

A Cross-Cultural Study Of Leadership Behaviors In Vietnamese And Chinese Working Adults

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Abstract This research displayed the leadership behavior in Vietnam and China regarding the task and relationship orientation. The empirical study was completed by collecting surveys from 633 participants working for various state and private enterprises in Vietnam and China. The expected result is to find the existence of task and relationship orientations in Vietnamese and Chinese organizations. Another expected finding demonstrates the change in Vietnamese and Chinese leadership behaviors from relationship orientation to task orientation.

Keywords: Leadership behaviors, task orientation, relationship orientation, Vietnam, China.

Introduction

Leadership is an intangible value that plays an essential role in the success of organizations. Especially with the increase of economy towards market orientation in Vietnam, building the right organizational culture is a challenge and a complex but vigorous task for the business. In an organization, the complexity of employees in terms of social and geographical differences, educational qualifications, and leadership is the cause of conflict (Schein, 1992). Moreover, competition and globalization pressure request organizations to discover new and creative ways for existence and development. Hence, this paves the way for organizations to find profound suitable leadership behavior to boost employees to achieve their main goals and objectives.

In this research, we suggest the assumption that leadership behavior is divided into task orientation and relationship orientation (Schein, 1992). While task orientation displays the extent to which employees follow the targets and tasks of organizations, relationship orientation reveals the emotional sides and the extent to which relations are recognized in organizations. Hence, the main objective of this research is to compare

the leadership behavior in light of task and relationship orientations between Vietnam and China. The content of the research proposal includes three parts. While the first part displays the literature review of the research, the second part introduces the research method, including sample and measurement. The third part suggests the research's result, conclusion, and contribution.

Literature review

Factors underlying leadership in China and Vietnam

This section displays three dimensions of leadership in China and Vietnam: culture, legislation, and economy. Regarding culture, China has dramatically impacted Vietnam, which continues to the present in terms of Confucianism and Yin and Yang. In the former, China's cultural tradition has been influenced by the most significant ancient thinker, Confucius, who created the core value of Confucianism that highlights persistence, a top-down approach, and humility. The belief system pervaded Vietnam in 111 BCE when the country was a colony of China and has persevered to the present (Zhu & Verstraeten, 2013). According to Edwards and

Phan (2013), Confucianism accentuated the role of consensus, kindness, and benevolence, which have been the main part of current Chinese and Vietnamese culture.

Another core value system in China is yin and yang, which derived from Taoism and came to Vietnam along with Confucianism (Jamieson, 1995). In this system, yang represents the positive side of the world, the sun, and heaven, while yin is a metaphor for the negative side of the moon and hell. In Chinese and Vietnamese views, the former relates to masculinity, dogma, and a top-down approach, while the latter represents femininity, equality, and consensus.

Similar to cultural aspects, China's law system is strongly associated with the Vietnamese one. China's system of legislation is based on the combination of Imperial laws followed by Confucianism and modern laws derived from German and Japanese legislation systems. In the case of Vietnam, this country has imported many Chinese Imperial law features into its legal system and blended them with French civil law and Soviet legal ones (Gillespie & Chen, 2010). In management, the legal systems affect the relationship between organization and employee in the Chinese and Vietnamese workforce, which display a framework for labor contract law and labor code (Warner, 1996).

Regarding the economic aspect, the two countries have reformed their economy significantly. China embarked on the transformation from a state-centralized orientation to market orientation in 1979, which adjusted its economy from a centrally bureaucratic system to a socialist market-focused economic system through cooperation between corporation ownerships, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), multinational enterprises (MNEs) and state-owned enterprises (SOEs). On the surface of the transition aimed to a market-oriented economy, Vietnam displayed a similarity in developmental trajectory with China when seven years after the

economic reform in China, under the pressure of economic crisis derived from poor results of public ownership, the Sixth Communist Party decided to establish an economic reform calling "Doi moi" policy which shifted the national economy from centralization to market orientation (Phuong et al., 2015). As a result, the government restructured the state owner through equalization, encouraging investment from foreign corporations and private enterprises (Quy, 2011).

Task and relationship orientations

Leadership has been classified into many types for several decades. One of the most famous pieces of research is the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) created by the Ohio State University, which is divided into two characteristics: task orientation and relationship orientation. Task orientation focuses on achievement, goal outcome, and tangible reward. Leaders with this leadership style follow strict rules, policies, and high outcomes. The target of this orientation is to organize tasks effectively. On the other hand, relationship orientation yields the emotional issue and finds how to estimate organizational relations.

Cunha and Cooper (2002) divided leadership behavior into organization integration versus performance orientation. In detail, while the performance orientation determines the responsibility of leaders to satisfy goals and tasks, the mutual relationship concerns the extent to which leaders build the relation with employees and how employees connect. Cameron and Quinn (2006) established a model of leadership behavior, including clan behavior and adhocracy behavior. In this case, the former relates to a human relationship which concerns how to work as a team and build human relations to create a strong relationship among members of the organization. By contrast, the latter relates to the extent to which adjustment, affability, and creation of organizations. In detail, it estimates

the ability to take risks to exploit new ways to get profits.

Methodology

From the above analysis, although the same reform in the economy, there is a converse way of managing leadership behavior in Vietnam and China. While the former is towards a shift from relationship orientation to task orientation, the latter still emphasizes relation-oriented dominance in the local context. Therefore, we aimed to determine and compare the leadership behavior in Vietnam and China regarding task orientation and relationship orientation. The following hypotheses are:

H1. Vietnamese respondents have different scores than Chinese respondents in both orientations.

H2. In both orientations, Vietnamese respondents up to 29 years of age have different scores from Chinese respondents up to 29 years of age.

H3. Vietnamese respondents who are 30 years of age and above have different scores from Chinese respondents who are 30 years of age and above in both orientations.

H4. Vietnamese respondents who are up to 5 working experience years have different scores from Chinese respondents who are up to 5 working experience years in both orientations.

H5. Vietnamese respondents with six working experience years and above have different scores

from Chinese respondents who have six working experience years and above in both orientations.

Participants

This research investigates the leadership style of both genders in Vietnam and China. Data was collected through a convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire was created in both complex and online formats. The detailed guideline, confidential procedure, and explanation of the research were also attached to the questionnaire. The original English was translated into Chinese and Vietnamese by academic scholars fluent in English. In the next step, it was back-translated by two experts to confirm the validity of the translated questionnaire. Finally, it is confirmed that their back-translated survey is significantly similar to the original version. A self-administered questionnaire was used to minimize respondent subjectivity mistakes and guarantee the confidentiality of the data. The surveys were sent to the participants, and the duration time for conducting them was two months.

There were 500 Vietnamese and 705 Chinese respondents who completed the questionnaire. Afterward, 206 Vietnamese and 366 surveys were removed because of missing items. As a result, a total of 633 surveys, including 294 Vietnamese and 339 valid Chinese, were selected for data analysis. The detailed characteristics of the participants are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (N = 633)

		Place of birth	
		Vietnam	China
Gender	Male	117 (39.7%)	80 (23.6%)
	Female	177 (60.3%)	259 (76.4%)
	Total	294 (100%)	339 (100%)

Age	18-29	172 (58.5%)	289 (85.30%)
	30-39	80 (27.2%)	43 (12.70%)
	40-49	28 (9.5%)	6 (1.80%)
	Above 50	14 (4.8%)	1 (0.3%)
	Total	294 (100%)	339 (100%)
Educational degree	College	0 (0%)	77 (22.70%)
	Bachelor	199 (67.7%)	210 (61.9%)
	Master	68 (23.1%)	44 (13.00%)
	PhD	27 (9.2%)	8 (2.40%)
	Total	294 (100%)	339 (100%)
Position	Employee	254 (86.3%)	280 (82.60%)
	Manager/Director	40 (13.7%)	59 (17.4%)
	Total	294 (100%)	339 (100%)

Instruments

For measuring leadership style, the Northouse (2007) questionnaire was selected in this research. It has two dimensions, including task and relationship orientations. Task orientation relates to the odd-number items, while relationship orientation relates to the number of items. Participants were required to express their opinions on a five-score scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A lower grade mentions that the participants disagree with the leadership style, while a higher grade means that they agree with the leadership style mentioned in the questionnaire.

Data analysis

IBM SPSS 22 was chosen to examine the valid responses and investigate the hypotheses. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) and paired t-test were selected to challenge whether there is a difference between Vietnamese and Chinese respondents based on gender.

According to Kaiser (1974), data needs to satisfy three conditions to proceed with further analysis: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is higher than 0.5, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is higher than

0.4, and Cronbach's Alpha is higher than 0.7. For this study, KMO is 0.938, which meets the standard requirement. Regarding the factor loadings, six items (Q2, Q10, Q13, Q17, Q18, Q19) were removed because their values were lower than 0.4. As a result, 14 items are confirmed valid in the data analysis. Finally, Cronbach's Alpha of all items is (), confirming the data's correctness.

Results

Gender between Vietnam and China

According to Table 2, the first hypothesis mentions that Vietnamese respondents have different scores than Chinese respondents in both orientations. Regarding task orientation, Vietnamese male (4.052) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.564). Similarly, Vietnam female (4.122) is a significantly higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.594). Therefore, hypothesis 1a is supported. Regarding relationship orientation, Vietnamese female (4.122) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.594). Similarly, Vietnam female (3.963) is a significantly higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.372).

Therefore, hypothesis 1b is supported. Altogether, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 2. A comparison between Vietnam and China

Task orientation	Vietnam	China	t	p
Male	4.052 (N=117)	3.564 (N=80)	5.256	0.000*
Female	4.122 (N=177)	3.594 (N= 259)	8.692	0.000*
Relationship orientation				
Male	4.122 (N=117)	3.594 (N=80)	4.549	0.000*
Female	3.963 (N=177)	3.372 (N=259)	8.745	0.000*

Note: $p < 0.05$

Age and gender between Vietnam and China

According to Table 3, the second hypothesis mentions that Vietnamese respondents up to 29 years have different scores from Chinese respondents up to 29 years of age in both orientations. Regarding task orientation, Vietnamese male (3.961) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.587). Similarly, Vietnam female (4.113) is a significantly higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.581). Regarding relationship orientation, Vietnamese male (3.788) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.404). Similarly, a Vietnam female (3.879) is a significantly higher mean score than a Chinese counterpart (3.355). Altogether, hypothesis 2 is supported.

The third hypothesis mentions that Vietnamese respondents who are 30 years of age and above have different scores from Chinese respondents who are 30 years of age and above in both orientations. Regarding task orientation, Vietnamese male (4.107) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.516). Similarly, Vietnam female (4.132) is a significantly higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.702). Regarding relationship orientation, Vietnamese male (3.925) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.395). Similarly, Vietnam female (4.053) is a significantly higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.523). Altogether, hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table 3. A comparison of age between Vietnam and China

Task orientation	Vietnam	China	t	p
Male				
Males up to 29	3.961 (N=44)	3.587 (N=54)	3.120	0.002*
Male 30 and above	4.107 (N=73)	3.516 (N=26)	3.764	0.000*
Female				
Females up to 29	4.113 (N=91)	3.581 (N=235)	7.094	0.000*
Female 30 and above	4.132 (N=86)	3.702 (N=24)	2.783	0.006*
Relationship orientation				

Male				
Males up to 29	3.788 (N=44)	3.404 (N=54)	3.120	0.002*
Male 30 and above	3.925 (N=73)	3.395 (N=26)	3.764	0.000*
Female				
Females up to 29	3.879 (N=91)	3.355 (N=235)	7.094	0.000*
Female 30 and above	4.053 (N=86)	3.523 (N=24)	2.783	0.006*

Note: $p < 0.05$

Working experience and gender between Vietnam and China

According to Table 4, the fourth hypothesis mentions that Vietnamese respondents who are up to 5 working experience years have different scores from Chinese respondents who are up to 5 working experience years in both orientations. Regarding task orientation, Vietnamese male (3.964) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.537). Similarly, a Vietnam female (4.089) is a significantly higher mean score than a Chinese counterpart (3.587). Regarding relationship orientation, Vietnamese male (3.780) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.338). Similarly, Vietnam female (3.875) is a significantly higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.365). Altogether, hypothesis 4 is supported.

The fifth hypothesis mentions that Vietnamese respondents with six working experience years and above have different scores from Chinese respondents with six working experience years and above in both orientations. Regarding task orientation, Vietnamese male (4.191) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.627). Similarly, a Vietnam female (4.217) is a significantly higher mean score than a Chinese counterpart (3.634). Regarding relationship orientation, Vietnamese male (3.780) has a higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.338). Similarly, Vietnam female (4.147) is a significantly higher mean score than their Chinese counterpart (3.428). Altogether, hypothesis 5 is supported.

Table 4. A comparison of working experience between Vietnam and China

Task orientation	Vietnam	China	t	p
Male				
Male with up to 5 years of working experience	3.964 (N=65)	3.537 (N=54)	3.681	0.000*
Males have six years of working experience and above	4.191 (N=111)	3.627 (N=51)	5.016	0.000*
Female				
Female with up to 5 years of working experience	4.089 (N=117)	3.587 (N=234)	7.364	0.000*

Females have six years of working experience and above	4.217 (N=59)	3.634 (N=25)	3.565	0.001*
Relationship orientation				
Male				
Male with up to 5 years of working experience	3.780 (N=65)	3.338 (N=54)	3.630	0.000*
Males have six years of working experience and above	4.074 (N=111)	3.481 (N=51)	4.656	0.000*
Female				
Female with up to 5 years of working experience	3.875 (N=117)	3.365 (N=234)	6.625	0.000*
Females have six years of working experience and above	4.147 (N=59)	3.428 (N=25)	4.164	0.000*

Note: $p < 0.05$

Discussion

This research opens the findings of previous studies, which highlight the implications of gender on leadership style. More specifically, this is the first research to compare this issue in Vietnam and China. Previous studies have explored the difference in choosing a preferred leadership style between men and women. Women often have a favor for using a relationship-oriented leadership style, which is due to primary characteristics of sympathy, femininity, and coordination. In contrast, men are labeled as masculine, competitive, and strong, so they often use a task-oriented leadership style in the workplace. However, this study expresses reverse results when Vietnamese and Chinese females express higher mean scores than males in task orientation.

In contrast, both countries' males have higher mean scores than females in relationship orientation. To explain these surprising results, the rise of women's rights in Confucius society (Korea, Japan, China, and Vietnam) has led to significant changes in women's roles in the workplace. Traditional women have been expected to stay home to care for their families for many centuries. The Vietnamese and Chinese traditional societies consider women to be baby keepers who have been ready to sacrifice their individual lives to serve their husbands and children. However, when both countries opened their economy a few decades ago, their societies expressed changes in society, economy, and education. As a result, local women have equal rights to men in all fields, supporting them to participate in the workplace actively. Many leadership positions in Vietnamese corporations

belong to women. Similarly, Chinese females have kept important roles in massive firms. Therefore, females in the two countries must have the same characteristics as men to enhance tasks effectively. To overcome the bias about women's ability in the workplace, even they must express these characteristics more seriously than males.

In contrast, when the requirement for gender equality has risen in recent times, the dominance of men in two societies has reduced significantly. In detail, while males still must conduct their tasks in the workplace, they must share the housework with their wives. As a result, Vietnamese and Chinese males develop female characteristics, which support them in solving tasks effectively.

The findings highlight that Vietnamese respondents have higher task and relationship orientation scores than their Chinese counterparts. These results are reversed from the prior studies, which regarded the dominance of relationship orientation in Vietnamese society. Although Vietnam is labeled as a collective country that values collectivism, relationship, and sympathy, this nation concentrates on getting the task conducted. In contrast, as the Chinese economic reform (the 1970s) started earlier than the Vietnamese economic reform (the 1980s), traditional culture plays a vital role in the Chinese context. Therefore, Chinese people are likely to follow the relationship-oriented leadership style, which highlights the value of collectivism, sympathy, and cooperation between members of society.

The interplay of age with gender is confirmed in this study. Vietnamese males up to 29 years old have higher mean scores in both orientations than Chinese males. Similarly, Vietnamese females up to 29 years old have higher mean scores in both orientations than Chinese females. Again, these results are regarded as a reflection of the two countries' cultural settings. The implications of culture in gender differences can lead to different

selections for leadership styles. The Vietnamese culture, which is a mix of Confucius and Western culture, has easy access to task-oriented leadership behavior that is suitable for the current business market. Moreover, Vietnamese individuals born before the economic reform in 1986 have been likely to access the modern leadership style. In contrast, although China has witnessed significant economic development for several decades, the society has been deeply influenced by Confucianism, so individuals still follow a relationship-oriented leadership style.

Conclusion

The study attempts to apply an effective statement model to find leadership behaviors in Vietnam and China toward task orientation and relationship orientation. To fulfill this objective, it provides a proficient methodology for testing the ten statements of the questionnaire created by Northouse (2007) on a scale of task and relationship orientations. The findings show the dominance of relationship orientation that confirms a link between traditional and corporate culture in Vietnam and China. Under the influence of Confucius values, Vietnamese and Chinese participants might highlight collectivism in workplaces, such as prioritizing the organizational goal rather than their own goal and respecting the top-down approach by calling directors or managers by title to display a high level of respect.

As in studies, this research still has several limitations. Firstly, this questionnaire is restricted to several participants in Vietnam and China, so the opportunity to absorb its result in other countries is unavailable due to a difference in individuals thinking and behaviors. Secondly, this research only identifies leadership in the light of task orientation and relationship orientation so that others dimensions will be overlooked. Although the study has several disadvantages, its results are hoped to support the Vietnamese and Chinese leaders in finding practical solutions for

managing their organizations. Moreover, foreign companies might find an effective leadership behavior to adapt to Vietnam and China contexts. Otherwise, considering the advantages, these limitations might bolster future studies to have a proficient and better result.

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