

Stress, Task, and Relationship Orientations Across German and Vietnamese Cultures

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Abstract

Cultural background and context can be an important predictor of a manager's behavior, stress and leadership orientation. This paper examines the stress, task, and relationship orientations of people in the high-context culture of Vietnam and in the low-context culture of Germany. As a result of the analysis of 420 responses, some significant differences were found between the two samples. It appears that Vietnamese have higher scores on task, relationship and stress orientations than German respondents. While gender is a significant factor in stress perceptions, it did not demonstrate any differences in the task and relationship orientations of these respondents. In this paper, literature on German and Vietnamese cultures is presented along with practical application, suggestions and implications for future studies.

Key words: Culture; Germany; Leadership; Relationships; Stress perception; Tasks; Vietnam

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INTRODUCTION

Many studies in cross-cultural leadership literature have found various beliefs about leadership across cultures (Dickson, DenHartog & Mitchelson, 2003; Giberson, Resick, Dickson, Mitchelson & Randall, 2009). Cultural values and norms are important to leadership and the understanding of different expectations of leader behaviors in different context (Kuchinke, 1999; Lord, Brown, Harvey & Hall, 2001). With the world of business becoming significantly globalized and the workforce becoming more diverse, understanding the expectations and behaviors of employees is paramount for international and multicultural organizations to succeed. Therefore, there is an urgent need for cross-cultural comparative research to provide theoretical and practical guidance for these organizations. It is important for managers, trainers and researchers to examine how differences in cultural background and context can lead to cultural misunderstanding that can potentially lead to organizational failure.

The purpose of this comparative, cross-national study is to examine the task, relationship and stress similarities and dissimilarities between adult Vietnamese and German respondents, expand the body of knowledge of cross-cultural leadership and management, and provide practical implications for international and multicultural business managers who work with these populations. More specifically, this paper addresses the following research question: Do German and Vietnamese differ in their task, relationship and stress orientations based on culture and gender? In addressing this question, we use the Style Questionnaire, provided by Northouse (2007) to obtain a general profile of a person's leadership behaviors regarding task and relationship orientations and the Overload Stress Inventory, adapted from Hyde and Allen's conceptual analysis of overload (1996, p.29-30), to assess the stress perception of respondents.

We chose to compare Vietnam and Germany for several reasons. Firstly, Germany is Vietnam's biggest trading partner in Europe with average trade turnover of 4.6-5.0 billion U.S. dollars in 2009-2010, while Vietnam serves as "a bridge for Germany to strengthen ties with ASEAN countries" (Department of Planning and Investment, 2011). The relationship between the two countries has been strengthened and become more strategic in recent years. Secondly, both countries represent distinct cultural norms, values and philosophy. Similar to China, Taiwan, Thailand, China, Japan, Iran, Afghanistan, or India, Vietnam is considered a high-context culture (Nguyen, 2011; Nguyen & Mujtaba, 2011), while Germany, like other countries of the Western industrialized world, is considered a low-context culture (Nguyen, Boehmer & Mujtaba, 2012). Thirdly, there has been little to no research comparing samples in Germany and Vietnam. This makes this research unique and worth taking. Lastly, both Germany and Vietnam are very similar in terms of population numbers and both countries are now playing an important role in their continents.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 The Vietnamese Culture

Located in Southeastern Asia, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has a population of about 90.5 million people and Hanoi is the capital. There are 58 provinces and 5 municipalities (major cities) including Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho in the South, Hanoi, HaiPhong in the North, and Da Nang in the Central (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011a).

Besides its own local culture of a "fairly large cultural community" that was formed thousands of years ago (Embassy of Vietnam, n.d.), the Vietnamese culture has been strongly influenced by the Chinese culture. In addition, it has inherited many unique cultural features from other countries in the region as well as from the Western cultures. Despite the mix of unique cultures, Vietnamese culture can be referred to as high power distance, high collectivism, moderate uncertainty avoidance, and high context (Triandis, 1989; Parks & Vu, 1994; Swierczek, 1994; Quang, 1997; Ralston, Nguyen & Napier, 1999; Quang & Vuong, 2002). Organizational structure shows a strong vertical relationship with high level of conformity, face saving, and social control (Quang & Vuong, 2002; Scott, Bishop & Chen, 2003). Vietnamese people tend to think as a group, prefer and feel comfortable with group activity and decision making that benefit the group instead of personal goals (Parks & Vu, 1994; Scott *et al.*, 2003; Fan & Zigang, 2004). Considered as high risk averse, they tend to delay to make immediate decisions if they feel uncertain, and do not accept abnormal ideas and behaviors easily (Quang & Vuong, 2002; Fan & Zigang, 2004). Personal

relationship is considered the key to success. "In-group" status needs to be achieved and trust needs to be gained in order to create a good and successful social and business relationship.

1.2 The German Culture

Located in Central Europe, the Federal Republic of Germany is the Europe's largest economy and plays a key role in the continent's economic, political, and defense systems. Germany has a population of about 81.5 million people and Berlin is the capital. There are 16 states in the country and federal republic is the government structure (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011b). The German culture has been strongly influenced by major intellectual and popular trends in Europe and is one of the most influential cultural powers in this continent. The German history has influenced culture in many ways.

Several studies have identified some general cultural aspects of Germany including the Hofstede studies and the GLOBE project. Hofstede (1984) created rankings off numerous countries all over the world with respect to the five cultural dimensions. The ranks are based on indices which in turn are derived from the results of all individuals' answers to the questionnaires collected in each country (Hofstede, 1984). The German rankings are interpreted as follows:

- *Power distance (PDI)* is not very large in Germany. Germans expect their superior to be an expert in solving problems (Hofstede, 1993).
- *Individualism (IDV)* is considerably high, receiving a rank of 36 out of 50. Thus Germans tend to believe that they control their own fate.
- With respect to masculinity (*MAS*), Germany has a rank of 41 out of 50, which means that there is a high level of those attitudes associated to masculinity and dissociated to femininity, like achievement, assertiveness, and material success (Ardichvili and Kuchinke, 2002).
- With respect to uncertainty avoidance (*UAI*), Germany receives a middle range (23 of 50). Germans tend to be moderately risk and ambiguity averse.
- With respect to *long term orientation (LTO)*, Germans tend to lean more on the "short term" dimension.

1.3 Task and Relationship-Oriented Leadership

According to Mintzberg (2003), leadership is a central aspect of management. Previous studies in leadership literature emphasized two main categories of leader behaviors: initiating structure, or task-orientation, and consideration, or relationship-orientation (Oaklander and Fleishman, 1964; Fleishman, 1967). One of the earliest and most influential studies on leadership is the Ohio State University studies which began in the 1940s, and found two basic types of leader behaviors: consideration

and initiating structure. Building and maintaining good relationship, providing great supports, and delegating authorities to subordinates are considered key to success by consideration style leaders. On the other hand, initiating structure leaders concentrate on goals, tasks and delegation. They concern mainly with defining and organizing tasks and activities and their accomplishments (Oaklander & Fleishman, 1964; Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2008). Initiating structure leaders emphasize the effectiveness and efficiency of tasks that lead to the achievement of their goals. The Michigan studies found two similar leader behaviors: employee-centered and production-centered (Schermerhorn *et al.*, 2008). Employee-centered, which is similar to consideration, leaders pay attention to their subordinates' welfare while production-centered, which is similar to initiating structure, leaders emphasize goals, tasks and the accomplishment of these goals and tasks.

As deeply rooted in and strongly influenced by Chinese culture over a thousand years, Vietnamese people inherit a strong sense of superior-subordinate hierarchical relationships, or "guanxi" (Chen & Chen, 2004; Wong *et al.*, 2003a; 2003b as cited in Chen & Tjosvold, 2006). High guanxi person is highly trusted and respected and at the same time is expected with higher level of obligation (Chen & Tjosvold, 2006; Ping, Mujtaba & Jieqiong, 2012). Vietnamese people emphasize group efforts and place high priority on maintaining high guanxi to be accepted as an "in-group". Frequently considered themselves a part of a larger group, Vietnamese people are willing to sacrifice personal interests to achieve group interests. Morality is the strong foundation of a superior-subordinate relationship.

Though similar to Chinese culture in many ways, characteristics of effective leadership in Vietnam have not been clearly identified. Vietnamese leaders are considered to be in the early stage of developing professionalism with a strong influence of the "command and control" economy system and the Confucian values (Doanhand Nguyen, 1995). Quang, Swierczek & Chi (1998) found that honesty, dependability, and trustworthiness are among several key leadership characteristics of Vietnamese managers. Trust is considered a key success factor. Vietnamese leadership style is quite different from those in the ASEAN region. Vietnamese managers show more concern for relationships. However, sharing power is not emphasized which is a reflection of a high power distance culture in which authoritarian-oriented leadership style is prevalent. Politics is considered to be important for Vietnamese managers. They take serious consideration of external political impact in planning out their business plans and strategies.

German leadership carries its unique cultural values. According to Larsen (2003), before the Second World War, both the mechanistic and organic features have been

presented in Germany and the latter have older roots and focused on the higher value of culture (Kultur) and community (Gemeinschaft) over the value of society (Gesellschaft) and civilization (Zivilisation). Mechanistic features of leadership could be task, position, structure, direction, and coordination, while organic features focused around community, ethics, empathy, authenticity, identity, and charisma (Jepson, 2010). Larsen (2003) concluded that the organic approach to leadership originally came from German tradition. According to Brodbeck, Frese and Javidan (2002), a German leader of post-war Germany was pictured as a person with a formal interpersonal style and straightforward behavior. He/she possessed high technical skills and was considered a specialist rather than a generalist (Lawrence, 1994; Warner & Campbell, 1993). Germany has a special system called the vocational apprenticeship through which employees often go and learn technical skills. This system exists both on the shop floor and in the office. Those who successfully complete the apprenticeship will receive a certificate, the Facharbeiterbrief, which is recognized throughout the country. This occupational certification means much more than a certificate. It is also a pride. It makes them feel competent as an employee or as a manager. German businesses consider professional criteria such as technical skills, experience, and expertise knowledge as the most important factors for employment, promotion, evaluation, and social acceptance. German middle managers often use their technical expertise as their main source of authority and at the same time they tend to focus more on focus technical responsibilities (Schneider & Littrell, 2003). They emphasize task orientation and focus on high performance and leave little room for feelings and compassion. Stewart, Barsoux, Kieser, Ganter and Walgenbach (1994) state that, in such cultures, "feelings take second place to task". However, since mid-70s, a more human relation approach has become popular and managers pay more attention to the "softer" side of management. Mutual trust, compassion, generosity, and interpersonal skills, are among values that are ranked highly by German managers. Despite this growing emphasis on human relation, German leadership style is still skewed towards "competent fist" principle (Brodbeck *et al.*, 2002). Effective German leaders are associated with high performance orientation, low compassion, low self-protection, low team orientation, high autonomy, and high participation (Brodbeck *et al.*, 2002; Jepson, 2010).

According to Chapman (1975), very little empirical research has been conducted to explore if there are any differences between male and female leadership behaviors, and this is especially true in regards to cross-cultural research between Germany and Vietnam. As such, more cross-cultural leadership research and gender focused studies are needed.

1.4 Work Overload Stress Perception

According to Ellis (2006), stress is a sequence of events with the presence of a demand. According to Nichols (2008), Selye (1956) and others, the impact of stress can be physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral. Stress can be all those feelings and perceptions in lack of time, ability, skill, or resources to effectively deal with personal or professional demands in a given time. Stress is all those real and perceived forces that encroach or are imposed on the individual (Mujtaba & McCartney, 2007; Selye, 1974). Hyde and Allen (1996, p.27) state that overload stressors can produce psychological, physiological and behavioral changes. Quantitative overload can cause elevation in blood cholesterol level which is associated with atherosclerosis and coronary heart disease (Hyde & Allen, 1996, p.27). Overload can decrease motivation toward learning/work performance. Stress not only impacts individuals but also organizational performance. Oaklander and Fleishman (1964) defined organizational stress as interpersonal conflicts, hostility, and non-cooperative relationships among employees and colleagues.

Similar to many Germans, Vietnamese are likely to hold stress and emotional problems to themselves or only discuss it within the extended families (Byleen, 1986; The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 2010). However, Vietnamese and Germans find different ways to deal with it such as smoking, drinking, spending time with family or friends, going to prayer sessions, or even gambling. While there are many ways to effectively handle stress, there are also many variables that impact a person's level of stress that can lead to health problems, this study is designed to assess whether Vietnamese and Japanese respondents report low, moderate, high, or severe levels of stress associated with task overload.

1.5 Study Methodology and Analysis

This research attempts to clarify whether Germans and Vietnamese are more relationship oriented or more task-oriented. It further attempts to determine whether gender is a factor in the stress, tasks and relationships orientations of respondents.

Northouse's (2007) Style Questionnaire is used to obtain a general profile of a person's leadership behaviors regarding task and relationship orientations. A rating of 1 means "Never" and a rating of 5 means "Always" with the person demonstrating the specific behavior. The scoring interpretation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Task and Relationship Score Interpretations

Scores	Descriptions
• 45-50	Very high range
• 40-44	High range
• 35-39	Moderately high range
• 30-34	Moderately low range
• 25-29	Low range
• 10-24	Very low range

The Overload Stress Inventory, adapted from Hyde and Allen's conceptual analysis of overload (1996, p.29-30), is used to assess the stress perception of respondents. A rating of 1 means "Never" and a rating of 5 means "Always" with the person demonstrating the specific behavior. The responses are assessed according to the following general criteria:

- *Scores in the range of 40–50* tend to mean severe stress from overload.
- *Scores in the range of 30–39* tend to mean high stress from overload.
- *Scores in the range of 20–29* tend to mean moderate stress from overload.
- *Scores in the range of 19 and below* tend to mean low stress from overload.

The research question for this study was to determine whether adult Vietnamese are different from adult Germans in terms of task orientation, relationship orientation, and overload stress perception. Another aspect of this study was to determine whether there is any difference between the two countries' gender on these scores. The specific hypotheses for this study are as follows:

- Hypothesis 1: German respondents have task scores that are significantly different than Vietnamese respondents.
- Hypothesis 2: There is significant difference in the task scores between male and female respondents.
- Hypothesis 3: There is significant interaction between gender and country in the task scores.
- Hypothesis 4: German respondents have the relationship scores that are significantly different than Vietnamese respondents.
- Hypothesis 5: There is significant difference in the relationship scores between male and female respondents.
- Hypothesis 6: There is significant interaction between gender and country in the relationship scores.
- Hypothesis 7: German respondents have the overload stress perception scores that are significantly different than Vietnamese respondents.
- Hypothesis 8: There is a significant difference in the overload stress perception scores between male and female respondents.
- Hypothesis 9: There is significant interaction between gender and country in the overload stress perception scores.

Convenient sampling procedure was used for selecting and contacting respondents through face-to-face meetings, group gatherings, and social media linkages. The target respondents are German and Vietnamese adults who

possess a good command of written and spoken English. The original English questionnaires were distributed to insure its validity. Both weblink and hard copy were used to collect the data. For the Vietnamese sample, 300 questionnaires were distributed to people in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and after two rounds of email reminders, 188 returned surveys were fully completed and used for this study. For the German sample, hard copies were distributed in several universities and companies. One of the authors was present while the volunteer subjects filled out the questionnaire. Overall, 232 returned surveys were fully completed by the German respondents and used for this study. Altogether, there were 420 completed surveys that were used for this study.

Table 2 shows the majority of the Vietnamese people were in between 26 to 34 years of age with 87 respondents (46%) while there were 43 respondents in the 17 to 25 years old group (23%) and 43 respondents in the 35 to 44 years old group (23%). There were 15 Vietnamese in the sample who were 45 years old and above (8%). As for the German sample, there were 73 respondents in the 35 to 44 years old group (32%), 70 respondents in the 26 to 34 years old group (30%), 49 respondents in the 17 to 25 years old group (21%), and 40 respondents who were 45 years old and above (17%).

Table 2
Age

Age	Place of birth		Total
	Germany	Vietnam	
17-25	49	43	92
26-34	70	87	157
35-44	73	43	116
45 and above	40	15	55
Total	232	188	420

Table 3 shows that the Vietnamese sample had an even number of male and female respondents (94 each) while the German sample had 135 female respondents (58%) and 97 male respondents (42%).

Table 3
Gender

Gender	Place of birth		Total
	Germany	Vietnam	
Male	97	94	191
Female	135	94	229
Total	232	188	420

Table 4 shows that the Vietnamese sample had 68 respondents who had 1 to 5 years of work experience (36%), 60 respondents who had 6 to 10 years of work experience (32%), 36 respondents who had 11 or more years of work experience (19%), and 24 respondents who had no work experience (13%). As for the German sample,

79 respondents had 6 to 10 years of work experience (34%), 69 respondents who had 11 years or more of work experience (30%), 50 respondents who had 1 to 5 years of work experience (21%), and 34 respondents who had no work experience (15%).

Table 4
Work Experience

Experience	Place of birth		Total
	Germany	Vietnam	
None	34	24	58
1-5 years	50	68	118
6-10 years	79	60	139
11 years or more	69	36	105
Total	232	188	420

Table 5 shows that the Vietnamese sample had 119 respondents who had bachelor degree (63%), 42 respondents who had master degree (22%), 22 respondents who had high school degree (12%), and 5 respondents who had doctorate degree (3%). As for the German sample, 100 respondents had high school degree (43%), 65 respondents who bachelor degree (28%), 62 respondents who had master degree (27%), and 5 respondents who had doctorate degree (2%).

Table 5
Education

Education	Place of birth		Total
	Germany	Vietnam	
High school	100	22	122
Bachelor	65	119	184
Master	62	42	104
Doctorate	5	5	10
Total	232	188	420

2. RESULTS

Univariate analysis of variance (Two-way ANOVA) was used for hypotheses testing in this research. Two-way ANOVA is a commonly used statistical technique for finding significant relationships between groups or samples by comparing the means of those groups on two factors of interest.

2.1 Task Orientation Scores

As presented in Table 6-1, the average scores of Vietnamese respondents for task orientation fell in "high range" ($M = 41.79$), while the German respondents scored in "moderately high range" ($M = 35.60$). This difference is statistically significant ($F = 93.824, p = .000$), as shown in Table 6-2. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported. There is a statistically significant difference between the average task orientation scores of Vietnamese and German. Vietnamese appear to be more task-oriented.

Table 6-1
Descriptive Statistics

Place of birth	Gender	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Germany	Male	36.47	7.131	97
	Female	34.98	6.535	135
	Total	35.60	6.816	232
Vietnam	Male	41.63	5.691	94
	Female	41.95	5.767	94
	Total	41.79	5.716	188
Total	Male	39.01	6.944	191
	Female	37.84	7.104	229
	Total	38.37	7.048	420

Dependent Variable: Sum_Task_Scores

Also seen in Table 6-1, the average scores of both male and female respondents fell in “moderately high range” though male respondents scored higher (M = 39.01) than female respondents (M = 37.84). There is no statistically

significant difference between these two mean scores (F = .885, p = .347), as shown in Table 6-2. Therefore, hypothesis two is not supported. Male respondents did not score significantly higher than female respondents.

Table 6-2
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Std. deviation	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	4102.236 ^a	3	1367.412	34.042	.000
Intercept	616342.260	1	616342.260	15344.173	.000
PlaceofBirth	3768.704	1	3768.704	93.824	.000
Gender	35.545	1	35.545	.885	.347
PlaceofBirth* Gender	84.538	1	84.538	2.105	.148
Error	16709.82	416	40.168		
Total	639206.000	420			
Corrected Total	20812.057	419			

Dependent Variable: Sum_Task_Scores

Table 6-2 also shows no significant interaction between place of birth (Germany and Vietnam) and gender (male and female) (F = 2.105, p = .148). Therefore, hypothesis three is not supported. Despite the lack of statistical

significant, we noted that while the average scores between Vietnamese males (M = 41.63) and females (41.95) did not differ much, German males scored higher (M = 6.47) than German females (M = 34.98).

Table 6-3
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Partial eta squared	Noncent. parameter	Observed power ^b
Corrected Model	.197	102.127	1.000
Intercept	.974	15344.173	1.000
PlaceofBirth	.184	93.824	1.000
Gender	.002	.885	.155
PlaceofBirth* Gender	.005	2.105	.304

Dependent Variable: Sum_Task_Scores

a. R Squared = .197 (Adjusted R Squared = .191)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

A helpful way to understand what it means when a difference between groups is not statistically significant is to check the observed power value. As Table 6-3 reported, there would be only 15.5% chance of finding a significant difference between mean scores for task orientation of males and females with our sample size. For a significant interaction between place of birth and gender, there would be only 30.4% chance.

Table 7-1
Descriptive Statistics

Place of birth	Gender	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Germany	Male	39.66	4.991	97
	Female	39.83	4.866	135
	Total	39.76	4.909	232
Vietnam	Male	40.83	4.490	94
	Female	41.95	4.556	94
	Total	41.39	4.546	188
Total	Male	40.24	4.775	191
	Female	40.70	4.845	229
	Total	40.49	4.812	420

Dependent Variable: Sum_Relationship_Scores

Also seen in Table 7-1, the average scores of both male and female respondents fell in “high range” though female respondents scored slightly higher ($M = 40.70$) than male respondents ($M = 40.24$). There is no statistically significant difference between these two mean scores ($F = 1.885$, $p = .170$), as shown in Table 7-2. Therefore, hypothesis five is not supported. Female respondents did not significantly score higher than male respondents.

Table 7-2
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Std. deviation	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	336.075 ^a	3	112.025	4.973	.002
Intercept	675251.222	1	675251.222	29976.368	.000
PlaceofBirth	277.112	1	277.112	12.302	.001
Gender	42.469	1	42.469	1.885	.170
PlaceofBirth* Gender	23.008	1	23.008	1.021	.313
Error	9370.865	416	22.526		
Total	698207.000	420			
Corrected Total	9706.940	419			

Dependent Variable: Sum_Relationship_Scores

As Table 7-3 reported, there would be only 27.8% chance of finding a significant difference between the mean scores for relationship orientation of males and

2.2 Relationship Orientation Scores

As presented in Table 7-1, the average scores of Vietnamese respondents for relationship orientation fell in “high range” ($M = 41.39$), while the German respondents scored in the upper “moderately high range” ($M = 39.76$). This difference is statistically significant ($F = 12.302$, $p = .001$), as shown in Table 7-2. Therefore, hypothesis four is supported. There is a significant difference between the average scores for relationship orientation of Vietnamese and German.

Table 7-2 also shows no significant interaction between place of birth (Germany and Vietnam) and gender (male and female) ($F = 1.021$, $p = .313$). Therefore, hypothesis six is not supported. Despite the lack of statistical significant, we noted that while the average scores between German males ($M = 39.66$) and females ($M = 39.83$) did not differ much, Vietnamese females scored higher ($M = 41.95$) than Vietnamese males ($M = 40.83$).

females with our sample size. For a significant interaction between place of birth and gender, there would be only 17.2% chance.

Table 7-3
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Partial eta squared	Noncent. parameter	Observed power ^b
Corrected Model	.035	14.919	.913
Intercept	.986	29976.368	1.000
PlaceofBirth	.029	12.302	.938
Gender	.005	1.885	.278
PlaceofBirth* Gender	.002	1.021	.172

Dependent Variable: Sum_Relationship_Scores
 a. R Squared = .035 (Adjusted R Squared = .028)
 b. Computed using alpha = .05

2.3 Work Overload Stress Perception Scores

As presented in Table 8-1, the average scores of Vietnamese respondents for work overload stress perception fell in “high” range (M = 30.87), while the German respondents scored in “moderate” range (M=

27.08). This difference is statistically significant (F = 26.496, p = .001), as shown in Table 8-2. Therefore, hypothesis seven is supported. There is a significant difference between the average scores for work overload stress perception of Vietnamese and German.

Table 8-1
Descriptive Statistics

Place of birth	Gender	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Germany	Male	25.85	7.156	97
	Female	27.97	8.119	135
	Total	27.08	7.787	232
Vietnam	Male	31.76	8.652	94
	Female	29.98	6.982	94
	Total	30.87	7.891	188
Total	Male	28.75	8.443	191
	Female	28.79	7.721	229
	Total	28.78	8.048	420

Dependent Variable: Sum_Stress_Scores

Also seen in Table 8-1, the average scores of both male and female German and Vietnamese respondents fell in “moderate” range though female respondents scored slightly higher (M = 28.79) than male respondents (M= 28.75). There is no statistically significant difference between these two mean scores (F= .051, p= .851), as

shown in Table 8-2. Therefore, hypothesis eight is not supported. Female respondents did not score significantly higher than male respondents. However, it should be noted that Vietnamese males (M = 31.76) and females (M= 29.98) scored significantly higher than German males (M= 25.85) and females (M = 27.97).

Table 8-2
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Std. deviation	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1891.070 ^a	3	630.357	10.387	.000
Intercept	342411.557	1	342411.557	5642.233	.000
PlaceofBirth	1607.960	1	1607.960	26.496	.821
Gender	3.113	1	3.113	.051	.012
PlaceofBirth* Gender	390.388	1	390.388	6.433	
Error	25245.892	416	60.687		
Total	374926.000	420			
Corrected Total	27136.962	419			

Dependent Variable: Sum_Stress_Scores

Table 8-2 shows a significant interaction between place of birth (Germany & Vietnam) and gender (male & female) ($F = 6.433$, $p = .012$). Therefore, hypothesis nine is supported.

Table 8-3
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Partial eta squared	Noncent. parameter	Observed power ^b
Corrected Model	.070	31.161	.999
Intercept	.931	5642.233	1.000
PlaceofBirth	.060	26.496	.999
Gender	.000	.051	.056
PlaceofBirth* Gender	.015	6.433	.716

Dependent Variable: Sum_Stress_Scores

a. R Squared = .070 (Adjusted R Squared = .063)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

It was hypothesized that German and Vietnamese respondents will have dissimilar scores for relationship and task orientations, and the current study supported these hypotheses as respondents in Vietnam appear to be more task-oriented and more relationship-oriented. Vietnamese respondents showed more concern for organizational efficiency and productivity and perhaps the “command and control” system has had some influence. The high power distance level could also be a factor that led to high task orientation scores. Gender was not a factor in the task orientation of respondents.

Stress perceptions from work overload appears to be significantly higher for Vietnamese respondents than for Germans. Perhaps German respondents have a more balanced work/life balance. Significant differences in stress perceptions were found based on gender between cultures; Vietnamese males and females appear to experience more stress than their Germans counterparts.

3. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

It is often assumed that employees from high-context cultures are likely to be more relationship-oriented. This research demonstrated that compared to the German respondents, Vietnamese are more focused on both their tasks and relationships. This research has shown that Vietnamese respondents from a high-context culture of Vietnam are just as task-oriented as they are relationship-oriented. This is a good implication for international business partners as well as local government leaders that Vietnamese working adults, beside their relationship orientation, will at least be as serious as Western people in getting the job done. They are accepting roles that are assigned to them, willing to comply with the instructions, and focusing on getting the work done efficiently and effectively to achieve the group goals. It is highly recommended that the key success factor in doing business with Vietnamese people is to build a good

relationship that is based on mutual trust, honesty, and long-term cooperation.

As Table 8-3 reported, there would be only 5.6% chance of finding a significant difference between the mean scores for work overload perception of males and females with our sample size.

relationship that is based on mutual trust, honesty, and long-term cooperation.

With a high level of work overload stress perception among Vietnamese working adults, global as well as local managers should develop optimal work load for the employees. At the personal level, Vietnamese respondents should learn how to deal with stress by applying proper time management: balancing one’s work-life relationship by effectively scheduling, planning and organizing one’s workload that works well with other activities for school and family. Individuals should be decisive in determining their priorities and limitations.

Stress has no gender. However, Vietnamese and German women have been increasingly taking on many roles that were previously considered just for men such as top management executives, political figures, or simply bread winners. Females have been increasingly adding more stress on themselves through multi-tasking at home and professional roles. Therefore, it is wise for both men and women to be fully aware of stress and learn how to cope with and relieve it in a positive manner (Puff & Moeckel, 1979). In high stress environments, employees tend to have more defensive behaviors such as engaging in minimal communication, expressing hard feelings and mistrust among others, isolating themselves from the group and maintaining an uncooperative relationship. In low stress environment, people tend to possess more collaborative behaviors, which create a more cooperative relationship and trust among others. Stress and ethical dilemmas are believed to exist simultaneously in organizational settings. Leaders tend to face ethical dilemmas when dealing with stressful situations (Mohr & Wolfram, 2010; Mujtaba & Sims, 2011).

One limitation is the fact that this study was conducted with a general adult population from different sectors and industries in Germany and Vietnam. Future studies can compare populations with similar working backgrounds and demographic variables such as comparing government

employees with the private sector. Another limitation is the small sample size of working adults who can speak fluent English. Thus, these results cannot be generalized to the larger population, especially those who do not speak any English. Future studies can be conducted on larger sample size with similar population and the surveys can be given in the local Vietnamese and German languages.

This research only looked at the work overload stress. Future research can examine other aspects of work and life that can cause stress. Finally, this study only focused on the German and Vietnamese respondents. Future studies can look into the task and relationship orientation scores of respondents in many countries from each continent, as well as the perception of stress across several different cultures to see if there is similarity or difference among these diverse people groups.

CONCLUSION

After reflecting on the behaviors of people from Germany and Vietnam, we can say for certain that these Vietnamese respondents are definitely more task and relationship-oriented. Vietnamese people also report a higher level of stress perception as well. Perhaps this is expected as Vietnam is now more industrialized with a competitive economy in the region.

This study has shed light into the differences in leadership behaviors and stress perception in Germany and Vietnam. Researchers and scholars can benefit from this study as it provides more empirical results regarding the stress orientation as well as relationship similarities and dissimilarities between adult Germans and Vietnamese based on gender and culture. Managers and practitioners can also benefit from the study as it provides real-world implications in doing business or in dealing with these working adults whatever they might be.

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