

# Orientations of the Managers, Culture and Gender: Cross-cultural Study of Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship

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**Abstract** This study investigated differences in the attitudes toward workplace practices between male and female managers from Serbia and Macedonia. There were included 200 managers, 100 managers from Macedonia and 100 managers from Serbia. The analyses is aimed at determination differences of orientations toward cultural dimensions collectivism-individualism and power distance, paternalism, and affective, instrumental, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinate relationship between male and female Macedonian and Serbian managers. The results suggest significant differences in orientation toward power distance and collectivism-individualism, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinate relationship among managers from Serbia and Macedonia. Macedonian managers score higher on collectivistic orientation, and contractual supervisor-subordinate relationship than Serbian managers. But Serbian managers score higher on orientation toward power distance and obligatory supervisor-subordinate relationship. The study showed that there are no differences according to gender and there is no interaction effect of culture and gender on orientations toward collectivism-individualism and power distance, paternalism and supervisor-subordinate relationship. The results of the study lend support for the notion that the culture influences on organizational practices. With increasing knowledge about the differences of attitudes of managers with different cultural background, increases the possibility of developing open and productive relations in the business world.

**Keywords** Culture, Leadership, Managers, Gender

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## 1. Introduction

This study examines possible national differences in the moderating effect of supervisor-subordinate relationship on the managers work attitudes.

In recent times researchers are trying to discover the background characteristics of managers in order to improve organizational performance.

Gender and culture are the features that have attracted the most attention in identifying background characteristics and leadership behavior of managers [20].

The world community is increasingly developing interest in the topic that includes gender and leadership, specifically differences between men and women in the higher positions in organizations. For various reasons as methodological difficulties and domination of male-researchers, who have ignored gender equality in the leadership, the researchers fled this topic until the seventies of the last century

(Chermes 1997; Hoyt 2008 [16]). According to Dienesch and Liden (1986; [21]) the key determinants of the quality of a supervisor-subordinate relationship are individual characteristics as race, gender and nonperformance behaviors as personal relationships.

With increasing number of women occupying leadership positions, there is a question whether men and women differ in leadership styles. Empirical results to support gender differences in leadership behavior are mixed, and conclusions cannot be made about gender differences for the whole world [20].

There are many studies that showed the differences in the perception of adequacy of leadership roles between women and men in several cultures

In the study conducted by Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra [5] was tested whether the leadership role is more appropriate to male or to female gender role among German and Spanish participants. The results showed that Spanish participants express more prejudice against female candidates for leadership position than German participants. Also it was assumed that leadership is more congruent with masculine gender role than the feminine gender role.

In sum, the characteristics that are associated with

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Published online at <http://journal.sapub.org/ijap>

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leadership role, as power, authority, and competition are attributed more to men than women.

The relationship between the leadership and national culture is often studied in the cross-cultural management literature, causes a lot of attention among researchers. The leadership processes reflect the culture in which they unfold; this conclusion is accepted as an axiom by international researchers[6].

The research of gender differences in management are conducted in the North America and Europe, otherwise research in Balkan cultures has been very limited because of the main role of the women as mother-wife-daughter-sister. By the years there is increasingly number of women on managerial positions in the organizations. In Taiwan the researchers found that male employees had higher job satisfaction and job levels, but there was no difference in work values by male and female employees[18]. Also in the research conducted in Macedonia, found that gender is a significant factor for job satisfaction, where male health workers are more job satisfied than female health workers[.].

Yugoslavia was the only Eastern block country that had a part in Hofstede's research of national cultural differences, conducted in 1970. Macedonia and Serbia were parts of Yugoslavia in that time. Serbia in 1970 manifested higher power distance 86 than Yugoslav average of 76. Although Yugoslavia manifested average of 27 for cultural dimension collectivism-individualism, Serbia showed 25.

There are many different definitions of culture; with the intention that culture is a very complex construct that encompasses various aspects of individual's lifestyle.

Hofstede and Hofstede defined culture as *collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another*. Individuals belong to different groups of people at the same time and have several layers of mental programming that correspond to different levels of the culture. In this study are analyzed national level and gender level of the culture. National level of the culture refers to one's country, while gender level of culture refers to whether individual is born as male or as female.

According to Bocher & Hesketh[4] individualized measures of culture are used when the culture is an independent variable as to suppose any individual measured variable. Cultural orientations are personal constructs arising from the cultural dimensions. Specifically cultural orientations are cultural dimensions at individual level.

This study covers two cultural orientations: orientation toward cultural dimension collectivism-individualism and orientation toward cultural dimension power distance.

Individualism-collectivism is the most commonly applied construct to explain and predict cultural differences[8].

According to[19], orientation toward individualism is characterized with attitudes of group independence; giving priority to personal goals, using attitudes much more than norms as determinates of their social behavior. While orientation toward collectivism is characterized with intensive interpersonal relationships, loyalty and security,

also maintaining group harmony.

Power distance dimension is the extent to which the less powerful people in the organizations and institutions accept and expect unequal power distribution[11]. Individuals who are high on power distance accept a subservient hierarchy in terms of authority, also accept their status. Power distance reinforces interdependent relations, where individuals have to adhere to their beliefs that are aligned in society and they have no many alternatives.

In every society family is of enormous importance. Especially within developing countries, as Serbia and Macedonia, despite the nuclear family, also extended family is priority. Family and work are interrelated, so the work is in the function of family[2]. Paternalism reflects behavior of supervisors to their subordinates as father to their children. In the organization, leader creates family atmosphere, acting as father to his/her subordinates, develops close interpersonal relationships with the subordinates, to detail is familiar with their personal problems and family situation, maintains authority, giving importance to differences of status.

Also this study reviews the supervisor-subordinate relationship as integral part to understand the complex construct leadership. Recent revisions of theories for leadership describe a life-cycle of a leader-follower relationship, which begins trial than proceeds in a more reliable and binding relationship or remains fixed at the initial stage[13]. However, every relationship starts with low quality but the leader should continue to develop relations to higher levels. There are four supervisor-subordinate relationships: (1) Affective supervisor-subordinate relationship in which supervisor and subordinates develop close interpersonal relations and emotive attachment; (2) Instrumental supervisor-subordinate relationship is based on submission of a reward or punishment, instrumental behavior is motivated of goal achievement; (3) Contractual supervisor-subordinate relationship, in which supervisors and subordinates perform their duties specified in advance of organizational regulation; (4) Obligatory supervisor-subordinate relationship in which leader shows authority by giving directions and orders, that their subordinates should follow.

According to Eagly, Karau, Miner and Johnson[1] women are less than men impose its authority on others. Also Eagly and Johnson[1] suggested that women displayed more democratic and interpersonal behavior than men.

The purpose of this paper is to test prior theoretical background regarding culture's and gender's influence on attitudes toward collectivism-individualism and power distance, paternalism and supervisor-subordinate relationship. To reach the purpose it is necessary to answer the question: are there differences in orientations toward collectivism-individualism and power distance, paternalism and supervisor subordinate relationship among male and female managers from Serbia and Macedonia? The authors discuss possible explanations for the following results (a) orientation toward collectivism-individualism, paternalism and supervisor-subordinate relationship among managers

from two cultures: Serbian and Macedonian, (b) orientation toward collectivism-individualism, paternalism and supervisor-subordinate relationship among male and female managers, (c) orientation toward collectivism-individualism, paternalism and supervisor-subordinate relationship among male and female managers from Serbia and Macedonia.

The authors discuss possible explanations for differences in attitudes toward collectivism-individualism and power differences, paternalism and supervisor-subordinate relationship (a) based on culture, (b) based on gender and (c) based on the interaction of culture and gender.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Hypotheses

H1: Macedonian managers score higher on orientation toward cultural dimension collectivism-individualism and power distance, paternalism, affective, instrumental, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinates relationship than managers from Serbia.

H2: Male managers score higher on orientation toward cultural dimension collectivism-individualism and power distance, paternalism, affective, instrumental, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinates relationship than female.

H3: There are significant differences on orientation toward cultural dimension collectivism-individualism and power distance, paternalism, affective, instrumental, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinates

relationship between male and female managers from Macedonia and Serbia.

### 2.2. Participants

The questionnaires were completed by 200 managers, 100 managers from Serbia and 100 managers from Macedonia from different industries. The average age of the participants is 42 years (SD=9.18), the youngest is 22 years old and the oldest 67 years. The structure by gender, education and level of management is adequate in both groups (Table 1).

#### Procedure

The researchers distributed questionnaires individually to examine workplaces with pointing at the object of research that is the impact of organizational practices among cultures over managerial attitudes toward working and socio-cultural environment in Serbia and Macedonia. The instrument was obtained through back-translation procedures based on English version.

A 12 item scale developed by Dorfman and Howell (1998) measured individualism-collectivism and power-distance orientations; a 6-item scale from Pellegrini and Scandura (2006) measured paternalism and 12-item scale constructed by Jiang (2005) measured affective, instrumental, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinate relationship. The participants were requested to give answers on a six point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree).

**Table 1.** Demographics of the participants

|                     |                    | Serbia                 |     | Macedonia              |     |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|
|                     |                    | Number of participants | %   | Number of Participants | %   |
| Gender              | Male               | 74                     | 74% | 75                     | 75% |
|                     | Female             | 26                     | 26% | 25                     | 25% |
| Education           | Primary school     | 2                      | 2%  | 0                      | 0%  |
|                     | High school        | 14                     | 14% | 11                     | 11% |
|                     | College            | 21                     | 21% | 38                     | 38% |
|                     | Bachelor           | 53                     | 53% | 46                     | 46% |
|                     | Postgraduate level | 10                     | 10% | 5                      | 5%  |
| Level of Management | First-line         | 34                     | 34% | 31                     | 31% |
|                     | Middle             | 66                     | 66% | 37                     | 37% |
|                     | Top level          | 0                      | 0%  | 32                     | 32% |
| Ethnicity           | Macedonian         | 0                      | 0%  | 50                     | 50% |
|                     | Albanian           | 0                      | 0%  | 50                     | 50% |
|                     | Serbian            | 96                     | 96% | 0                      | 0%  |
|                     | Montenegrin        | 2                      | 2%  | 0                      | 0%  |
|                     | Bosnian            | 1                      | 1%  | 0                      | 0%  |
|                     | Slovak             | 1                      | 1%  | 0                      | 0%  |

**Table 2.** Results of multivariate analyze of variance

| Source             | Variable                   | Sum of square | Df | Mean square | F      | Sig.  |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------|----|-------------|--------|-------|
| Gender             | Collectivistic orientation | 0.73          | 1  | 0.73        | 0.05   | 0.83  |
|                    | Power distance orientation | 51.06         | 1  | 51.06       | 2.15   | 0.14  |
|                    | Paternalism                | 7.36          | 1  | 7.36        | 0.24   | 0.62  |
|                    | Affective relationship     | 1.60          | 1  | 1.60        | 0.19   | 0.66  |
|                    | Instrumental relationship  | 0.04          | 1  | 0.04        | 0.01   | 0.94  |
|                    | Contractual relationship   | 0.58          | 1  | 0.58        | 0.05   | 0.82  |
|                    | Obligatory relationship    | 50.23         | 1  | 50.23       | 3.385  | 0.67  |
| Culture            | Collectivistic orientation | 2808.60       | 1  | 2808.60     | 181.95 | 0.00  |
|                    | Power distance orientation | 524.59        | 1  | 524.59      | 22.14  | 0.00  |
|                    | Paternalism                | 2.28          | 1  | 2.28        | 0.075  | 0.78  |
|                    | Affective relationship     | 7.04          | 1  | 7.04        | 0.83   | 0.36  |
|                    | Instrumental relationship  | 0.01          | 1  | 0.01        | 0.00   | 0.96  |
|                    | Contractual relationship   | 508.35        | 1  | 508.35      | 46.83  | 0.00  |
|                    | Obligatory relationship    | 83.05         | 1  | 83.05       | 5.60   | 0.02  |
| Gender and Culture | Collectivistic orientation | 2.92          | 1  | 2.92        | 0.15   | 0.70  |
|                    | Power distance             | 11.94         | 1  | 11.94       | 0.50   | 0.48  |
|                    | Paternalism                | 60.93         | 1  | 60.93       | 2.005  | 0.16  |
|                    | Affective relationship     | 3.445         | 1  | 3.445       | 0.41   | 0.525 |
|                    | Instrumental relationship  | 4.06          | 1  | 4.06        | 0.59   | 0.44  |
|                    | Contractual relationship   | 24.115        | 1  | 24.115      | 2.22   | 0.14  |
|                    | Obligatory relationship    | 47.37         | 1  | 47.37       | 3.19   | 0.08  |

### 3. Results

Table 2 presents main and interaction effects of culture and gender on collectivistic and power distance cultural orientation, paternalism and affective, instrumental, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinate relationship. Regarding the main effects of culture and gender, there are differences in the mean values of culture on collectivistic orientation ( $F(1, 98) = 181.95; p < 0.01$ ), power distance orientation ( $F(1, 98) = 22.14; p < 0.01$ ), contractual ( $F(1, 98) = 46.83; p < 0.01$ ) and obligatory ( $F(1, 98) = 5.60; p < 0.05$ ) supervisor-subordinates relationship. Macedonian managers score higher on collectivistic orientation and contractual supervisor subordinate relationship than Serbian managers. Furthermore Serbian managers score higher on power distance orientation and obligatory supervisor subordinate relationship than Macedonian managers.

There are no differences in the mean values of gender; also there is no interaction effect of gender and culture on collectivistic and power distance orientation, paternalism, and affective, instrumental, contractual and obligatory supervisor-subordinate relationship.

### 4. Discussion and Implications

The results of this study show that there are cross-cultural differences in organizational attitudes among managers with

different cultural background, Serbia and Macedonia. Nevertheless the results confirm the claim that local culture has influenced in each domain and in organizational practices. There are not found differences in attitudes towards cultural orientations, paternalism, leader-member relationship among men and women managers from Serbia and Macedonia.

Macedonian managers score higher on collectivistic cultural orientation than Serbian managers. According to [12] Macedonians live in the expressed collectivistic cultural environment.

Serbian managers score higher on power distance cultural orientation. According to Janicijevic [15], the high power distance in Serbian national culture favors autocratic managerial behavior, taking responsibility and risks, as well making decisions.

Serbian managers show higher obligatory relationship than Macedonian managers. Kuzmanovic [22] in a comprehensive study in Serbia and Montenegro, without Kosovo, confirmed that 56.6% of the participants in most cases show authoritativeness, 28.8% show no authoritativeness and 15% show hesitation or mixed orientation. The war and UN sanctions in Serbia gave opportunity to managers for absolute power and a perfect cover for various kinds of abuse, corruptions.

Smith et al. [5] showed that managers in high power distance cultures, their actions are based on formal rules and

procedures. The previous findings showed that Macedonian managers score higher on power distance cultural orientation, also the results in this study showed that they are higher on contractual supervisor-subordinate relationship. Subordinates prefer to give its support to those with power, using legitimate power.

However, after the breakdown of Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Serbia entered in the process of transition, which lasts a very long time, and it is exhausting in any aspect of life. In the current crisis conditions there is increased authoritarian orientation, because of people's frustrations.

## 5. Conclusions

The results of this study showed that there are cross-cultural differences among managers from Serbia and Macedonia. It nevertheless lends support for the notion that local culture influences each human behavior, furthermore influences organizational practices. One of the key findings from this research suggests that male and female managers do not differ much in the leadership attitudes. These results are in favor of reducing gender stereotypes, especially about woman as manager. In addition of the findings is the reasoning of Costa *et al.*[20] that biological differences were not found to explain leadership behaviors of men and women. By identifying significant relationships between culture and managerial orientations, this study established a conceptual framework for future research including more different countries, and the ethnicities within the countries.

According to cross-cultural researchers mapping of cultural differences can serve as a general guide to different people[22]; so the results from this study will contribute to better understanding of cultural differences between neighboring countries, which could enable mutual good and cooperative business relations. Knowledge of obstacles and ways to overcome are very useful for further successful interaction.

To determine normative recommendations for Western investors and business associates who would collaborate with Serbia and Macedonia, besides the need to become familiar with the social values, it is necessary to consider the assumptions about the attitudes of the managers and their leadership styles.

Closer acquaintance of a neighbor contributes to overcoming the conflicts, developing mutual cooperation that is essential for the future of Serbia and Macedonia.

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