Cultural Influences on Business Practices: Motivation, Negotiation, and Partnership in Japanese Companies

Longxinyang Li[1]

[1] University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom

Correspondence: Longxinyang Li, University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom.

Abstract

On this report, business practice that influenced by culture has been discussed from motivation, negotiation and partnership. From motivation perspective, the extrinsic and intrinsic needs will be satisfied by different methods due to culture. Also, gender and job attitude have effect on the motivation of Japan company. From negotiation perspective, company will influence by the high-context society which will affect their methods of negotiation. Face and silence which are common phenomenon in Japan will be discussed on the function of them on the negotiation. From partnership perspective, some conflicts due to cultural incompatibility and some special organizational culture like TPS will be discussed.

Keywords: intercultural business strategy, Japan, GlOBE model, cultural conflict, motivation, negotiation, partnership, Hofstede model

1. Introduction

Intercultural management become more common nowadays due to the globalization (Rothlauf, 2015). Global managers will face intercultural challenges when they different culture which make the understanding of local cultures more important than before (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010). It is important that colleagues or counterparts who are from different culture to know some manners firstly which will avoid offending others (Washington, Okoro & Thomas, 2012). Japan plays an important role on today business development, and Japan attracted many companies from outsider, and influence a lot by Zen philosophy, which require diligence and practical spirit (Chiarini, Baccarani & Mascherpa, 2018). Residents on Japan are highly influenced by this philosophy and apply it into daily life. Also, Japan is a web society that always relies on relationship (Lewis, 1996). These characteristics highly influence the management on multinational companies from motivation, negotiation and partnership. When dealing with these parts, people not only need to get familiar with the culture but also they need to negotiate the conflicts between these cultures. So, on this paper, the evaluation of culture on business practices in Japan will be discussed with the support from Hofstede, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner and GLOBE model.

2. Critical Evaluation of the Impact of Culture on Business Practices in Japan

2.1 Motivation

With the development of the globalization, more company use expatriate assignments and more other methods to manage their multinational company (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010). Cappellen and Janssens also point out that during the interdependent process, many companies find that the global manager is essential for the company especially they need to use their work experience to achieve resource integration and find culturally synergistic way of working between countries that have different characteristics. As a global manager, motivating employees will be discussed on the following.

Motivation is essential for the performance measurement of the company, manager should rely on the

characteristics of the culture and develop their leadership style (Ouakouak, Zaitouni & Arya, 2020). Company can motivate employee from extrinsic and intrinsic factor (Herzberg, 1959). From the perspective of extrinsic needs, on the Hofstede (1980), Japanese always consider collectivism which lead to this motivation always focuses on the family which Japanese are really considered. As research showed by Japan Business Federation, when Japan company improve their work-life balance and pension systems, employees are more likely to be make retention on this company (Yamamoto, 2011). And this phenomenon is discussed on the case the case of Mieko Suzuki.

However, intrinsic needs sometimes will be considering more than some monetary items, while people always will emphasize the achievement of accomplishment and functionality (Abbasi, 2008). From the Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner model (1993), the communitarianism of Japan is high. It provides evidence to Japan company that it should be care about the belongness of team. This is mainly because Japan is a web society (Hooker, 2009), they consider the relationship between each other is an essential part when they work. For example, Japan employees should know each members' name before they go to the meeting which will show their concentration on the teammates (Lewis, 1996). Also, if people want to satisfy the intrinsic needs of employees, they cannot hurt the feeling of the employees. These feeling always be called face in Japan, and if people hurt others face, they will feel upset and lose confidence to work (Lewis, 1996).

When consider the need of employees, the social need on Maslow model is important. From the Hofstede model (1980), the individualism of Japan is low (46). Their social needs always achieve by the relationship with their colleagues and friends. Japanese spend nearly 12-13 hours with their colleagues and after working, they will go for drinking with their teammates in order to maintain the relationship with their workers. It also highly shows that Japan is a relationship-based society (Hall, 1976). However, although Maslow model can help Japan company to motivate employees from their dimensions, this model was based on USA situation. USA purses the realization of the individualism which is match the highest level of need on Maslow model, self-actualization while Japan prefers to emphasize the achievement on collectivism (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003). This conflict may influence the application of Maslow model on Japan company.

Motivation also can be seen from the attitude towards job which is highly influenced by the long-term orientation. From Hofstede (1980), it only had four dimensions before he tried to use Chinese Culture Connection and develop the Hofstede into six dimensions (Minkov & Hofstede, 2010). Motivation also can be seen from the attitude towards job which is highly influenced by the long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. These two dimensions can inspire company to encourage workers from long-term plans. Employees' attitude to unstructured is negative which force them to avoid risk and have high demand for security (Cesare & Sadri, 2003). And it is also mentioned that this security always come from the clear goals and rules on their work which will help company keep coherence. An example to support high uncertainty avoidance is Japan company always use one job for entire life to make retention of employees which will bring the job security for the employees (Kato, 2001).

Also, gender should be considered when making motivation (Worthley et al., 2009). When people consider Japanese culture, masculinity-femininity dimension are necessary reflection of Japan culture, and Japan is defined as a masculinity society (Hofstede, 1980) which also is reflected in GLOBE research in terms of gender egalitarianism (2004). This can be shown on that the average salary of Japan female is lower than males, which is unfair between males and females, and management always has bias on females about their ability (Hirokawa et al., 2001). In the traditional perspective about Japan women, they set stereotype that always think women spend more time on family and man are reaching the ranks of managements (Izumi et al., 2013). However, in the value of gender egalitarianism is relatively high which means people seek to the equal on the GLOBE (2004). So, if company wants to motivate females, they may need to change the salary and the traditional view about women in the workplace. What is more, women analyzed in the research showed that they will prefer to motivate from some networks and job security (Renshaw, 1999). Females will work more efficient on a balanced relationship with cooperators which is highly influences by the collectivism from dimensions of Hofstede (1980).

Although Japan is masculinity society and ranks the highest on the masculinity of Hofstede (1980), the attitude to women in their culture has changed a lot due to the capacity of labor and change of some laws in Japan (Yamamoto, 2011). More women are needed and have more opportunities to enter the higher level of management. From the case of Mieko Suzuki, when managers try to motivate them, they may use more plans to satisfy female employees by some training plans. For example, some special management plans for training women already have been applied in the Hewlett-Packard (Worthley et al., 2009).

2.2 Negotiation

Negotiation seems special in Japan. Japan is a high-context society (Hall, 1976), they will avoid using clear words and message to transfer their information. An example representing high context is that Japanese seldom will say "no" during their negotiation (Adair, Okumura & Brett, 2001). But negotiation always rely on

information, during Japanese meeting, they prefer to hide information and the outsiders will not get sufficient information like insiders (Yoshimura, 1997). But it does not mean that Japan do not have strong emphasize on information sharing, Japan will use amount of offers to indirectly transfer their preference, which will help Japan company achieve joint gains (Brett et al., 1998). This can be seen as the collectivist from Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1993). People in Japan prefer to use collective opinions to make decision (Luo, 2008).

Also, Japan has high possibility to use silence as a bargaining tactic during their negotiation (Graham, 1993). This is a reflection of neutral from Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1993) which does not show their real emotion to others. Japanese endurance is significant on negotiation, they can wait a long time for a deal (Kumar, 1999). While silence may have negative effect on negotiation on some aspect, this means silence will interpret conversational rhythm which makes other people feel uncomfortable.

When making a negotiation, face should be considered. Face is a reflection of collectivism on Hofstede (1980). On the face-negotiation theory, Ting-Toomey (1988) told people that face can be divided into self-face and other-face, Japanese prefer to consider the other-face. They try to reduce the conflicts between others to achieving respects of others' faces (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). So, when having conflicts, people may solve them privately not publicly or just compromise to the conflicts (Merkin, 2006). Also, it is worth mentioning that when there are conflicts happening, Japan as a relationship-focus society (Hooker, 2008), employers will prefer to use teamwork will help them to solve their conflicts (Gesteland, 2019). Merkin (2006) said that using cooperative facework will be effective, this is mainly because Japanese will give priority to the relationship when conflicts happened, and do not want to break the relationship with others.

Also, negotiation will be affected from hierarchy. Hofstede (1980) defined that people in the Japan society accepted the power is allocated unequally. And this also can be found in the GLOBE analysis showed that power distance really gets a high score in practice part (House, 2004). High status may enforce their thoughts to low status during the process of negotiation, so Japan company will highly be sensitive to their status during this process, and if the hierarchy is not clear, they may try to use sufficient issues to make the situation be clear about the hierarchy (Tinsley, 2001). From research of Graham (1993), Japan prefers to explain the details of the situation firstly in order to handle the situation and make them on a higher status.

Conflicts is inevitable on the operation of company especially to some international joint ventures, how to solve these conflicts is important for company to think about. Japan is reactive society which is recognized as a good listener and always is patient to others (Lewis, 1996). Japanese seldom will show their angry publicly and they will ignore their own feeling to face-saving (Ting-Toomey, 2012). Also, the problems always happened between the managers who are from different countries. The characteristics of culture influence the style that they solve conflicts, Japan seldom use some assertiveness to face the problems (House, 2004). Like the managers of Japanese company prefer not to use detailed contracts and directly law to solve some conflicts (Pothukuchi et al., 2002). And Japanese are more likely to use intermediates to solve their conflicts. This is because Japan always will recognize it that influences the harmony of the Confucian cultures which the obligation and loyalty to friends and family is more important than the application of rules (Hooker, 2009). Using human resource system is essential for Japanese which is due to the relationship-based society, and it will be seen as a buffer to solve conflicts (Brannen & Salk, 2000).

2.3 Partnership

Partnership always relates to different countries, and they always will face poor performance and high risk which are due to cultural conflicts (Pothukuchi et al., 2002). If other countries want to enter the Japan market, there will be several conditions that they need to consider.

Cultural incompatibility will increase the possibility of failure of the merger and acquisition. If companies would like to continue their partnership, they should make cultural assessment. From Hofstede model (1980), people can find that Japan gets high score on uncertainty avoidance (92). Japanese will prefer to have some cooperate experience with the company before they want to take over, which will know the rituals and behaviors of this company in advance. It will reduce risk and help acquirer to justify whether the acquiree is suitable (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993). Pettigrew and Whipp model's also mention that knowing the details of organizational culture is an important point when making strategic change especially some partnership (Stetler et al., 2007). High uncertainty avoidance leads to some Japanese partnerships use focus group and questionnaires to get familiar with what employees think and whether they can accept the new management before partnership, which can decrease the possibility of barriers on effective cooperation between companies. (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993).

Although Hofstede and GLOBE provide much information about the national culture, company in Japan always has their own organizational culture which is not clearly shown on these models. For example, Hofstede does not provide any information about the IBM corporate culture (McSweeney, 2002). Also, during the GLOBE, it does not provide a clear distinguish between organizational culture and social culture (Hofstede, 2006). So, when

considering partnership, companies should rely on different organizational culture to analyze which will increase the possibility of partnership success. Japan always creates a special organizational culture compared to other countries' companies which is called lean production (Lee, 2004). The lean production always is influenced by in-group collectivism. On GLOBE, in-group collectivism is really high in practice and people hope to be more collectivism in the future. Also, this is also a reflection of future-orientation on leadership. The Toyota is an example that they even make their own culture about the production called Toyota production system (TPS) which not only require the high quality of the products but also train the ability of their employee to solve the problems (Chiarini, Baccarani & Mascherpa, 2018). During this process, employees will focus more on the teamwork and keep one vision of the company (Hall, 2004). Because many global managers sometimes feel confused about the decision between two companies. So, when keeping the same vision, TPS will be seen as a "common language" between the two companies and help them work more like a team (Brunet-Thornton, Koža & Bureš, 2016).

Also, Japan company emphasize *Genba*, which requires all managers should use the practice to check the statistics (Chiarini, Baccarani & Mascherpa, 2018). This activity is influenced by long-term orientation on Hofstede (1980), Japan gets 88 scores on this model. This spirit aims less at the achievement of some monetary objectives but focus more on pursing the improvement of the processes that has prolong influence on company (Deming 1993, p. 63). An example of this is that Japan company try to satisfy customers need to achieve good reputation although they may need to give up some short-term profit. In other words, because managers will require to make plans which make all actions clear on the *Genba*, this also can be seen as uncertainty avoidance (Beldona, Inkpen & Phatak, 1998).

In addition, partnership should be careful about diffuse culture of Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner on Japan. (Mohan G., 2013) *"What many foreign companies often see as impenetrable barriers to Japanese business are more often strong bonds of personal trust."* The method of daily work of Japan manager always relies on the relationship. And diffuse makes people vague the boundary of life and work and address problems indirectly. Employees may need to do overtime work when there is a temporary product plan which is unsuitable for some countries (Brannen & Salk, 2000). They will use some private time to socialize with colleagues. It is also approved by the case study of Mieko Suzuki; She always stays at the office to work overtime even work on holidays in order to response the emails.

The style of management also will have effect on the partnership. Consultative decision-making system always is applied by Japanese managers who hope to reach a consensus between each hierarchy (Pascale, 1978). And they are less likely to take responsibility when they make decision which can be seen as relying on the team (Luo, 2008). From GLOBE, the majority of Japanese managers use charismatic, and team orientated to manage their employees (House, 2004). And these styles of leaderships always influence by collectivism on Hofstede (1980) and particularism on Trompenaars (1993) which will focus more on each relationship and all of relationship should be considered. A business example from a joint venture between German and Japan, German managers can make some decisions on their daily operation while Japan managers should report every detail about their production to higher level manager and their power on decisioning is limited (Brannen & Salk, 2000).

So, all these cultural views will get suggestion to those who want to make partnership with Japan, they should respect the traditional view about production, and improve their management by reviewing the ground-level work regularly in order to handle real situations (Hall, 2004).

3. Reflection on Feedback

Throughout the Intercultural Business Perspectives module, I have reflected on feedback received for my group presentation and Assignment 1. Here I focus on the three key areas of feedback received and outline the actions that I have taken to improve my work.

3.1 Read More Wide

Feedback from the assignment 1 and presentation showed the content do not include enough high-quality resource to support my opinion.

I reviewed many journal articles and books from the library. Through these articles, they provided me with many different opinions about how company should do to improve their motivation and how to increase the efficiency of cooperation during their negotiation and partnership.

For example, during the partnership discussion, I got support from the Ting-Toomey' articles who wrote many articles about the face-negotiation theory and they give me different perspectives about how face can be used to help negotiation.

3.2 Business Example

Feedback from the presentation showed that our group do not use sufficient business case to make our content

more detailed.

To address this, more business examples have been added to the report. On "motivation" section, I used the story of Mieko Suzuki to support the point about work-life balance. And on "negotiation" section, how America and Japan company negotiate has been used as a business example to support how high-content and low-content influence the negotiation. And on "partnership" section, Toyota has been applied as a source of lean production to identify the organizational culture of Japan.

3.3 Critical Thinking

Feedback from the assignment 1 showed that critical thinking was lack when considering the question, answer was more descriptive than critical.

To address this, I compared Hofstede and GLOBE on the dimension of masculinity that Hofstede is lack of the expectation of people on this dimension. Also, on "negotiation" section, I add the disadvantage of the Hofstede to help discuss on the organizational culture. In addition, when using some dimensions, I try to link them more with other models and make comparison. Like the Herzberg and Maslow model of the motivation to support why company motivate employees on some methods.

4. Conclusion

Overall, it can be found that culture really have effect on business practices in Japan. And it also gives many suggestions for global manager to solve the intercultural challenges during the process of motivation, negotiation and partnership. However, these models provide us many dimensions to consider culture, but they all have some shortcomings on their surveys. Like Hofstede (1980) may have questions on their questionnaire and only focus on IBM (Mcsweeney, 2002), and Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner has statistics problems (Hofstede & Regout, 1996). So, if company depend on them, they should compare them and practice more.

Intercultural challenges bring company new opinions about how to improve their daily operation and some policies which will encourage employee to work more effective (Vveinhardt & Dabravalskytė, 2014). Also, because communication is culture-bound, knowing the intercultural difficulties will help company to make cooperation more easily and increase the possibility of the success international trade when they know some rituals and manners about other company (Washington, Okoro & Thomas, 2012).

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