

Chapter 12

National Culture Influence on Organisational Trauma: A Conceptual Framework Review

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ABSTRACT

Increasing human interaction creates extra stress on individuals and organisations as well. The nature of such stress results in economic shocks and large societal and organisational traumas. Although recent social science is capable of addressing the complexity of international interplay such as culture, acts of multinational corporations or cross-cultural team management, little attention was paid on the cultural aspects of removing organisational trauma. Since the 1980s, social science has experienced lively development in cross-cultural studies via the work of Hofstede, the Globe Group, the World Value Survey initiative, Trompenaars, Schwartz and others. Although major models are sufficient for defining national culture, there is lack of work explaining the managerial implications for crisis management or mitigating trauma in organisations. The authors of this chapter intend to critically review the latest literature on national culture, while discussing the relevant models and introducing the theoretic framework applicable for crisis/ trauma management.

INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or losing a family member have a strong psychological impact not only on individuals, but societies and organizations as well (Dutton, et al., 2002). Trauma's role in having a negative influence on the national culture was described in the example of Saadat Hasan Manto's genocide (Saint, 2012). The author Saint (2012) argues that under extreme external pressure, cultural norms can be re-forged. In his review, Norburn (1987) suggests that managerial attitudes, beliefs or

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values are a function of their country of origin. He (Norburn & Hall, 1987) also claims that it is not an individual decision, but rather the national culture of the decision maker which impacts that organization. Culture plays a crucial role in recovering from organizational trauma (Brewis & Ozbilgin, 2013).

“A program of the mind” (Hofstede, 1990) is a definition introduced by Hofstede for the concept of culture. Although there is a vivid debate on the definition, application, and robustness of culture as a concept, one is generally used in the literature: the importance and impact of the culture on the behaviour of individuals, communities, countries or organizations. The concept of culture shapes social sciences and is gaining significant momentum in the field of management too.

This chapter aims to explore conceptual models of national culture and their relationship to organizations and their traumas and trauma recovery. This is important, as one’s occupation has a direct influence on their mental health (Champagne, 2009). An extensive literature review will be carried out to fulfil the goal of the research. The desired outcome is a conceptual map comparing major national culture-related studies (such as Hofstede, Schwartz, Trompenaars and Globe) and their influence on organizational traumas and mitigating them. We also intend to introduce a critical discussion of the concepts of national culture vs. the corporate stream of thoughts culture.

BACKGROUND

National Culture vs. Corporate Culture

The cultural concept debate started in 1955 when Herskovitz (1955) suggested culture to be “the human-made part of the environment”, and Shweder and LeVine (1984) introduced the importance of the shared meaning of cultural systems, or the “Collective programming of a mind” as Hofstede defines culture. An important aspect of this view of culture is the collective understanding of it. Perhaps the most complex understanding of culture was demonstrated in the original study by Rohner (1984) “the largest unit of a territorially bounded, multigenerational population recruited largely through sexual reproduction, and organized around a common culture and a common social system”, describing the social system also known as society. He also describes culture as “the totality of equivalent and complementary learned the meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segments of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next”. Rohner’s definition is supported by Lenug (2006) and Redding & Witt (2009).

Lively academic discussion has resulted in two major schools of thoughts. The collective centric scholars such as Hofstede tend to generalize their observations into a group or national cultural behaviours. Others lead by Rohner tilt toward the importance of the individual culture definer. Their definition of culture suppresses the idea of creating “cultural boxes”. Such an elementary cultural debate might be seen through the literature from leading international business or management studies (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991; Leung & Bond, 2006; Rohner, 1984; Tung & Verbeke, 2010). This academic discourse leads to the question of which of the streams is more sustainable for management studies, and why?

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