

## Group Behaviors in Cross-Cultural Contexts: In-Group Relationship, Leadership, and Communication

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### Abstract

Organizational effectiveness tends to depend on how well groups in the organization function especially when the organization experiences a cultural diversity. The purpose of this study was to identify influences of national culture on group process behaviors. International and cross-cultural studies on the group process behaviors were reviewed to find how group behaviors are effectuated in cross-cultural contexts and what the differences of the behaviors are in various cultures. Cultural difference was analyzed according to four Hofstede's national culture dimensions. Findings suggest that national culture is likely to influence the group process behaviors in different ways.

**Keywords:** *organization development, group, process behaviors, cross-cultural context, national culture*

### I. Introduction

Organizational issues are usually attributed to the conflicts with environmental change(Cummings & Worley, 2004). To prepare or resolve organizational issues, organization development(OD) requires extensive and systematic understanding of the

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phenomena revealed in the organization. Tremendous changes in politics, economy, and society resulting from globalization have been pushing many organizations to a continuation of adjustment or sometimes to a transformation to survive changes of the business environment(Marquardt, Berger, & Loan, 2004). Thus, during a planned organizational change, it is important for organizations to diagnose what has been changed inside and outside the organizations and to carry out effective interventions for organizational changes in a strategic and systemic process(McLean, 2006).

Marquardt, Berger and Loan(2004) identified workplace changes caused by globalization: working in different cultures, different types of leadership and decision-making, working with culturally diverse people, and retaining effective communication. For these changes, they argued that it is necessary to fully understand cultural differences and how the differences impact the workplace. Especially, leaders, HRD professionals, and change agents should prepare to diagnose the issues caused by changes and to design, develop, and implement appropriate solutions for organizational effectiveness(Burke, 2008; Cummings & Worley, 2004; McLean, 2006).

Organizational effectiveness heavily depends on how well groups in the organization function through cooperation between members as the result a group produces can be greater than the sum of each individual's capacity(Burke, 2008; Cummings & Worley, 2004). There are several factors that influence group effectiveness. In general, it is known that performance and satisfaction in a group depend on the group structure, group members' abilities, available resources, organizational system, group tasks, and group behaviors(Gladstein, 1984; McGrath, Arrow, & Berdahl, 2000). In theoretical models of group effectiveness, group behaviors are usually regarded as process behaviors that are placed between input(e.g., structure, abilities, and resources) and output(Gladstein, 1984; Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005).

Different styles of group behaviors resulting from different cultures tend to cause miscommunications, conflicts, and disengagements in the organization(Marquardt et al., 2004). In addition, research, interventions, and activities for group dynamics that are well-applied in one culture may not be useful in different cultural groups(McLean, 2010). However, despite many studies on group-level OD and group effectiveness conducted in management, psychology, and human resource development(HRD), few dealt with group behaviors in various cultural contexts or integrated the influence of cultural difference on the behaviors.

In this study, national culture was employed to determine cross-cultural contexts. As the most frequently used way to classify culture in social science is using

nationality, employing national culture enabled the researcher to find sufficient literature for this literature review study. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to identify influences of national culture on group process behaviors. International and cross-cultural studies on the group process behaviors were reviewed to find how group behaviors are effectuated in cross-cultural contexts and what the differences of the behaviors are in various cultures. Cultural difference was analyzed according to four of Hofstede's seven national culture dimensions: individualism versus collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Long-term versus short-term orientation, indulgence versus restraint, and monumentalism versus self-effacement, the recently proposed dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010), were excluded because little literature addressing these dimensions was found for this study.

The research questions that guide this study were:

1. Does national culture result in differences in group process behaviors?
2. What is the impact of national cultures on group process behaviors?

Findings of this paper will contribute not only to the consideration of cultural differences when OD practitioners or change agents plan group interventions, but also to the development of indigenous HRD approaches appropriate to their own cultural context.

## II. Theoretical Background

In a group, individuals interact with themselves and organizational and environmental contexts. These interactions influence the group, group members, and their environments in ways more complicated than is merely seen (Ilgen et al., 2005). As, in theories on group effectiveness, it is generally regarded that a group as an entity in organizations is influenced by both the individuals in the group and the external environment of the group (Gladstein, 1984; Kozlowski et al., 1999; Marks et al., 2001). Therefore, it may be obvious that cultural contexts of group members, and those of a group itself are important factors affecting team or group behaviors. As theoretical backgrounds of this study, group process behaviors in the input-process-output model and national culture were involved.

## 1. Group Process Behaviors: In the input-process-output model

According to the degree and scope of organizational characteristics and functions, the OD levels can be generally classified as individual, group, and organization although there may be more than the three levels in an actual OD situation because organizational constituents between each level exist, such as interpersonal and intergroup(Burke, 2008). Groups consist of people with intentions and resources and include two functions: to perform a group project and to satisfy group members' needs(McGrath & Tschan, 2004). HRD practitioners or change agents should pay attention to employees' feelings and experiences in the groups considering the best way for the group effectiveness, because groups usually reveal resisting behaviors when a change occurs which they cannot embrace(Burke, 2008).

For better understanding of dynamics in group and group effectiveness, several researchers developed frameworks of groups and teams(McGrath et al., 2000). Among them, one of the most well-known and widely used models of group effectiveness is the input-process-output model(e.g., Gladstein, 1984; Kozlowski et al., 1999) although there are criticisms that the model is too simple to explain group phenomena(Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002), and input and process are not clearly distinctive(Marks et al., 2001). In some research, input is replaced as structure(Gladstein, 1984), and process is exchangeable with mediator(Ilgen et al., 2005). In general, input includes skills, knowledge, work condition, organization structure, vision(goal), role, rewards, control, etc. Process consists of intragroup interaction(e.g., communication, in-group relationship, supportiveness) and intergroup management. Group performance and satisfaction are included in output of group effectiveness. The three components in the model reveal linear paths from input to output while input can influence both process and output(Gladstein, 1984), and a new input follows output because group dynamics are not a single round but cyclical(Ilgen et al., 2005). As the focus of this study was not on intergroup relationships but in-group behaviors, intergroup management in group process was excluded.

Group process behaviors are to maintain a sound group life and to enable a group to achieve its goals(Gladstein, 1984). It is generally regarded that encouragement of open communication, smooth relationships, and supportiveness leads to improved group effectiveness(Hackman, 1987). The effectiveness of group process behaviors can be seen through group-level OD interventions. Many researchers found team effectiveness as an output of the OD interventions used for group process behaviors, such as team building, process consultation, and self-directed work teams(Guzzo,

Jette, & Katzell, 1985; Kaplan, 1979; Kauffeld, 2006; Lipshitz & Sherwood, 1978; Muthusamy, Wheeler, & Simmons, 2005; Wall et al., 1986; Woodman & Wayne, 1985).

It was found that group process behaviors correspond with team/group leadership actions. According to Hill(2007)'s model for team/group leadership, internal leadership actions include coaching, collaborating, and managing conflict. Supportiveness in group process behaviors may be enabled by the sound in-group leadership actions, and group process behaviors are related with in-group leadership. Thus, in addition to in-group relationship and communication, leadership came into one of the foci of this study for group process behaviors. To explore cultural impacts on group process behaviors, the researcher employed national culture as follows.

## 2. National Culture

Hofstede(2001) regarded culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”(p. 9). He stated that each individual belongs to various groups that have various levels of culture from organizational to national level.

National culture is a collection of common ways of thinking and acting in a country, distinct from other countries(Marquardt et al., 2004). One might question whether artificial country borders are appropriate for such cultural distinctions as a nation might involve different groups that have dissimilar histories, language, customs, and religions. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov(2010), however, argued that nations contain power toward integration of mass media, laws, education, politics, sports, and economy so that people from a nation may be distinguished from those from another.

There are several value frameworks to understand and compare cultures. Hall(1976) suggested the high and low context dimension and the cultural dimensions Trompenaar(1994) proposed are usually referred to in cross-cultural practices. Hofstede(2001) developed a cultural taxonomy through his extensive empirical studies. Schwartz(1994) proposed ten cultural dimensions to measure individual values recognized across cultures. Meyer et al.(2012) developed a cultural classification, Global Organizational and Behavioral Effectiveness(GLOBE), to test managerial behaviors. Among these cultural frames, this study employed Hofstede's framework. As the focus of this study is not on the cultural dimensions but on OD interventions associated with cultures, adopting the most widely-used cultural classification in social science helps clarify the influences of culture.

Hofstede(2001) posited four dimensions of national cultures: power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. He identified a fifth dimension of national culture, long-term versus short-term orientation, while using the Chinese Values Survey(Hofstede, 2001) and more recently identified the sixth and seventh dimensions, indulgence versus restraint through collaborative work with Minkov using the World Values Survey(Hofstede et al., 2010). However, those recent dimensions have not been widely used in research. Although several scholars criticize that Hofstede's research is outdated and has methodological limitations(Baskerville, 2003; Blodgett, Bakir, & Rose, 2008; Helgstrand & Stuhlmacher, 1999; Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges, & Sully de Luque, 2006; Lim, 2001; Orr & Hauser, 2008), his model is still the most influential in cultural research in social science(Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). In this study, to identify the influence of national culture on group process behaviors, the researcher employed four out of the seven national culture dimensions power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance.

<Table II-1> Dimensions of National Culture according to Hofstede

Dimension	Description
Power distance	The extent to which power is distributed equally or unequally
Collectivism vs. individualism	The extent to which relationship between individuals is loose or tight
Femininity vs. masculinity	The extent of assertiveness or modesty
Uncertainty avoidance	The extent to which individuals feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations

Source: Hofstede et al. (2010).

### III. Methods

For a comprehensive literature review, first, the researcher specified as keywords in-group relationship, leadership, communication, and culture. Literature published after 1980 was searched using the keywords and their synonyms and similar terms. The search databases used were ERIC, Business Source Complete, Human Resources Abstracts, ABI/Inform, Academic Search Complete, and Google

Scholar. All the literature that include culture with at least one group process behavior description as keywords was involved. The literature was also identified through references found in the identified articles. Through the selection process focusing on abstracts, findings, and discussion, 139 articles, book chapters, and books were identified and reviewed. The contents of the literature were analyzed by the researcher to find appropriate answers to the research questions. First, contents related to group process behaviors in cultural contexts were summarized. Then, using a deductive approach, each segment of the contents was categorized according to the three group process behaviors and four cultural dimensions.

## IV. Findings

Through a review of the literature, differences in group process behaviors by cultural and cross-cultural contexts and what national cultures influence group process behaviors were identified.

### 1. In-Group Relationship

One of the salient characteristics of a group may be social interactions in which two or more people are involved. In other words, group success requires proper cooperation based on member interactions (Greenberg, 2010). In a group, employees can gain skills in interpersonal relations, such as communications, teaching, and coaching, and those new skills are expected to spread over all group members (Alpander & Lee, 1995). Group relationships can also provide members with stability and a sense of belonging which help them value the group and working as a unit (Greenberg, 2010).

However, it had been known especially in the West that each member's contributions to the group tasks in a collaborative setting tend to be less than the contributions to the same tasks in an individual setting (Shepperd, 1993). Social loafing, in which less effort is put in to achieve a goal when people work in a group than when they work alone, is an obvious phenomenon which can happen in group work (Erez & Somech, 1996). Generally, social loafing can be mitigated by the presence of familiar members, the use of specific goals, intra-group communication, and incentives (Erez & Somech, 1996).

Although social loafing had been regarded as a universal phenomenon in a group, after the 1990s, researchers discovered that the extent to which people contribute to group tasks could vary in culture(e.g., Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; Tavakoli, Keenan, & Crnjak-Karanovic, 2003). In their study with multiple ethnic groups in the United States, such as Anglo American, Asian, Hispanic, and African American, Cox et al.(1991) uncovered that the more collectivistic, the more the group members are cooperative in doing a group task. To identify cross-cultural differences of contributions to group tasks, Earley(1993) conducted an experiment with managers from different countries. In this study, it turned out that in the collectivistic cultures of Israel and China, managers performed well when they work with their colleagues while managers from the U.S., a country with a strong individualistic culture, performed well when working alone. Supporting these two studies, Chatman and Barsade(1995) found that in collectivistic cultures, individuals tend to work with many people and emphasize contributions to the team performance rather than individual achievement. Erez and Somech(1996) also found that individuals who showed a strong independent personality carried out less group performance than interdependent individuals. Interdependent individuals enhanced contributions to their group performance even though there was the absence of group goals, communication, and incentives. Kirkman and Shapiro(2001) discovered that individuals from highly collectivistic cultures were more productive, cooperative, and empowered when they felt comfortable with the members. Through their study that compared groups in Croatia and the United States, Tavakoli et al.(2003) found that individuals from Croatia(collectivistic culture) are more expected to behave as part of a group that influence them to support group needs and interests than those from the U.S.(individual culture).

Sometimes, purposes of relationships in groups differ by culture. In a strong power distance culture, people tend to have close relationships with their supervisors because those relationships often relate to hiring, promotion, and financial rewards(Lehmann, 2009). Employees often focus on face-saving for their supervisors because that affects relationships with supervisors in the Korean culture(Choi, 2004; Jeon, 1990). According to Choi(2004), although, in large power distance situations, face-saving behaviors do not directly affect the performance evaluations in the organization, they are closely connected to support, attitudes, and recognition of their supervisors. In cross-cultural contexts, different social status, such as age, rank, title, and gender can be a critical factor that influences group relationships. In Brazil where organizations present a high power

distance and masculine type of control and authority, people tend to regard hierarchical relationship as important in organizations even though they have close relationships with their co-workers (Garibaldi de Hilal, 2006). People from Turkey of high power distance culture are likely to show obliging behaviors for their superiors accepting and following opinions or perspectives of the superiors because the subordinates do not want to break their team harmony and relationships (Ozkalp, Sungur, & Ozdemir, 2009).

In feminine cultures, employees tend to think that workplace is where people cooperate to reach the same goal, whereas those from masculine cultures take achievements from a group competition for granted (Hofstede et al., 2010). People from a masculine culture are more likely to have strong willingness to challenge at work, which relates to self-concept, affecting work performance and achievement (Kim & McLean, 2013). In a study with Australian and South Asian, Niles (1995) found that people from Australia (a masculine culture) regarded competition and reaching the top as the central motivations in a group, whereas social approval, such as caring about others' expectations and relationship with group members, significantly motivated the achievement of people from South Asia (feminine culture). Another example on in-group relationship in terms of feminine/masculine culture is from a Hofstede's anecdote. According to Hofstede (2001), several US automobile employees were invited to a Swedish car manufacturer and worked for three weeks. After that, the US employees (from a strong masculine culture) expressed that they did not like working in the Swedish company (in a strong feminine culture) because they have to consider people for their team's harmony. They said that, in the U.S., they just focused on their own work and did not have to care about other people much.

Little was found for uncertainty avoidance on in-group relationship. This may be because a cultural attribute of uncertainty avoidance is not closely associated with people's relationship. What can be inferred is that people from a low uncertainty avoidance culture may be more independent in the group because they tend to reveal greater acceptance of change and more autonomy than those from a high uncertainty avoidance culture (Hofstede et al., 2010).

## **2. Leadership**

Success of an organization is greatly dependent on the quality of its leadership (Greenberg, 2010). Leadership basically concerns caring about individuals

encouraging, motivating, and mentoring them while it also focuses on efficient production and completing jobs(Greenberg, 2010). When organizations consider transformational change, a key role of leaders in OD is to inspire individuals to make commitment to the change(Holbeche, 2006).

As for desirable capacities good leaders should retain, Mintzberg(1998) contended that leaders need to acquire attributes of guiding and directing individuals, coordinating work, encouraging learning, initiating new change, producing results by using given resources, and building values and unity. Schein(1997) presented key characteristics of good leaders for organization change: perception and insight, motivation skills, emotional resilience, abilities to change old assumptions, abilities to facilitate involvement in change, and deep and far vision. Leaders should initiate organization change not only with a clear vision and shared goals and values, but also with a passion for learning because individuals' commitment to learning is critical for a success in organization development(Wang, 2010).

Although definitions, attributes, and roles of leadership founded in different cultures are overall similar to each other(Burke, 2008), cultural empathy and open-mindedness should be emphasized when leadership is executed in cross-cultural contexts(Van Woerkom & de Reuver, 2009). In strong collectivistic, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance cultures, people tend to prefer leadership that emphasizes interpersonal activities rather than one that pushes for producing good outcomes(Yan & Hunt, 2005). According to Yan and Hunt(2005), in China, effective leadership is likely to depend on whether behaviors of leaders fit in the values of the members on leadership. On the other hand, in the U.K., performance outcomes leaders produce are a more important standard for evaluating leadership than leader's behaviors.

In the West, employees tend to recognize a leader who had individual and performance-oriented characteristics as the most effective(Helgstrand & Stuhlmacher, 1999). However, a different result was recently found by Euwema, Wendt, and Emmerik(2007). Their study focused on culturally different recognitions on supportive leadership, in which leaders care for harmonious relationship within groups, and directive leadership, in which task-oriented behaviors are emphasized. The finding of the study was that individuals highly recognize supportive leadership as a set of constructive actions for the effective group function rather than directive leadership regardless of cultures. Interestingly, directive leadership effectively worked in a few groups from non-western cultures involving high collectivistic and strong power distance cultures. This may be because of the

hierarchical relationships in those cultures and the influence of western culture and business systems(Cho & Park, 1998; Cho & Yoon, 2001).

Powers that leaders possess usually come from their formal positions and how members respond to them(Greenberg, 2010). Because bonds and powers in a group are different by culture, relationships between a leader and the group members can also vary by cultural settings. Casimir and Keats(1996) found that, when judging a leader, Chinese Australian individuals are more affected by work environments than Anglo Australian. This may be because of the strong sensitivity of the Chinese Australians to the relationships with their leaders attributed to the collectivistic and high power distance culture. In Mexico where power distance and collectivism are strong, leaders are likely to regard their subordinates as family members(Najera, 2008). Relationship between leaders and the subordinates in this culture is so reciprocal that leaders provide cares and supports meanwhile the subordinates promise their obedience(Najera, 2008). Similar phenomena are observed in other collectivist and high power distance cultures. In Brazil, group members regard relationships with their leaders as a network for reciprocal political purposes(Garibaldi de Hilal, 2006). In Turkey, also a high collectivist and power distance culture, compliance of members to leaders are usually achieved through the tacit and culturally granted power(Pasa, 2000). They obtain members' compliance through taking over the group members' responsibilities as a "caring father"(Pasa, 2000, p. 423). In Greece where a high power distance culture is prevalent, leaders have little conflicts over their relationships with members even though their managerial behaviors are authoritarian(Joiner, 2001).

In masculine cultures, leaders tend to focus on technical problems while leaders from feminine cultures are likely to take care of human problems(Hofstede et al., 2010). As feminine culture is more often seen in any culture for women, women leadership is very similar to leadership in a feminine culture(Hofstede et al., 2010). In this regard, Stathan(1987) interviewed male and female managers and their secretaries who worked in the U.S. where a masculine culture is predominant. She found that the women predominantly perceived job and people as interdependent, while the male managers saw that they were opposite each other.

In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, it is important for a leader to have immediately precise answers or provide solutions to most of the questions or requests that subordinates ask about their work(Hofstede et al., 2010). Yamazaki and Kayes(2005) found that Japanese leaders who are from a high uncertainty

avoidance culture preferred concrete descriptions and reflective observations, while US managers with low uncertainty avoidance preferred abstract conceptualizations and active experiments. In his study on leaders from U.K., France, and Germany, Horovitz(1980) found that Britain leaders(low uncertainty avoidance) were interested more in dealing with strategic problems than daily operations in their teams while leaders from France and Germany(high uncertainty avoidance) were more willing to take care of their teams' technical tasks. A similar result was found from a study conducted by d'Iribarne(1998). He investigated leaders' behaviors in a joint venture company made by French and Swedish car manufacturers. It was found that, in mixed teams of engineers and technicians from France(high uncertainty avoidance) and Sweden(low uncertainty avoidance), the French employees expected detailed directions from the leaders and leaders' involvement in the work all along while Swedish employees took the delegated responsibility to themselves for granted.

A certain style of the leadership tactics is limited to another cultures(Pasa, 2000) and enough time and preparations are needed to adopt new methods created or developed in a different environment(Garibaldi de Hilal, 2006; Harrison, McKinnon, Wu, & Chow, 2000; Yoon, 2005). Additionally, how to leverage the original culture in the organization as an advantage instead of restricting that culture may be a key point that leaders should keep in mind when OD is planned in cross-cultural settings(Wang, 2010).

### **3. Communication**

Communication is essential to acquire employees' commitment and agreement to change in the organization(Holbeche, 2006; Spinks & Wells, 1997). Through communication, groups can make up much of information sharing and decision making regarding work(Larkey, 1996) while reducing uncertainty, building solid networks, and encouraging feedback and two-way interactions(Holbeche, 2006). Communication positively influences in-group performance because it facilitates understanding of group tasks and their evaluation criteria although there may be a little relationship between communication and individual performance(Erez & Somech, 1996).

However, an appropriate and successful communication style in one culture may be unsuitable and ineffective in other cultures(Spinks & Wells, 1997). That may be because group members, who perceive themselves as similar, are likely to communicate with each other openly whereas, with dissimilar group members,

communication can be established in an opposite way(Ayoko, 2007). Thus, people in cross-cultural contexts should be aware of the differences of communication styles and the cultures(Larkey, 1996; Spinks & Wells, 1997). In this context, Marquardt et al.(2004) stated that some cultures emphasize strict protocols, etiquettes, and rituals when it comes to communication while some other cultures prefer informal and less traditional ways of interaction.

Regarding individualistic and collectivistic culture, some cultures like the West encourage delivering opinions and dealing with conflict in a direct, explicit, and frank way of communication while other cultures like many Asian and Latin countries tend to be more indirect and vague in order to avoid conflicts or shame and save face or honor of people(Marquardt et al., 2004). Erez and Somech(1996) found that the performance of collectivistic groups did not decline even though communication was not publically allowed at the workplace because they had small talks with their colleagues during breaks and after work. However, regardless of individualistic or collectivistic cultural contexts, when there is low communication openness, which is the extent of talking to each other in the group and understanding other members, destructive reactions to conflict, bullying behaviors, and emotional reactions are increased in culturally diverse workgroups(Ayoko, 2007).

In terms of power distance, in some cultures like Latin American and Southern and Eastern European, people tend to be expressive in delivering emotions and representing charisma eloquently in communication while people in some other cultures, such as Western Europe, may be more instrumental so that the communication in these cultures is apt to be impersonal, problem or goal-oriented, and objective(Marquardt et al., 2004). Lehmann(2009) argued that communications between supervisors and employees are usually one-way in strong power distance cultures. In these cultures, subordinates' questions may not be acceptable, and feedback from superiors may be recognized as important commands rather than suggestions(White & Thobo-Carlsen, 2002). Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou(2004) found that the strong power distance culture in Southern Europe decreased the likelihood of using communications to employees in management and interrupted the willingness to directly communicate with their senior managers especially about financial or strategic issues.

In a group, individuals from masculine cultures are more responsive to communications that involve cheerful and proud emotions related to their work, whereas those from feminine cultures are more likely to be open to peaceful and

comfortable communication styles(Higgins, 1997). Hofstede et al.(2010) presented a case of different communication styles between the Netherlands(feminine culture) and the U.S.(masculine culture). In Dutch organizations, meetings were held to discuss problems and seek common solutions. Consensus decisions were usually the goal of the meetings. On the other hand, in the U.S. situation, meetings were opportunities to show their abilities and persuade others for sticking their opinions. Decisions were usually made by an individual. In the case study about a joint venture company, d'Iribarne(1998) also discovered that French employees(masculine culture) did not hesitate to say new ideas and to defend them aggressively. The Swedes(feminine culture) were always tried to seek consensus. In negotiation, the French usually won.

Employees from high uncertainty avoiding cultures are relieved when they are provided with formal rules, regulations, detailed directions, and explicit duties, whereas people from low uncertainty avoidance cultures feel restricted and uncomfortable in the same setting(Hofstede et al., 2010). Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou(2004) found that, in Austria, Finland, and Sweden, more organizations have joint consultative committees or work councils than those in Portugal because in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, people prefer formally responsible communication regarding the tasks. d'Iribarne(1998) found that the French were mainly concerned about the precision of decisions while the Swedes were concerned more about the decision process.

## V. Discussion

In this study, the researcher analyzed literature on the three group process behaviors focusing on influence of national culture. To this end, three group behaviors were identified: in-group relationship, leadership, and communication, and Hofstede's four dimensions for national culture were employed. Then, influences of national culture on group process behaviors were analyzed.

Findings in terms of in-group relationships are that people from collectivistic cultures generally more cooperative and effective in doing a group task whereas people from individual cultures are likely to work better with an individual task. In strong power distance cultures, relationships in a group tend to be more influenced by social power and authority of members than those in weak power distance cultures. In feminine cultures, workplace tends to be perceived as where people

cooperate to reach the same goal while, in masculine cultures, it is for achievements from a group competition. Employees from a low uncertainty avoidance culture may be more independent than those from a strong uncertainty avoidance culture.

As for leadership, although desirable roles of a leader and leadership attributes may not be very different by cultures, relationships between leaders and subordinates and expectations of subordinates to leaders tend to vary in culture (Van Woerkom & Reuver, 2009). In strong power distance and collectivistic cultures, leaders usually try to take more care of their members with absolute positional power while receiving strong loyalty from the subordinates than leaders in low power distant and individual cultures. In masculine cultures, leaders tend to focus on technical problems while leaders from feminine cultures are likely to take care of human problems. In strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, effective leadership is providing immediate and detailed directions or solutions to the subordinates while, in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, delegations are easily accepted.

Regarding communication, employees from individualistic cultures tend to be encouraged to deliver opinions and deal with conflict in a direct, explicit, and frank way of communication while, in the other culture, communication tends to be more indirect and vague in order to avoid conflicts or save face. In addition, people from collectivistic cultures generally share their ideas, information, and feelings with each other in the group more than people from individual cultures. Strong power distant cultures tend to negatively affect communications between superiors and their subordinates. Individuals from masculine cultures tend to prefer communications that involve cheerful and proud emotions, whereas those from feminine cultures prefer peaceful and comfortable communication styles. Employees from high uncertainty avoiding cultures usually like formal rules, detailed directions, and explicit duties, whereas those from low uncertainty avoidance cultures feel uncomfortable in the same setting.

<Table V-1> Group process behaviors in national cultures

National culture		Group process behaviors
Individualism–collectivism	Individualistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefer independent tasks</li> <li>• Task oriented leadership</li> <li>• Direct and frank communication</li> </ul>
	Collectivistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefer collaborative tasks</li> <li>• People oriented leadership</li> <li>• Share ideas, feelings, and information</li> </ul>

(Table continues)

National culture		Group process behaviors
Power distance	Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal relationships</li> <li>• Supportive but task oriented leadership</li> <li>• Active communication among all members</li> </ul>
	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchical relationships</li> <li>• Supportive but directive leadership</li> <li>• Communication is lateral not vertical</li> </ul>
Femininity-Masculinity	Feminine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative and harmonious relationships</li> <li>• People oriented leadership</li> <li>• Peaceful and comfortable communication</li> </ul>
	Masculine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive and independent relationships</li> <li>• Performance(task) oriented leadership</li> <li>• Cheerful and aggressive communication</li> </ul>
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent relationships</li> <li>• Delegated responsibilities from leadership</li> <li>• Flexible and open communication</li> </ul>
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent relationships</li> <li>• Immediate and detailed directions from leadership</li> <li>• Formal, explicit, and detailed communication</li> </ul>

Taking the findings together, a summary of the three group process behaviors in the four national culture dimensions was presented in Table 2. Findings of this study lead to the conclusion that national cultures are likely to influence group process behaviors in the organization. However, caution is needed when generalizing the group behaviors in a particular culture. As national culture was developed to understand the cultural traits of groups, not to assess an individual(Hofstede et al., 2010), the findings may need to be used for understanding different cultures but beware of any stereotype.

Given the importance of culture in organizations, it is necessary for HRD professionals, change agents, and leaders to understand the cultural characteristics of their employees in groups. OD can successfully enhance group effectiveness when OD interventions are culturally appropriately implemented, especially in organizations where cultural diversity exists in the group or new group-level OD interventions developed in a different culture are adopted.

This study has limitations. First, this study was conducted by using only the literature written in English because of the researcher's limited access to resources written in other languages. There may be good research sources written in other languages. Second, some journal articles or books referenced in this paper are 10-20 years old. Third, what I found in this study on cultural differences are

limited to some cultural dimensions. Dealing with more extensive cultural models or dimensions would help the findings richer.

## VI. Implications for Research and Practices

Due to the difference of group process behaviors in culture, group-level OD also can be greatly influenced by cultures when they are implemented in a cross-cultural context. Although the most prevalent HRD theories and interventions were created and developed in the West and applications of them can occur in non-western cultures (McLean & McLean, 2001), there are few of them developed considering cultural differences (McLean, 2010). Therefore, HRD professionals and change agents should be aware of the impact of culture and carefully execute OD interventions at the group-level. Because what is successfully implemented in one culture may not guarantee the same result in the other culture (McLean, 2006), what is culturally different and how the difference is applied should be considered. Practical OD cases collected in various cultural settings will be valuable sources not only for OD in similar situations but also OD theory development. Sound indigenous theories or cross-cultural theories may be guidelines for practitioners to successfully develop and implement culturally customized OD interventions.

The more the globalization expands, the more culture becomes an important matter in organizations. In these organizations, what is needed for OD professionals and practitioners will be an ability to think about change through lenses by which cultural differences and attributes are considered.

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## 국문 요약

### 이문화 맥락에서의 그룹행동: 그룹 내 관계, 리더십, 커뮤니케이션을 중심으로

김세훈

조직의 효과성은 얼마나 그룹들이 기능하느냐에 영향을 받는데, 특히 조직이 문화적인 다양성을 경험하고 있을 때 더욱 그러하다. 이 연구의 목적은 국가 문화가 그룹 행동에 미치는 영향을 알아보는데 있다. 문헌조사를 통해 이문화 맥락에서 어떻게 그룹행동이 결정되는지, 그리고 다양한 문화 안에서 그 행동들이 어떻게 다른지를 확인하였다. Hofstede의 국가 문화 차원이 분석의 틀로 이용되었다. 이 연구에서 국가 문화에 따라 그룹행동이 다르게 나타남을 발견하였다.

**핵심되는 말:** 조직개발, 그룹행동, 국가문화 이문화 맥락