

# collectivism and individualism

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## Individualism, Collectivism and Organization Culture

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### Individualism, Collectivism and Organization Culture

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory gives managers and leaders tools to evaluate cross-cultural relations as a way to understand differences in behavior. The theory was established after directive qualitative studies where workers explained the national cultural differences and the consequences thereafter. Hofstede posits that culture is a collectively programmed in the mind that differentiates members of a group from others. From his studies, he was able to explain how individualism-collectivism affects organization culture. To get a grasp of what Hofstede tried to explain using his theory, literature will use the theory to analyze how organizational culture influences the behaviors and values of individual's employees, how such individual behavior employees affect group of employees and the organization at large. Consequently, how given behaviors can improve or hurt culture of an organization will be discussed.

#### **How Organization Culture Influences the Behaviors and Values of Individuals Employees**

It is the will of every manager of an organization to have an organizational culture that goes hand in hand with the behaviors and values of individual employees. For that reason, it is important as a manager or a leader in an organization to ensure that employees feel that their efforts are recognized and appreciated. In the workplace, some individuals like to work alone while others work in a group (Triandis, 2018). Those individuals who work alone make their own decisions and excel in the undertakings. Since they have strong opinions, their superiors tend to acknowledge their accomplishments.

Those organizations that prefer individualistic values appreciate employees because of their unique skills and not rewarding the group as a whole. Researchers in the past have noted that many employees tend to prefer being seen and respected as individuals for their personalities

Triandis, 2018). Having such an individualistic culture in an organization promotes innovation, creativity and encourages employee engagement hence doing their best. This makes employees be proud of what they are doing and strive every day to achieve their peak performance having in mind that their efforts will be appreciated.

Looking at the collectivist approach, organizations that support and encourage the same put much focus on the whole good well-being and are less concerned about individual achievements and skills. What they put much emphasis on is cooperation between employees expecting them to work as members of a cohesive group. With a collectivist culture, all members of the group are appreciated and rewarded accordingly and hence this helps to build the spirit of oneness in the organization and support culture of togetherness (Thomas et al., 2016). In such an organizational culture, the employees are given equal opportunities which help to reduce conflicts. At the end of the day, consistency and stability of the workers are improved. Employees can share equal responsibilities, rights, together brainstorm ideas and make collective decisions.

Despite each approach have its strengths and drawbacks, none of them is perfect. Looking at individualist, it creates personal excellence and creativity. However, employees under this approach may not want to adhere to methodologies and norms of the organization and thus affect the organization's operations (Triandis, 2018). Besides, others may even utilize unethical practices to be competitive enough, be promoted and excel in their career.

On the other hand, organizations using collectivism approach may experience the same issues with that using individualism but to less extent (Thomas et al., 2016). Employees' performance may be low since individual efforts are not rewarded and some view it as being

overlooked. As a result, the creativity of the individuals may be downgraded since if one's idea does not please the rest of the group it ends up being thrown away.

Ideally, as a way to find a balance between individualism and collectivism, it is worth to note that the two are not mutually exclusive (Triandis, 2018). For example, even if a project is assigned to a group where employees will work together, individual employees will still be evaluated on their contributions and performance on the project.

### **How Such Individual Behavior Employee Affect Group of Employees and the Organization**

Individual behaviors can in a long way affect or influence employees and the organization at large. First, when individualist approach is highly emphasized in an organization, most individuals are so concerned about being at certain levels of leadership and acquiring certain status (Barron & Chou, 2016). If all employees in an organization aim at being at certain positions, this will lead to them being more disconnected in terms of feeling that one is important more than the other. Lack of collaboration between employees affects the organization's performance as they are not heading to same direction.

Looking at collectivism approach, some individuals in charge of others can affect some sections of a group of workers in terms of morale and this later result in low productivity in the organization. Therefore, individualism should be encouraged in an organization as making employees being in charge of themselves cultivates sense of loyalty and makes them work hard.

Failure to put a balance between individualism and collectivism also can affect a group and the entire organization (Hui & Wang, 2015). Appraising individualism at the same time not emphasizing quality may lower the quality of services or goods being offered by the organization and hence this will make it be in a downfall. Once some individuals feel they are gauged in terms

of competitiveness, then this will lower their self-belonging in the organization a culture that will spread to the rest of the group. At the end of the day, the organization may even experience high number of resignations from members who feel are not being appreciated as they are treated like machines.

Avoiding uncertainties can also spread to the whole group and the entire organization and affect it negatively. Having a case where employee is in fear of trying new things will low the creativity of the organization and this will put the organization behind other organizations that encourage risk-taking (Hui & Wang, 2015). At the end of the day, workers will be used to doing things the normal way as an attempt to try something new has negative consequences.

Finally, individualism may also affect the whole group or organization where all workers aim at a certain hierarchical structure and not necessarily do what they are supposed to do for the wellbeing of the organization and also their growth (Barron & Chou, 2016). Failure to concentrate on personal strength makes an organization weak in terms of growth as workers are only concerned about climbing the hierarchical ladder and not well-being of the organization.

### **How Given Behaviors Can Improve or Hurt Culture of an Organization**

Employee behaviors go a long way in either improving or hurting an organizational culture. Turnover is one of the behaviors that either hurts or improves organization culture. Organizations with high turnover are unable to establish cordial relationships with their employees and this inhibits teamwork (Denhardt et al., 2018). This makes the organizational culture in high turnover industries to be short-lived relationships while in low turnover organizations to be long-lived and efficient teamwork.

Employee productivity also hurts or improves organization culture. Low productivity goes against the organization's way of doing things that have become a challenge to many of the organizations. When workers' performance is at its best it means they are following the organization's customs and practices and thus making it better every day (Harvey et al., 2018). Therefore, the managers should ensure that employee productivity is in line with the organization's way of doing things as this should be part of the traditions of the organization which can either hurt or improves it.

Another behavior that may hurt or improve organization culture is job satisfaction (Denhardt et al., 2018). How employees perceive the working environment, promotion earnings and relation among colleagues ted to either hurt or improve organizational culture. If how they perceive the aforementioned aspect is in a good way then the organizational culture will be improved through employees adopting some attitudes which will improve their functioning and wellbeing.

Workplace misbehavior also plays a role in either hurting or improving organizational culture. If in an organization there is defiance and aggression towards how workers are supposed to carry out themselves, it means they are weakening the organization culture. The standards and laid procedures of how individuals should carry out themselves in the organization should be strict to ensure that the organization's outlook to the members of the society is not damaged (Harvey et al., 2018). Managers should thus encourage strict following of ways of doing things in an organization to not only maintain but also improve the existing culture of doing things.

In summation, having used Hofstede's theory to analyze how organizational culture influences the behaviors and values of individual's employees, how such individual behavior

employees affect group of employees and the organization at large, it is clear that organizational culture and individual behavior have to go hand in hand. Consequently, how given behaviors can improve or hurt culture of an organization gives a challenge to managers in every organization to ensure those right behaviors are in place with the organization culture. This will not only facilitate the organization growth but also individual performance within their working departments.

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