

Communication Styles of Business Students: A Comparison of Four National Cultures

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Abstract : Culturally diverse global companies need to understand cultural differences between leaders and employees from different backgrounds. Communication is culturally contingent and has a significant impact on effective execution of leadership goals. The awareness of cultural variations related to communication and interactions will help leaders modify their own behavior, and consequently improve the execution of goals and avoid unnecessary faux pas. Our focus is on young adults that have experienced cultural integration, culturally diverse surroundings in schools and universities, and cultural travels. Our central research problem is to understand the impact of different national cultures on communication. We focus on four countries with distinct national cultures and spatial distribution. The countries are Finland, Indonesia, Russia and USA. Our sample is based on business students (n = 225) from various backgrounds in the four countries. Their responses of communication and leadership styles were analyzed using ANOVA and post-hoc test. Results indicate that culture impacts on communication behavior. Even young culturally-exposed adults with cultural awareness and experience demonstrate cultural differences in their behavior. Apparently, culture is a deeply seated trait that cannot be completely neutralized by environmental variables. Our study offers valuable input for leadership training programs and for expatriates when recognizing specific differences on leaders’ behavior due to culture.

Keywords : communication, culture, interaction, leadership

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