

A Micro-Research On Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions In Local Public Administration

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Abstract: *This paper aims to analyze the cultural dimensions stated by Geert Hofstede in order to identify the particularities of the organizational cultural profile with applicability at the level of the Suceava City Hall institution. The micro-research carried out by means of this survey-based questionnaire demonstrated that at the level of the analyzed institution, the cultural profile is characterized by: distance from power partially small, respectively partially large; swinging opinions between individualism and collectivism; inclination towards the femininity dimension; the strong presence of the uncertainty avoidance dimension; long-term orientation, as well as reporting the existence of both indulgence and coercion in the workplace.*

Keywords: *cultural dimensions, Geert Hofstede, micro-research, survey-based questionnaire, local public administration, human resources.*

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JEL classification: M14, Z18

I. INTRODUCTION

An organization's culture refers to unique ways of doing the activities within it. The cultural orientations of the individuals who form the organization decisively influence the content of the organizational culture, which can largely determine the success or failure of the respective business. (Dartey-Baah, 2013)

The Dutch specialist G. Hofstede is of the opinion that organizational cultures rather reside in (visible and conscious) practices: the way people perceive what happens in their organizational environment. (Hofstede, 2011). He identified a set of four cultural dimensions, later recognizing a fifth dimension highlighted by M.H. Bond. (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Inspired by the research undertaken by M. Minkov, the specialist adds a sixth cultural dimension. These six paired dimensions of culture are as follows (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede & Minkov, 2013):

1. *Power distance*, relating to different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality;
2. *Avoiding uncertainty*, regarding the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future;
3. *Individualism versus Collectivism*, regarding the integration of individuals into primary groups;
4. *Masculinity versus Femininity*, regarding the division of emotional roles between women and men;
5. *Long-term versus short-term orientation*, concerning the choice of focus of people's efforts: future or present and past.
6. *Indulgence versus coercion*, relating to satisfying versus controlling basic human desires to enjoy life.

The purpose of this micro-research is *the analysis of the cultural dimensions stated by Geert Hofstede in order to identify the particularities of the organizational cultural profile with applicability at the level of the Suceava City Hall institution.*

To achieve the proposed goal, we aim to achieve the following specific objectives:

- O₁ – identifying the existence of distance from power;
- O₂ – analyzing individualism behavior versus collectivism behavior;
- O₃ – determining the percentage of masculinity versus femininity;
- O₄ – studying the feeling of uncertainty avoidance;
- O₅ – highlighting the long-term versus short-term orientation;
- O₆ – analysis of the level at which coercion stands compared to indulgence.

II. THE SAMPLING PROCESS

The sampling process involves questioning a predetermined number of civil servants and contractual employees from the Suceava City Hall, by selecting them in a block, based on the criterion of the place where they carry out their activity - the headquarters of the Suceava City Hall institution (see Table no. 1):

Table no. 1. Structure of the surveyed sample

r. no.	Staff category	Sampling base		Sample	
		Nu mber of staff		Nu mber of respondents	
1.	Leading civil servants	45	.30	12	.78
2.	Executive civil servants	359	1.98	111	2.71
3.	Contract management staff	32	.74	18	0.17
4.	Contract execution staff	419	9.00	36	0.34
	Total	855	00	177	00

Source: Organization chart of the Suceava City Hall Institution,
[https://www.primariasv.ro/dm_suceava/site.nsf/atasament/996306C75D07447FC2258997004632AA/\\$FILE/Org%20Primarie%20HCL%20383%20din%2027%20oct%202022.pdf?Open](https://www.primariasv.ro/dm_suceava/site.nsf/atasament/996306C75D07447FC2258997004632AA/$FILE/Org%20Primarie%20HCL%20383%20din%2027%20oct%202022.pdf?Open)

Data collection is carried out in physical form, by distributing the questionnaire within the Suceava City Hall institution, between March and April 2023. The data collected from the 177 respondents (valid questionnaires) represent a sufficient basis for outlining the specific characteristics of the organizational culture in the institution of the municipality's City Hall Suceava.

III. THE POWER DISTANCE DIMENSION

The *power distance* dimension is measured by whether or not there is inequality between superiors and subordinates, as well as how superiors make decisions, relying or not on the experience of subordinates.

To the question "Do you consider that in Suceava City Hall there is a pronounced inequality between superiors and subordinates?", almost half (49.72%=14.69%+35.03%) of the responding staff feel a pronounced inequality, which highlights a great distance from power, there being a large gap between bosses and subordinates (see Figure no. 1).

It is interesting that to the question "Do you think that bosses rely on their experience, but also on that of their subordinates?", $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents (75.14%=20.60%+54.24%) affirmed this. When bosses rely on their experience, as well as that of subordinates, in making decisions, the organizational culture is characterized by a low power distance. The explanation of this phenomenon lies in the presence of kinship relationships between superiors and subordinates, which ensure trust and closeness to the bosses (see Figure no. 2).

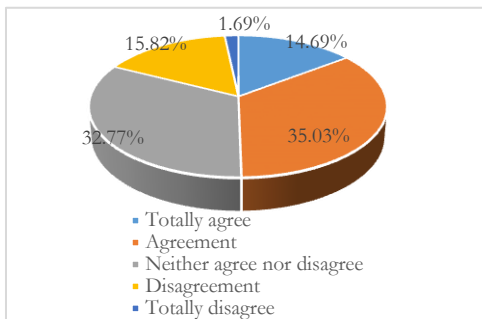


Figure no. 1. Inequality between superiors and subordinates

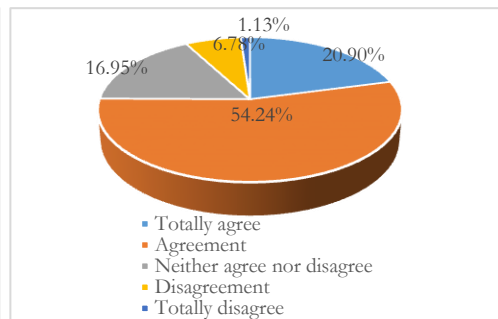


Figure no. 2. Decision making by superiors

IV. THE INDIVIDUALISM/COLLECTIVISM DIMENSION

The *individualism/collectivism* dimension is highlighted by measuring two variables, namely: the way of communication between workers and the predominant thinking that they have in performing their work tasks.

The results obtained for the question "Do you consider that communication between colleagues has a rich context and includes formal rules and empathy?" are represented by Figure no. 3. The measurement of the type of communication variable returned results showing an organizational culture characterized by collectivism, half of the respondents (50.29%= 8.47%+41.82%) agreeing with the presence of a communication with a rich context and with formal rules and empathy. Many times discussions at the workplace touch on topics unrelated to work duties. The

interest of the group prevails over the individual interest, as the workers know each other through family relationships.

In order to measure the predominant thinking variable, the question was asked, "When performing work tasks, the predominant thinking is <I execute, so I will collect the praises!>?", the answers being represented by diagram no. 4. In the execution of work tasks, the majority of respondents (46.33%=11.30%+35.03%) have a predominant thinking towards themselves (toward the individual), they affirm that it is normal to collect praise personally, which leads to an individualistic dimension of organizational culture. However, at the opposite pole, more than ¼ of the respondents (25.42%=23.73%+1.69%) disapprove of the indicated assertion, a result that denotes the existence of the collectivism dimension.

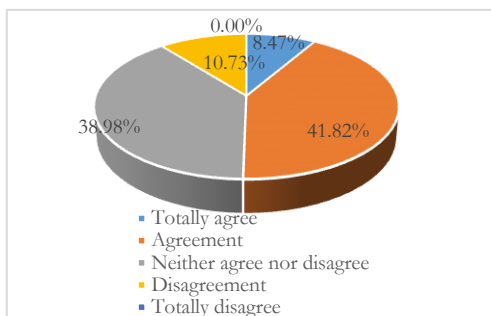


Figure no. 3. The way of communication between workers in the execution of work tasks

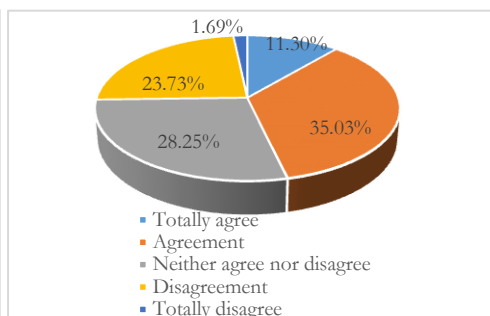


Figure no. 4. Predominant thinking of workers in performing job duties

V. THE MASCULINITY/FEMININITY DIMENSION

The *masculinity/femininity* dimension is highlighted by identifying how conflicts between employees are resolved, but also by establishing the proportion of women/men in management positions.

To the question "Do you consider that the resolution of conflicts arising at the workplace is resolved through compromise and negotiation?", which measures the way in which conflicts are resolved, the distribution of responses is represented in Figure no. 5. According to the recorded results, the majority of respondents (54.24%=13.56%+40.68%) agree that at work conflicts are resolved through compromise and negotiation, which leads to the presence of a dimension inclined towards femininity.

To the question "Do you think there are fewer women than men in management positions?", a majority of 45.77% (9.61%+36.16%) express

their agreement with this assertion. However, 38.98% of the respondents neither confirm nor deny a small share of women in management positions.

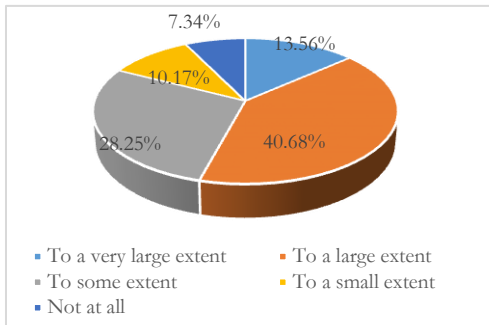


Figure no. 5. Resolving conflicts through compromise and negotiation arising in the workplace

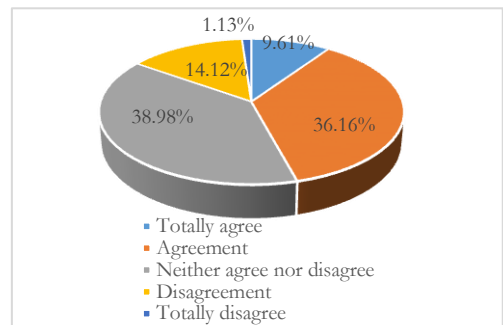


Figure no. 6. Proportion of women/men in management positions

This situation outlines an organizational culture that relatively easily accepts women in management positions, imprinting a feminine feature on the administrative work environment. In democracy, femininity or masculinity is also found in the custom of political games. Thus, in societies inclined towards femininity, governments are formed from coalitions, between different political parties that treat each other with relative gentleness (see Figure no. 6).

VI. THE AVOIDANCE OF UNCERTAINTY DIMENSION

The uncertainty avoidance dimension is highlighted through the prism of the following variables: the need for precision and formalization of the activity; openness to innovation of workers; the importance of professional training of human resources; citizens' trust in civil servants, politicians and the public system.

To the question "To what extent does the following statement describe the activity in the Suceava City Hall institution: *<The activity carried out needs more precision and formalization>?*", the majority of respondents (51.98%=7.35%+44.63%) agreed that there is a necessity in this area, which may suggest that the applied legislation is not sufficient for the performance of work duties. Human resources show a strong avoidance of uncertainty, which can be overcome by improving the internal procedures developed by the bosses that correlate the legislation with the techniques used in the provision of public services (see Figure no. 7).

The results recorded for the question "Do you agree with the statement: <My colleagues are better at innovations than at applications>?", show that the largest share of respondents (44.63%=37.85%+6.78%) expressed their disagreement about openness to innovation, which explains their affinity for apps. From here it can be deduced the presence of a strong avoidance of uncertainty (see Figure no. 8).

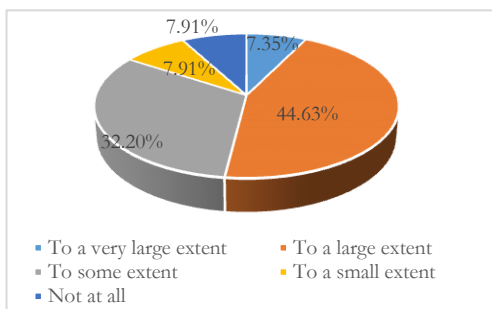


Figure no. 7. The need for precision and formalization of the activity of civil servants

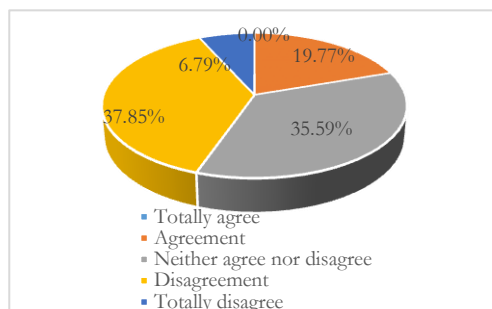


Figure no. 8. Openness to innovation of workers

To the question "Do you consider that civil servants in the public administration must be graduates of specialized studies?" (see Figure no. 9), it is observed that most of the respondents (65.53%= 36.72%+28.81%) consider professional training to be important in carrying out activities at the workplace. This again defines the existence of strong uncertainty avoidance (see Figure 9).

Regarding the question "To what extent do you think citizens trust politicians, civil servants and the public system?" (see Figure no. 10), the micro-research reveals a percentage of 44.63% (39.55%+5.08%) of respondents who declare that there is a low trust of citizens, which leads, again, to a strong avoidance of uncertainty (see Figure no. 10).

According to Hofstede's studies, environments with strong uncertainty avoidance are more professionally qualified than those with weak uncertainty avoidance.

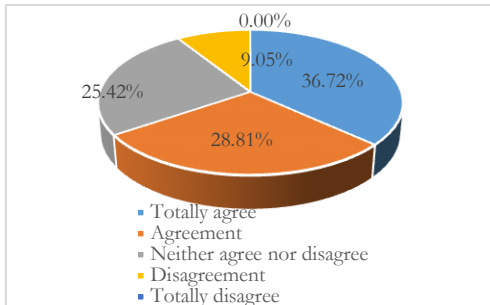


Figure no. 9. The importance of professional training of public administration workers

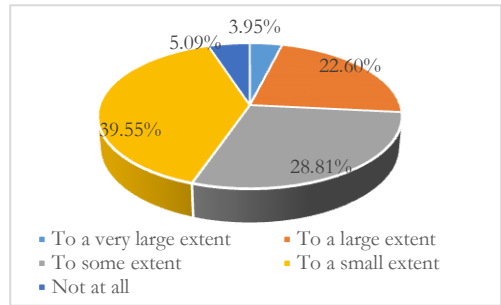


Figure no. 10. The existence of citizens' trust in politicians, civil servants and the public system

VII. THE LONG TERM ORIENTATION VERSUS SHORT TERM ORIENTATION DIMENSION

In determining the long-term/short-term orientation dimension, we measured the existence of common aspirations and ideas of bosses and subordinates, as well as the definition of the main values used in the execution of work tasks.

To the question "Do you think that bosses and subordinates share the same aspirations?" (see Figure no. 11), almost identical weights (44.63% / 44.07% = 5.65% + 38.42%) are recorded for respondents who state that they share to some extent / respectively to a large and a very large extent common ideas, of where the approach to the dimension of the long-term orientation results (see Figure no. 11).

The results recorded for the question "To what extent, in work, are the main values freedom, respect for rights, fulfillment and independent thinking?" shows, again, identical weights (42.94% / 42.93% = 16.38% + 26.55%) for respondents who consider that these values

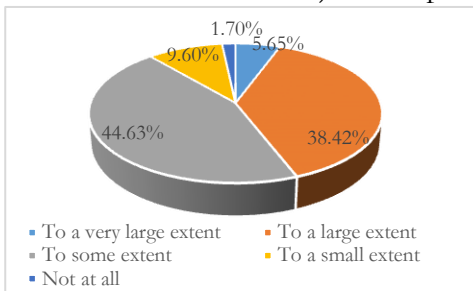


Figure no. 11. The existence of common aspirations and ideas of superiors and subordinates

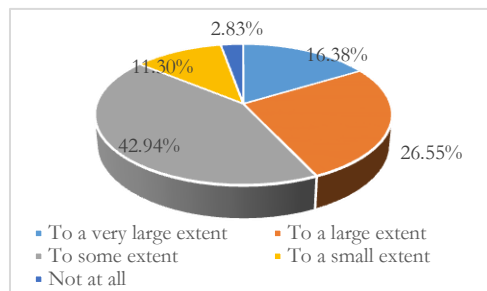


Figure no. 12. Defining the main values at work

are present to some extent, respectively to a large and very large extent in work relations (see Figure no 12):

VIII. THE *INDULGENCE/COERCION* DIMENSION

In order to identify this dimension in the organizational culture of the Suceava City Hall, we proceed to measure the variables: the presence of happy workers in the administration; the presence of moral discipline at work; the importance of freedom of expression; the method of sanctioning employees.

Analysis of responses to the question "Do you consider that you have more happy colleagues than unhappy ones?" shows that the largest share of respondents (43.50%) believe that there are happy employees to the same extent as there are unhappy employees, which creates uncertainty in defining the indulgence/coercion dimension (see Figure no. 13). According to the studies of the researcher Hofstede, happiness is associated with indulgence.

According to diagram no. 14, to the question "To what extent is there moral discipline in the environment where you work?", the majority of the responding employees (63.85%=22.04%+41.81%) affirm that there is a large and very large degree of such discipline, a fact that outlines a dimension cultural characterized by coercion.

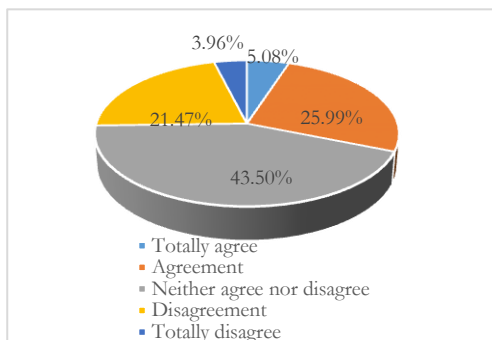


Figure no. 13. The presence of happy colleagues at work

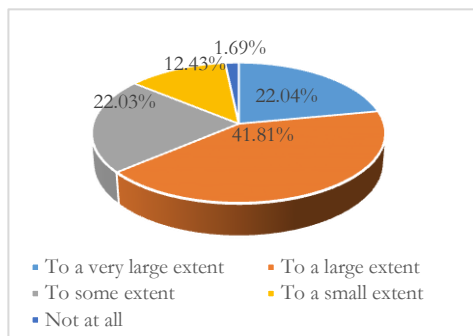


Figure no. 14. The existence of moral discipline at work

To the question "Do you consider that freedom of expression is important?", the majority of 63.27% (19.77%+43.50%) of the respondents consider it important that this freedom exists in the workplace (see Figure no. 15). Such a result defines a feature of the organizational culture inclined towards indulgence.

Recorded responses to the question "To what extent are employees penalized equally when they make mistakes?" shows that over half of the responding employees (51.98%=9.04%+42.94%) declare the application of an identical method of sanctioning when needed at work, a phenomenon that defines a side of the coercion of the organizational culture (see Figure no. 16).

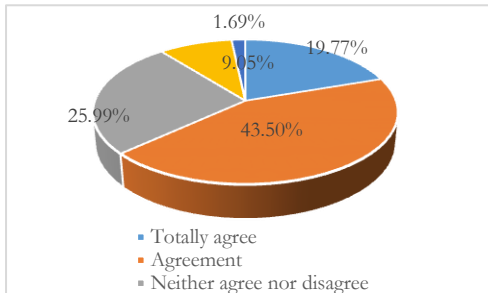


Figure no. 15. The importance of freedom of expression

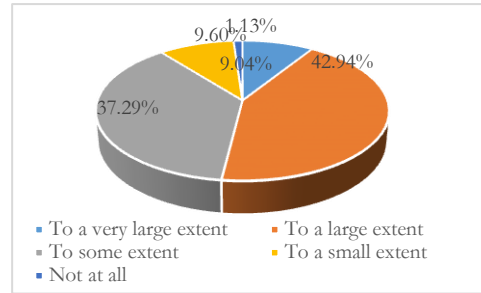


Figure no. 16. The method of sanctioning employees

IX. CONCLUSIONS

Based on what is presented in this paper, we can conclude that the micro-research made possible the analysis of the cultural dimensions stated by Geert Hofstede with the identification of the particularities of the existing organizational cultural profile at the level of the Suceava City Hall institution.

The *power distance* seems to be perceived by the respondents as partly high and partly low. From the perspective of appreciating the inequality between superiors and subordinates, a large gap can be noticed, while the consideration of subordinate experience in decision-making by superiors means that the organizational culture in the institution is characterized by a small distance from power, against the background of existing kinship relationships.

As in the case of the power distance dimension, *individualism/collectivism* poles are partially highlighted at the institution level. A consistent part of the respondents declares that the interest of the group prevails over the individual interest, since the workers know each other due to kinship relations, which denotes a collectivist dimension of the organizational culture. On the opposite pole, most respondents are of the opinion that in the execution of work tasks they possess a predominant thinking towards themselves (towards the individual), they affirm that it is normal to collect

praise personally, which indicates an individualistic dimension of the organizational culture.

In relation to the dimension of *femininity/masculinity*, the micro-research revealed the presence of feminine values at the level of the institution, with most respondents claiming that at work conflicts are resolved through compromise and negotiation. In addition, an organizational culture that relatively easily accepts women in management positions is noticed, which again reveals the presence of a dimension inclined towards femininity.

With reference to the *uncertainty avoidance* dimension, the recorded results proved the strong presence of this value, the respondents declaring that: the activity carried out needs more precision and formalization; colleagues have an affinity for applications rather than innovations; public administration officials must be graduates of specialized studies; there is a low trust of citizens in politicians, civil servants and the public system.

The analysis of the answers received to the questions aimed at determining the dimension of *long-term/short-term orientation* showed that respondents state that superiors and subordinates share common aspirations and that, within their work, values such as freedom, respect for rights, fulfillment and independent thinking are present. According to researcher Minkov, we can link the dimension of long-term orientation to the presence and sharing of common values in an environment.

Regarding the *indulgence/coercion* dimension, the analysis of the results recorded for the four measured variables (the presence of happy workers in the administration; the presence of moral discipline in the workplace; the importance of freedom of expression; the way employees are sanctioned) demonstrated that there is a balance somewhat balanced between the respondents who declare an organizational culture characterized by indulgence and those who opine the existence within the institution of a cultural dimension inclined towards coercion.

Overall, the micro-research carried out aiming to determine the six cultural dimensions stated by Geert Hofstede demonstrated that at the level of the institution of the Suceava City Hall, the cultural profile is characterized by: power distance partially small, respectively partially large; swinging opinions between individualism and collectivism; the existence of the femininity dimension; the strong presence of the uncertainty avoidance dimension; long-term orientation, as well as workplace declaration of both indulgence and coercion.

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