Liliana DUGULEANĂ
Transilvania University from Braşov

NATIONAL CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AND WELL-BEING IN SOME COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, IN 2013

Empirical studies

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Abstract

Cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model were developed in different models of cultural influences in business. Erin Meyer, the author of the Culture Map, uses eight scales for defining a national cultural profile. The database of cultural profiles for some states of the World was built in time, by business leaders and it can be dynamically updated by adding the answers of new respondents to the online questionnaire. The performances of economic and social organizations influence the well-being of their nations. The paper uses the estimations of the national cultural profiles from Erin Meyer's database and some indicators which characterize the well-being, like: human development index (HDI), the corruption perceptions index, the unemployment rate and inequality-adjusted HDI, in order to define how the culture influences the well-being. Using the Analysis of Principal Components in SPSS, there can be found the position of the analyzed countries about well-being in relation with their national cultural profile in businesses, in 2013.

Introduction

The national behaviour is influenced by specific factors of cultural nature, as: language, religion, moral values, education, traditions and customs, nonverbal human behaviour, but also the history of the country with spiritual values and meanings and with wealth accumulation over time. These factors influence the individual behaviour, but the overview of all individual behaviours has some common essence which determines the national specificity to act differently in the framework of a globalized economy.

Over the last years the study of cultural influences in consumption behaviour has become an element of intangible capital for almost all the global brands. Marketers and managers of important companies became interested to develop their global affairs on the international markets and also by knowing how to address the consumers of different cultures.

The well-known model of Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001) comprises the following cultural dimensions: *power distance*, *collectivism versus individualism*, *masculinity versus femininity*, *uncertainty avoidance*. Hofstede extended these dimensions with the fifth one, for explaining the large range of national cultures, depending on the life's view on *the long-term orientation versus short-term orientation (*Hofstede et al., 2010*)*. The long-term orientation is characteristic for the economic developed countries and the opposite short-term orientation, for the less developed countries.

Other experts expressed their opinions by adding new cultural dimensions and forming other models, but in most cases they based on Hofstede's dimensions. For example, Schwartz added dimensions of *egalitarianism* and *hierarchy* (Schwartz, 2006), but they can both be treated as dimensions of *power distance* and *individualism versus collectivism*.

Erin Meyer established a model with eight dimensions (Meyer, 2014c) and she built in time a database with answers of thousands of executives, to make a contour for the national cultural profile (Meyer, 2014b). Considering that the cultural dimensions are better expressed by the entrepreneurs of a country, because, as educated individuals acting in economic affairs, they are the best representatives of their countries. They are performing actions and show attitudes, behaviours and opinions in their management activities and in the relationships with collaborators, partners and subordinates. The database can have a dynamic character, being updated by online interviews of respondents.

The paper intends to make a connection between the cultural dimensions of Meyer's database (Meyer, 2014a) and the indicators of well-being, for the analyzed countries.

In order to understand the cultural dimensions of well-being, the first step is to present the meaning of the eight dimensions and the position of countries depending on their cultural profiles.

Meyer's dimensions of a national cultural model

The Meyer's eight dimensions are presented in Table 1. The online interview is based on a questionnaire with twenty-five questions, the last one being about the nationality. Combining the answers, Meyer offers a quantitative measure of individual evaluation, on an axis starting from 0 to 15, for each cultural dimension, being simultaneously compared with the national level. The individual can see his own position faced to the cultural national profile.

In this way she built in time, a database with the answers of thousands of executives, to make a contour for the national cultural profile. The database comprises the values for each dimension for nineteen countries from the World.

The scale for each dimension starts at 0 and finishes at 15. Close to lower limit it has a certain significance and close to upper limit it has the opposite meaning.

Communicating refers at the way of transmitting information and messages: either in a precise way, easy to understand, without much text for explanations which corresponds to a "low-context" for 0, or in a sophisticated way, nuanced, with more significances, difficult to understand, with a lot of words around, leaving place for "reading between the lines", corresponding to "high-context" for 15.

Evaluating mode has two ways, either "direct criticism" corresponding to value 0, being constructively given, with good intention and to correct the situation, either "indirect criticism" valued to 15, when the diplomatic approach is undertaken to avoid sufferings or moral injuries.

Persuading can be based on deductive arguments (Meyer, 2014b), seen as "principles-first" corresponding to 0 or on "applications-first" for 15. There are developed societies based on inductive logic (Meyer, 2014b), as said oriented to "applications-first", but also others developed, situated at an average level.

Leading refers to the degree of respect regarding the authority figures. This component corresponds to Hofstede's dimension of power distance. Leading can be done either in "egalitarian" way valued by 0 or in an "hierarchical" approach, marked with 15.

Deciding in a "consensual way" attributed to 0 assumes a group agreement or making "top-down" decisions of a single person, usually the boss, valued at 15. Not always the "egalitarian" way of leading supposes a process of "consensual" deciding, i.e., the Japanese which are recognized for the "hierarchical" way of leading, they accept decisions in high consensus degree.

Trusting is considered the cultural dimension, which is either based on tasks, passing through the rational filter of the brain and the valuation starts from 0 until trusting based on relationships, issues of heart, valued until 15.

Disagreeing can be expressed through either accepting a "direct confrontation" at level of ideas and reasoning in finding the constructive "true", the progress, applying a dynamism to the group, starting from 0 and going until 15, for "avoiding confrontation", which is not comfortable for the individuals of the group.

Scheduling the businesses supposes to do timetables and people to accept to respect the schedule, meaning a "linear" way of living and working, valued from 0. At the opposite end it is the flexible way of doing businesses and things in life, with a high degree of adaptability, marked with 15.

Analyzing the Meyer's dimensions it is not quite difficult to find correlations with Hofstede's model.

Power distance can be interpreted through the egalitarian and the hierarchical way of "leading".

Dimension of *collectivism versus individualism* can be explained through the rapport principles-first versus applications-first of "persuading" process. The persuading based on principles-first is specific for collective based societies, but the persuading based on applications-first refers to individuals who become responsible for their actions.

Masculinity versus femininity has more valences in Meyer's dimensions. She considered these features more analytically:

- the "communicating" way: low-context – corresponds to masculine character of society and high-context to the feminine societies;

- the giving way of "trusting": the task-based trust (from the head) corresponds to masculinity and relationship-based trust (from the heart) corresponds to femininity;

- the "evaluating" way with direct criticism in masculine societies versus "indirect criticism" in feminine societies.

Uncertainty avoidance can be assimilated with linear or flexible way of "scheduling" and with confrontational or avoiding confrontation in the "disagreeing" mode of Meyer. For this Hofstede's dimension, Meyer has also prefered to develop the kind of uncertainty avoidance, either through scheduling or by acting against uncertainty.

The long-term orientation versus short-term orientation can also be attributed to the "deciding", either in consensual way versus taking top-down decisions. The long-term orientation exists in the societies with consensual way of making decisions. The short-term orientation is specific to societies with taking top-down decisions, supposing hierarchical acceptance of "leading". Even the fifth

dimension of Hofstede, could be assimilated with the first one established, power distance.

National cultural models using Meyer's dimensions

Considering the data from Meyer database and using the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) in SPSS software, it is obtained a model of two principal components which explains together 90.6% of the entire variation of the analyzed countries; the first component being the most important and explaining 63.4% and the second component, only 27.2%.

The variables considered, were just the eight dimensions, which are correlated with the two components and they are presented in Table 2.

The circle of correlations shows the two components correlated with the variables, which define them, in Figure 1.

The first component has at one end five of eight cultural dimensions: *trusting, leading, scheduling, communicating* and *deciding* and at the other end *persuading*, as opposite to those previous mentioned.

The second component is defined by the remained cultural dimensions: *disagreeing* and *evaluating*.

Considering the significance of the variables which characterized them, the components can be defined. The first component which is described by actions can be named as *management component* or *managerial capabilities* – either for organizations or individuals. The second component unites the dimensions *disagreeing* and *evaluating*, which show the acceptance of management actions, *the executive component* or *way of perceiving the managerial actions*. With other words the first component can be that of *coordinating actions* and the second one, as the *operational component*.

The chart of individuals, in Figure 2, shows the positions of the 19 countries, depending on the two components.

Each quadrant of the chart defines a cultural model. The greater the projection of a country on one component is, the higher is the importance of the component for the country's position. The intersection of axes emphasizes the average levels of both components. The countries are placed at ±0.5, ±1, ±1.5 until ±2 standard deviations to the average level of the components.

Most of the countries from the first quadrant are Arab countries with islamic religion: United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey but also Portugal. Being representative for the high values of the dimensions defining the components, the conclusions about the cultural model one is: communicating at high-context, leading in hierarchical way, deciding by top-down decisions, trusting based on relationship, scheduling is flexible. Persuading being at the other end of the

first component, it results that for quadrants one and four, the low values are representative, meaning that persuading in these countries is based on principles-first. The other two dimensions of the second component are at their upper values, so that evaluating accepts indirect criticism and disagreeing is avoiding confrontation.

The second quadrant is formed by: United Kingdom and in the same measure, representative for persuading based on applications-first, are: Norway, Sweden and United States of America. Their cultural model indicates also low-context communicating, egalitarian leading, consensual deciding, task-based trust, linear scheduling, indirect criticism and avoiding confrontation in disagreeing.

The countries from the third frame of the chart from Figure 2 are: Germany, Finland, Denmark and Netherlands. Their cultural model is characterized by: communicating with low-context, persuading based on applications-first, egalitarian leading, consensual deciding, task-based trusting, linear scheduling, evaluating with direct criticism and disagreeing by avoiding the confrontation.

The representative countries for the fourth national model are: Poland, Italy, Spain, Romania, France and Russian Federation. The national cultural model from the fourth frame can be described by Meyer's dimensions as follows: communicating in high-context, hierarchical leading, top-down decisions in deciding, relationship-based trusting, flexible scheduling, direct criticism in evaluating, confrontational in case of disagreeing and principles-first in persuading.

Using PCA on the recorded values of the national cultural dimensions, established by Meyer, the paper presents the characteristics of four national cultural models, obtained in relation with two components of these cultural dimensions, which emphasize the management capabilities and their perceiving way by the peoples from the analyzed countries.

Well-being, a multidimensional concept

The European Commission, interested in the future of Europe, financed some research projects to find the main concerns of European citizen on long term, their hopes and fears and their choices and perceptions of the main issues of well-being of Europe. The obtained results of these projects should be useful for the policies makers at European level and at the country level.

The AUGUR project of the EU was a main instrument for funding research for the period 2007-2013. The reflection project "Well-being 2030" was a qualitative study in 2011, in eight EU member states: Estonia, Germany, Greece, France, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK.

The concept of *well-being* of society in the future was perceived by the respondents at personal level, for health services, for education and about employment/ income – priorities for spending.

The main priorities established by the participants for the "*well-being of society in future"(a)* were: the economy, the society and community, the resources: public financing and pensions, natural resources, the environment. The conclusions showed that all four factors were considered important in the same measure and interrelated; the changes to one will impact on another.

For the *personal well-being,* the conclusions of the report emphasized the key factors as being the interrelated areas: health, education and employment. Employment offers access to health and education. Education is important for employment and "*a good health is fundamental to being able to function in society and thus is fundamental to well-being.*" (Well-being in 2030, 2011)

About *health system*, the report "*Well-being in 2030"* ." (Well-being in 2030, 2011) showed that various aspects about healthcare expenditure depended on age and locality and did not mention any priority for certain directions, but the expected general ones: promotion of prevention behaviours, development of healthcare structures, extension of publicly funded treatments, and investment in medical research. Investment in healthcare staff had the lowest priority. The access for all in healthcare services was the main aspect accepted by respondents. The private healthcare system was perceived as being a discrimination of the poor.

The report emphasized the opinions of the respondents concerning the importance of quality in *education*, accessibility for all and the vocational education as a positive direction ." (Well-being in 2030, 2011).

Concerning the *employment / income – priorities for spending*, the report offered the main directions: reducing unemployment, economic growth and increasing competitiveness. The respondents from Greece and Germany declared that social protection is important in the same measure as the economic growth (Well-being in 2030, 2011).

The *summary* of the report showed that the social well-being for European citizens is influenced mainly by the social inequality and economy. The economic growth may conduct to decreasing unemployment and may relax the social inequalities ensuring good healthcare and education.

An objective definition of well-being takes in considerations the domains: *health*, *education*, *recognition, social inclusion and employment* and *income equality "as a condition for social cohesion*

and long-term development" (Wolleb& Daraio, 2013).

The following analyses consider the socio-economic indicators for this definition of well-being with all its aspects.

Cultural and socio-economic dimensions of well-being, in 2013

Analysis of national cultural models will continue by taking in consideration some indicators which characterize the well-being in the analyzed countries. The purpose of these analyses is to find the influence of cultural model over the economic development and the well-being of people from those countries.

Human Development Index (HDI) analyzes the well-being, due to its three dimensions: health or life expectancy at birth, education and wealth component for a decent standard of living - measured by GNI per capita ($ PPP) instead of GDP per capita. HDI covers the main areas of well-being in a country.

Because HDI does not refer to inequalities in the basic three areas of human development, there is calculated Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI). The IHDI is HDI adjusted for inequalities in the three areas of a long and healthy life, knowledge by education and a decent standard of living (www.hdr.undp.org).

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is a measure of perceived corruption in the public-sector, in a country. CPI is calculated by Transparency International, which is ranking 177 countries for which it has been obtained since 2002. The comparable scores of CPIs are available only starting with the year 2012, when the methodology was changed comparing to the previous period. On a scale of 0 – 100, value 0 means high corruption perceived and value 100 signifies a clean perception. Using CPI in these analyses covers the part of well-being related to people satisfaction about society and government in their own countries (www.countryeconomy.com).

To better find the impact of cultural influences it was also used the Overall life satisfaction index (OLSI), being considered also a measure for *well-being at personal level*. On a scale of 0 – 10, the lower level shows the worst possible life and the top of scale represents the best possible life for the respondents (www.data.worldbank.org a).

To complete all the areas of well-being the paper considers also the unemployment rates and the GDP per capita (PPP $2011) in 2013, for the analyzed countries. GDP per capita is calculated based on purchasing power parity (PPP) of US dollar from 2011 (www.data.worldbank.org b).

After establishing the socio-economic indicators to characterize the well-being, the new PCA considers the eight cultural dimensions together with CPI, HDI and unemployment rates, for 2013.

The obtained model of two principal components explains 81.6% of the entire variation of the countries, from which the first component has 62.6%.

Unemployment rate appears as opposite to the two cultural dimensions: "evaluating" and "disagreeing" of the second component. Unemployment is really associated with direct criticism in "evaluating" and "disagreeing" with confrontation. But for the analyzed countries, unemployment rate is medium correlated with the second component and it will be eliminated. Maybe in other case study with more countries, it could become more important, but here is no more considered.

CPI and HDI appear very strongly correlated to the first component, at the other end together with "persuading". The countries in the second and the third frame will be representative for higher values of HDI, but also of CPI.

The new PCA without unemployment rate offers a better model with a cumulated explained variance of 87.8%. The chart of countries' positions is that obtained in Figure 2.

A new PCA with introducing Overall Life Satisfaction Index (OLSI) and GDP per capita gives a model which explains less variation than the previous one, 84.2%. The circle of correlations shows the GDP per capita in the second frame, as a variable correlated with the second component, that of resulted perceptions and now it can be called component of results also of perceptions and economic results of managerial policies. High values of GDP per capita are associated with indirect criticism of "evaluating" and avoiding confrontation in "disagreeing". OLSI is positioned close to first component and high values of satisfaction index are associated with applications-first in "persuading", in developed countries.

This model is good because it offers a chart of countries' positions, presented in Figure 3, which clearly emphasizes the Arab World in first frame.

The Arab countries form a distinct group in first frame. They are developed countries and representative for the first cultural model, described by communicating at high-context, hierarchical leading, top-down decisions, relationship based trust, flexible scheduling, persuading on principles-first, indirect criticism in evaluating and disagreeing with avoiding confrontation. This cultural model is valid for the countries from first frame and the cultural dimensions strongly affect the economic transactions and political international relationship. For businessmen is difficult to have partners with this cultural model, being hard to understand the deep roots of traditions and religion, sometimes very different from their own cultural model.

Introducing of economic variable, GDP per capita and the OLSI, the positions of some

countries moved. Turkey and Portugal changed the first frame with the fourth frame, being close the average level of the second component, especially GDP per capita. Turkey continues to keep high cultural profile of the model, in the same measure as Romania and Russian Federation. The countries from fourth frame are placed between the interval of average level and minus one standard deviation to the second component of results, and Russia even more than minus one standard deviation.

To can analyze the countries' positions, it is better to renounce at Arab countries from first frame. Moreover we introduce the indicator HDI adjusted with inequalities, IHDI, keeping all the other variables. The PCA gives us a new model which explains 84.9% from the countries' variation. But very interesting is the new position of variables at both ends of first component, which changed between them. The second component remains with the same two cultural variables of "disagreeing" and "evaluating". The circle of components is presented in Figure 4.

Another significant change is about GDP per capita which becomes very correlated with the first component, together with all the other indicators of well-being: HDI, IHDI, CPI, OLSI and with the cultural dimension of "persuading".

The new analysis offers other significance for the two components, which can be named: the first one becomes very important in explaining of a proportion close to 70% from the variation of the countries could be *the component of socio-economic development*, and the second, *the component of action of cultural factors in managerial policies*.

The chart of individuals shows the countries' positions, depending on both components and is presented in Figure 5. The developed countries will be positioned here in first and fourth frame and are societies with applications-first in "persuading".

Changing the ends of first axis means that in Figure 5, there are other positions of cultural models. We can see that the same countries from second frame in the previous analyses are now in the first frame. Norway is significant for its high levels of HDI, IHDI and OSLI and also for the other indicators, high level of GDP per capita and CPI, meaning a clean and developed society. The cultural model for these countries has already been described. It seems to be the cultural model which ensures the well-being of people. It should be also followed by the other countries.

The group of countries from third frame until now, has moved to the fourth frame, like the left side moved to the right side of the chart, keeping the cultural characteristics, already described.

The countries which lie in the fourth frame until now, have divided in the new frames: the second and the third, here in Figure 5, through the disappearing of Arab countries. It is clearly

evidence about the low level of socio-economic development of Turkey, Russian Federation and Romania – placed between minus one and one and half standard deviation to the average level of socio-economic development of the analyzed countries under the influence of cultural factors.

For the countries in the second frame: Portugal, Romania and Turkey, which seems to be an outlier, it is obvious that cultural dimensions: high-context in communicating, hierarchical leading, top-down in deciding, relationship-based trusting, flexible scheduling, indirect criticism in evaluating, avoiding confrontation in disagreeing and principles-first in persuading – are huge barriers in the socio-economic development and causes of delaying and lagging behind of the well-being of their peoples.

For the countries in the third frame: Italy, Poland, Spain, France and the outlier - the Russian Federation, the significant cultural influences are: high-context in communicating, hierarchical leading, top-down in deciding, relationship-based trusting, flexible scheduling, direct criticism in evaluating, accepted confrontation in disagreeing and principles-first in persuading.

Applying the PCA for the indicators of well-being and the cultural dimensions, the paper explained the well-being in some countries of the World through some cultural models. The connection between the performances of economies and their national cultural models characterizes the well-being of people and also the future of well-being. It is accepted that the cultural values are hardly changing; so the well-being will keep the same positions between countries just because of their cultural models.

Conclusions

The paper presented the importance of considering the cultural dimensions in the actual globalized socio-economic context.

Describing the eight cultural dimensions of Erin Meyer, we presented them also in association with Hofstede's dimensions and concluded that the eight dimensions can be more analytical used for explaining the cultural differences.

Erin Meyer's database of cultural dimensions offered us the possibility to analyze them separately and in the context of well-being.

The separated analysis of cultural dimensions emphasizes the two components of them. One component "persuading" opposes to other five dimensions: "deciding", "leading", "communicating", "scheduling" and "trusting". The second component unites "evaluating" and "disagreeing".

The fact that all the following analyses, even adding variables of economic and social nature, have kept mostly intact the second component with the same two dimensions, even if not so important

as the first one, in explaining the variation between the countries – shows the importance of these two cultural dimensions, which succeed in making difference between the analyzed countries.

The two cultural dimensions "evaluating" and "disagreeing" are named in a single component the way of perceiving the managerial actions or the way of acting and reacting: evaluation with direct or indirect criticism and then in disagreeing acting either with confrontation or avoiding confrontation. The importance of these two cultural dimensions appeared when the renouncing at Arab countries has determined the first axis to change the ends, but this fact did not produce any change for the second component, which continued to characterize the national cultural profiles of analyzed countries.

The changing of sense on first axis shows how important is the Arab cultural model for the World economy, and how strong are these cultural influences with the other cultural models of world economies.

The analysis of national cultural models of well-being in some countries of the World proved its dynamic character but also stable status in time of well-being. The national cultural profiles determine the stable character of well-being in time.

The well-being is a complex multidimensional concept, as described here. The complexity of this concept is given by its consideration always in relation with other peoples belonging to other cultural models, each time for the previous state ago, in present and for the future.

The paper also offers an educational purpose for those who are or will arrive in top-positions, in making decisions processes. These persons should contribute to the well-being of people, as a condition for the well-being of the entire human society. Acting by education and changing the behaviours of young people, ensuring conditions for a healthy and decent life, freedom of expression and equality of chances in education and health services – to approach the values of the cultural model which ensures the socio-economic development.

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[12] http://hdr.undp.org/en

Table 1.
Explaining the meaning of Meyer's dimensions

Cultural dimensions	Scale from 0 to 15
	0 15
Communicating	Low ....High-context
Evaluating	Direct ....Indirect criticism
Persuading	Principles-first ....Applications-first
Leading	Egalitarian ....Hierarchical.
Deciding	Consensual ....Top-down decisions
Trusting	Task-based trust.........Relationship-based trust
	(from the head) ....(from the heart)
Disagreeing	Confrontational ....Avoid confrontation
Scheduling	Linear ....Flexible

Table 2.
Principal components of cultural dimensions (SPSS)

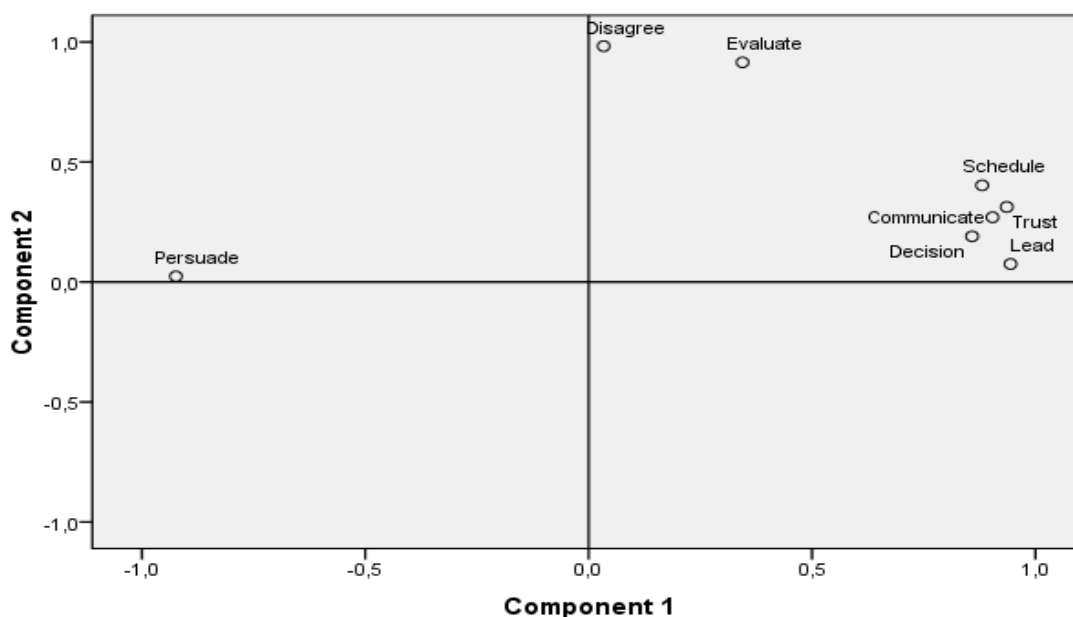|	Rotated Component Matrix[a]	
	Component	
	1	2
Communicate	**.904**	.270
Evaluate	.344	**.915**
Persuade	**-.924**	.024
Lead	**.944**	.075
Decision	**.858**	.190
Trust	**.936**	.313
Disagree	.034	**.983**
Schedule	**.881**	.403
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

Component Plot in Rotated Space

Figure 1. Circle of correlations of cultural dimensions
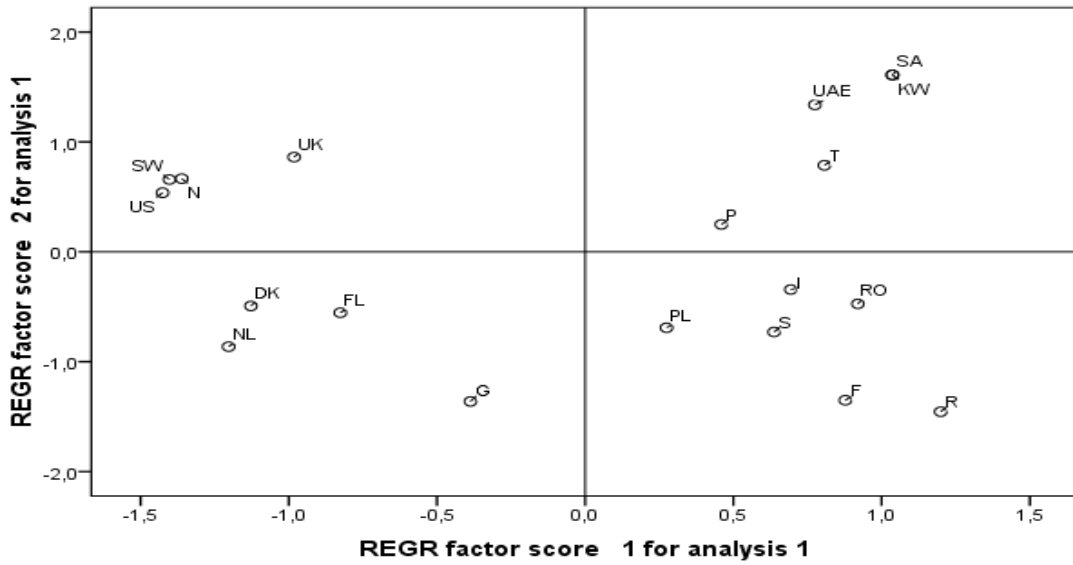
Cultural dimensions for the analyzed countries, in 2013

Figure 2. National cultural models of analyzed countries, in 2013

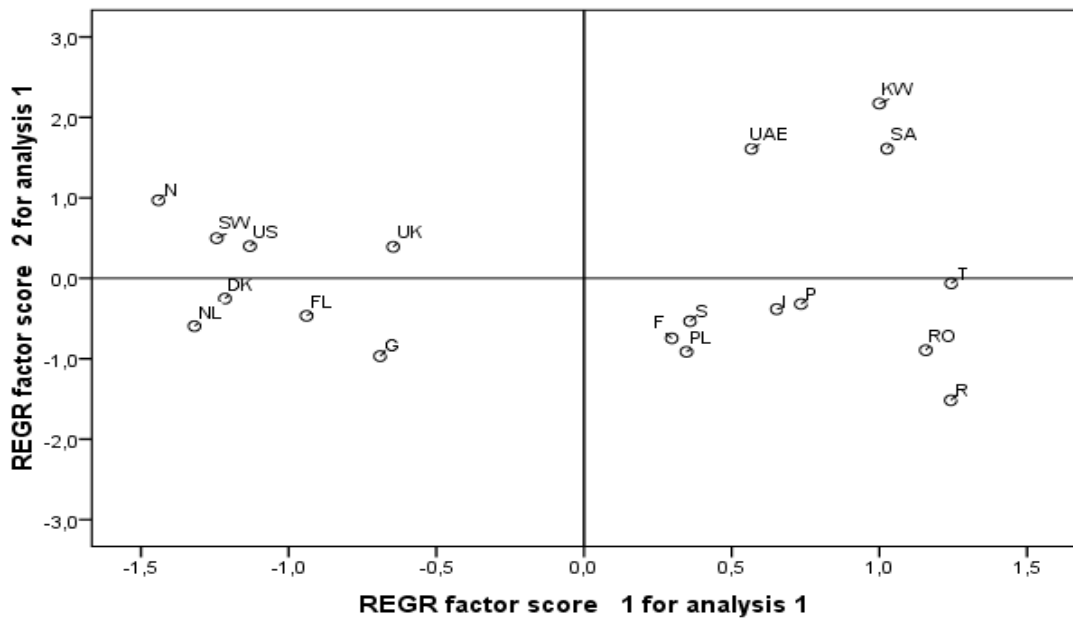## Cultural dimensions of well-being in some countries, in 2013

Figure 3. Countries' positions, depending on effectivness of socio-economic policies, in 2013
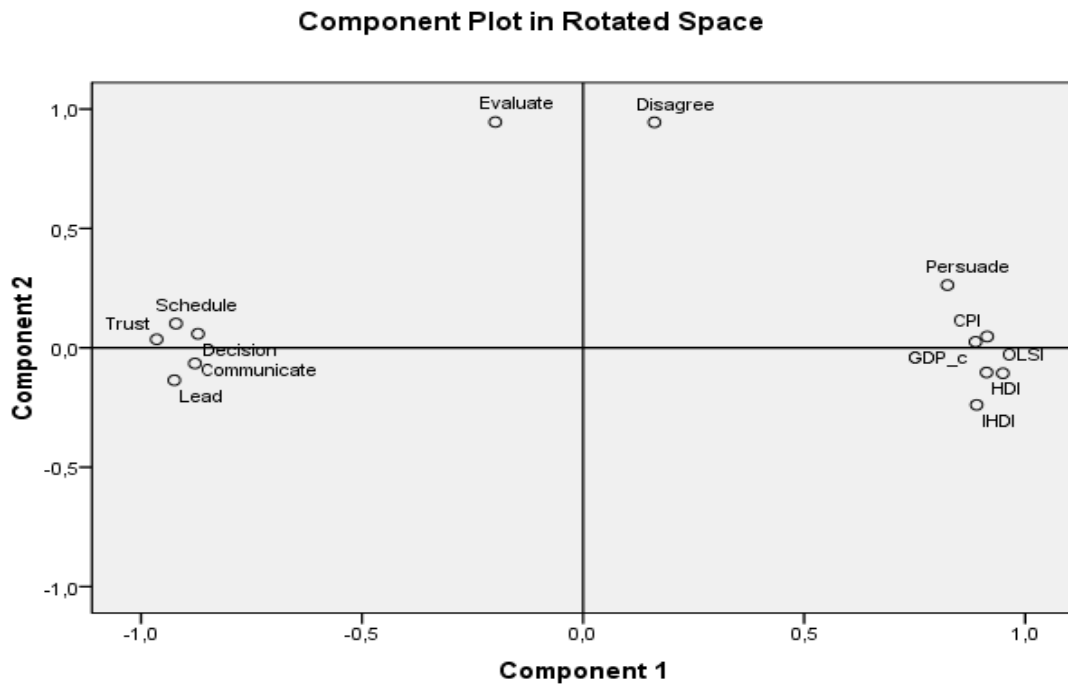
Component Plot in Rotated Space

Figure 4. Circle of correlations (without Arab countries)

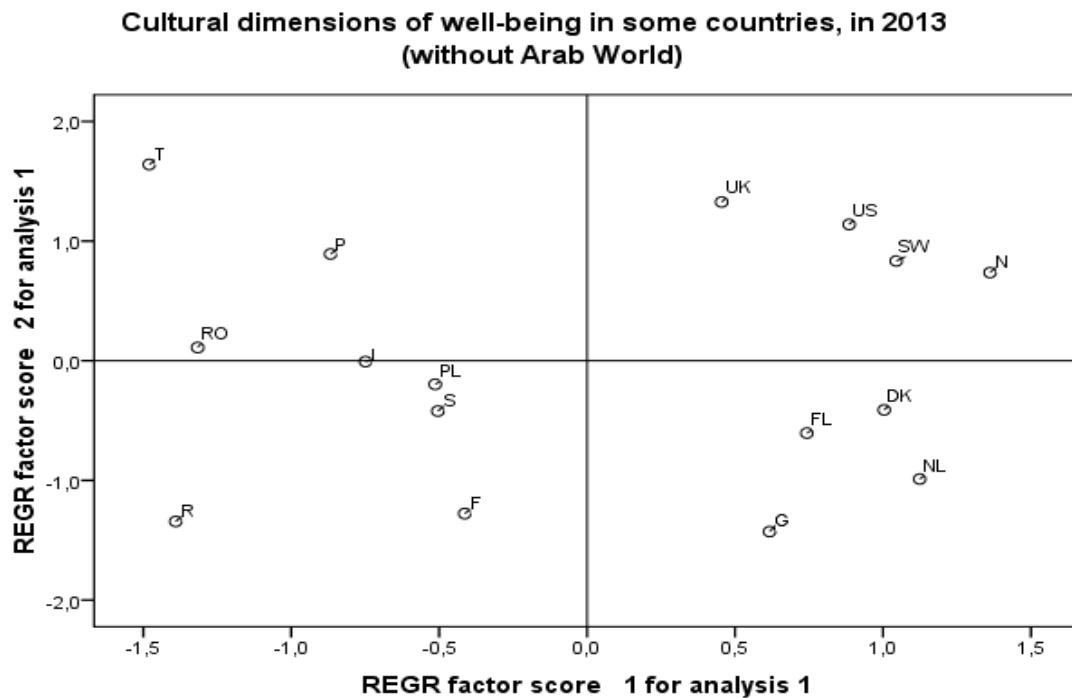## Cultural dimensions of well-being in some countries, in 2013 (without Arab World)

Figure 5. Countries' positions depending on their socio-economic performances and cultural influences, in 2013