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Cultural value differences among ethnic groups in Indonesia: Are Hofstede's Indonesian findings still relevant?

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to assess whether a national cultural framework can describe cultural differences among ethnic groups in Indonesia. We argue that to understand Indonesia's culture, the cultures of its ethnic groups must first be characterised. In this study, Hofstede's cultural framework was applied to explore cultural values of Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau, Batak and Chinese-Indonesian employees, and to investigate whether Hofstede's Indonesian findings are still relevant. A sample of 699 respondents was obtained and drawn from paid employees representing the five ethnic groups in Indonesia. The evidence suggests that Hofstede's Indonesian findings are only able to explain Javanese's cultural characteristics. Moreover, the overall findings show that there are significant differences among the ethnic groups studied.

Keywords: Javanese; Sundanese; Minangkabau; Batak; Chinese Indonesian; cultural values; ethnic group; national culture.

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1 Introduction

Culture has been recognised as a predominant factor in predicting human behaviour, and recent studies have shown its influences on business performance (Perdhana, 2014; Matveev and Milter, 2004). Culture is defined as "the collective mental programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of a group or society to the other" (Hofstede et al., 2010). To understand, measure and compare cultures, researchers have developed several methods known as 'cultural frameworks'. One of the most widely used frameworks is Hofstede's national culture dimensions.

Hofstede (1980b) identifies four dimensions of national culture: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity vs. femininity. On the basis of Bond's Chinese Values Survey across 23 countries, long- and short-term orientation was later added to the original four dimensions (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). In 2010, indulgence vs. restraint dimension was added based on World Values Survey findings (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The cultural framework allows comparisons among countries, presenting scores from each dimension ranging from 0 to 100. According to Hofstede's findings, Indonesia is high on power distance, low on avoiding uncertainty, collectivist, low on masculinity, long-term oriented and restrained (Hofstede et al., 2010). Although Hofstede did not explicitly report the ethnicities of his respondents, there is a tendency to present ethnic Javanese as representing the whole Indonesia (Perdhana, 2014).

In Hofstede's findings, Indonesia was reported to have large power distance (PDI score 78), collectivistic value (IDV score 14), low masculinity (MAS score 46) and low preference for avoiding uncertainty (UAI score 48). Although all respondents satisfied Hofstede's matched-sample requirements regarding occupations, there is a possibility that he overlooked the vast variation of cultures of Indonesia: almost all of the respondents were of Javanese ethnicity (Perdhana, 2014). Hofstede himself admits that his score may be misleading in a multi-ethnic country like Indonesia (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Understanding the complexity of Indonesia's culture is however jeopardised by the lack of empirical studies in the country. Most studies discussing Indonesia's culture disregarded cultural variation in the country (Liddle, 1996; Goodfellow, 1997; Irawanto, 2009; Irawanto et al., 2012). Perdhana's (2014) study attempted to bridge this gap by underlining that to understand Indonesia's culture it is necessary to draw comparisons among its ethnic groups. In summary, given the potential ethnic bias involved, we are left with the question of whether we should rely on Hofstede's findings to understand Indonesia's cultural values.

Given the tendency to present Javanese culture as the culture of Indonesia, and the dearth of studies of Indonesia's cultural variation, there may be confusion and generalisation toward Indonesia's cultural values. Therefore, more research is needed to investigate the extent of differences among ethnic groups in Indonesia. The purpose of the present study is to assess whether a national cultural framework can describe cultural

differences among ethnic groups in Indonesia, and whether Hofstede's Indonesian scores are still relevant today given their failure to take into account cultural variation across the country.

We investigated the cultural values of employees from five major ethnic groups in Indonesia: Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Minangkabau and Chinese Indonesian. We decided to draw comparisons from only five of the 31 ethnic groups in the country due to time and budget constraints. The reasons for choosing those five ethnic groups are explained below:

- Javanese and Sundanese were selected due to the size of these ethnic groups. "the Javanese are the largest ethnic group in Indonesia comprising over 40% of the total population, while the Sundanese are the second largest group comprising over 15%" (Statistics Indonesia, 2011; The World Factbook, 2016). Another reason was Javanese's long history in Indonesian Presidencies. From 1945 until today, Presidents of Indonesia have always come from Javanese ethnic group.

- The Batak was chosen due to its patriarchal organisation. Patriarchy is a social system in which men are more dominant over women. Men are the primary figures and hold the authority central to social organisation, political leadership, moral authority and control of the property. It encompasses the institutions of male's rule and privilege, and entails female subordination (Bhasin, 2006; Mitchell, 1971; Walby, 1990; Lerner, 1989). The Batak were also mentioned by Hofstede et al. (2010) and highlighted as an ethnic group with distinctive characteristics relative to the Javanese.

- As for the Minangkabau, the group was chosen based on its unique matriarchal organisation. Matriarchy is a social system in which women are more dominant over men. In matriarchy societies, women perform a central role in political leadership, moral authority, and control of property (Ledgerwood, 1995; Sanday, 2003; Robinson, 2012; Classen, 1989).

- Lastly, the Chinese Indonesian group was selected due to its strong presence in the country's economy, as exemplified by the fact that 8 out of the 10 richest men in Indonesia are of Chinese-Indonesian descent (Forbes, 2017).

By utilising Hofstede's four main dimensions of ethnic group level in Indonesia, this study has the aim of answering the following questions:

- What are the cultural values of Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau, Batak and Chinese Indonesian employees?

- Are Hofstede's Indonesian findings still relevant?

2   Literature review

2.1   *Indonesia and its ethnic groups*

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelagic country, spreads across over 13,000 from the tip of Sumatra Island to the edge of West New Guinea (Papua). Indonesia is also world's largest Muslim-majority country and the fourth world's most populous country (The

World Factbook, 2016). Indonesia has over 1300 distinct ethnicities and tribes clustered into 31 major ethnic groups (Statistics Indonesia, 2011). 'Bahasa Indonesia' or 'Bahasa' is the unifying language used mainly in more formal contexts or in interactions between different ethnic groups. Indonesian people, in general, prefer to use their traditional language in daily conversation.

Javanese. Javanese ethnic group is characterised by a strong culture playing a significant role in individual's lives from birth to death. Although there are many Javanese people who live outside of the Java Island, they still preserve their culture as 'ugeman', the Javanese term for 'reference in life'. The Javanese are well known for their politeness, shyness, preference for hiding feelings and etiquette.

Various studies have explored the Javanese's characteristics, cultures and traditions (Jong, 1976; Koentjaraningrat, 1984; Magnis, 2001; Mulder, 1983). As revealed by Magnis (2001), the uniqueness of the Javanese cultural values lies in its tolerance to new values without loss of traditional ones. In business or trading activities, Javanese people uphold the concept attaining victory without demeaning others and of achieving success even under unfavourable circumstances.

Currently, Javanese philosophies are often overlooked despite the fact that they could be developed in the form of work ethic principles and as such disseminated into business institutions. As another example, the puppet *Semar* can provide lessons in the art of delivering services. *Semar* can serve its boss well and is respected by its opponents, and despite not being high-minded, it possesses powerful weapons. As a God of great strength, it has the ability to deliver good services (Setyodarmodjo, 2007).

Sundanese. Sundanese ethnic group has some similarities with the Javanese. They respect older people, have a collectivist character, and take comfort in stable and predictable conditions. However, there is something that distinguishes them from the Javanese, especially in the religious activities: the Sundanese generally can be said to be more devout.

Minangkabau. The Minangkabau ethnic group is characterised by matriarchy, which means that women play an important role within families (Junus, 2004). Most Minangkabau people are from West Sumatra, comprising 2.7% of the total population in Indonesia (The World Factbook, 2016). As a rule, men leave their homes and move to another city after college or high school graduation in search of a better life. In other cities, most of them become entrepreneurs. Although happy to move to another city, those men will not forget their hometown and family. After achieving success in their business lives away from their hometown, they are able to contribute to social advancement (Junus, 2004).

Batak. In contrast to the Minangkabau ethnic group, the Batak are known for their patriarchal social structure. Men play an important role within the family. A small family often has at least one man carrying the family name. Most of the Batak ethnic group resides in North Sumatra, comprising 3.6% of the total population in Indonesia (The World Factbook, 2016). The Batak are also known as indigenous people who often move into cities in search of a better life (Bangun, 2004).

Chinese-Indonesian. Chinese-Indonesian people are Chinese migrants who initially entered Indonesia as traders, and have since then been recognised as one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia according to Act Number 12/2006 of the Republic of Indonesia. Chinese Indonesian people are seen as exhibiting a preference for trading or for

becoming entrepreneurs. The proof is that although small in number (only about 1.2% of the total population of Indonesia) Chinese Indonesians dominate the list of the wealthiest persons in Indonesia (Forbes, 2011).

Chinese-Indonesians are seen as showing a tendency to seek material success and to engage in entrepreneurial or trade activities. In conducting its business, Chinese-Indonesians often help each other. For example, if a store does not have the items requested by a customer in stock, the store owner is likely to contact another store so as to prevent disappointment in customers. If that is not possible, the store owner is likely to refer the customer to another store also owned by a Chinese-Indonesian.

2.2 *Hofstede's dimensions of national culture*

In 1980, Hofstede empirically identified four dimensions of national culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism and masculinity vs. femininity.

Power distance. Power distance is defined as the degree to which people with less power or lower social status expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1980a; Hofstede et al., 2010). This dimension relates to the fact that not all individuals in societies are equal and expresses the attitude of a given culture towards these social inequalities.

In countries with large power distance, the relationship between bosses and subordinates is similar to a family. The boss plays a role of a father figure for his or her subordinates. In such society, decisions are centrally made by the top management. To maintain harmony in the workplace, disagreements and arguments are avoided.

Uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance is defined as "the extent which the members of institutions and organisations within a society feel threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous, or unstructured situations" (Hofstede et al., 2010). The dimension of uncertainty avoidance refers to the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known. This ambiguity creates anxiety, and different cultures have learnt to deal with such anxiety in different ways. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations by creating beliefs and institutions to avoid them is reflected in the uncertainty avoidance score.

Individualism vs. collectivism. This dimension measures the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It refers to whether people's self-image is defined in terms of 'I' or 'We'. In Individualist societies, people are expected to tend for themselves and their direct family only. In Collectivist societies, people belong to 'in-groups' that provide support in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Masculinity vs. femininity. A high (or masculine) score on this dimension indicates that a given society is driven by competition, achievement and success, defined by the recognition of a 'winner' – a value system that starts in school and extending throughout professional life. A low (or feminine) score on the dimension implies dominant values of caring for others and quality of life in a society. In a feminine society, quality of life is the sign of success, and to be distinctive or stand out from the crowd is not considered an admirable trait. Feminine societies focus on "working in order to live"; managers strive for consensus, while people generally value equality and solidarity, and thus favour

well-being over status, and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation, and incentives such as free time and flexibility are favoured. An effective manager is a supportive one, and decision making is achieved through involvement of company members.

2.3 Hofstede's Indonesian dimensions scores

Hofstede's Indonesian scores were only available two years after his *Culture's Consequences* (1980a) had been published. The scores were presented in a booklet entitled "Cultural Pitfalls for Dutch Expatriates in Indonesia" (Hofstede, 1982a). In his findings, Indonesia was described as exhibiting large power distance, low preference for avoiding uncertainty, collectivist characteristics and low masculinty. Table 1 outlines the scores on each of the main four dimensions of national culture.

Table 1   Hofstede's Indonesian dimensions scores

Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Individualism vs. collectivism	Masculinity vs. femininity
78	48	14	46

Source: Hofstede (1982a) and Hofstede et al. (2010)

2.4 Applying a national cultural framework at the ethnic group level

Hofstede et al. (2010) define culture as "the collective mental programming of the mind" that differentiates members of a collective group from another. The term 'collective group' does not always refer to national culture. It may also refer to other levels such as regional cultures or ethnic group cultures within a single country (Hofstede et al., 2010).

A country might be formed with a high degree of similarities or homogeneity, or formed from different ethnic groups united by historical events of a colonial past. As a multi-ethnic country, Indonesia consists of many different cultures and values that make it a unique country. It is difficult to assess differences among minor ethnic groups as they are often only visible to the members of the ethnic groups themselves. The purpose of the present study was to give a closer investigation regarding the cultural variations using Hofstede's national cultural framework. Therefore, the classification of cultural differences in the present study is based on ethnicities and ethnic groups.

Ethnicity refers to "cultural practices and outlooks of a given community that have emerged historically and set people apart" (Giddens et al., 2012). Members of ethnic groups see themselves as culturally distinct from other groups and are seen as distinct by other groups. Various characteristics may distinguish ethnic groups from one another, but the most common are some combination of language, history, religious faith and ancestry – real or imagined – and styles of dress or adornment (Giddens et al., 2012). Examples of ethnic groups in Indonesia are Javanese, Madurese, Balinese, Sundanese and Batak.

Cross-cultural comparison studies have been based on two or more nationally distinct group of respondents, and built stereotypes at the national level to understand essential differences among countries. While not rejecting this approach entirely, the present study argued that such approaches are only useful at an early stage of investigations, when data validation or proof of concept is required and disregarding the actual conditions of many multi-ethnic countries may be justifiable.

Given the fact that Indonesia is a multi-ethnic country and Indonesian researchers have become increasingly aware of this reality (i.e., Mangundjaya, 2013; Perdhana, 2014; Mas'ud, 2008, 2010; Suharnomo, 2016) efforts must be made to address cultural variation within the country.

2.5 Past studies

Several studies have investigated the importance of culture in the business context. In 2010, Hofstede et al. (2010) tested a common assumption that a cultural framework designed for country-level comparisons could also be applied to other collective groups within a country, such as regional culture or ethnic group. The value survey module (VSM) used in these three studies was VSM 82 and VSM 94. Although the results of the study suggest that there are significant differences among regional cultures, they were reluctant to recommend using the VSM to understand regional differences due to its inability to capture meaningful local cultural variation. They recommended future research to extend the questionnaires based on local literature.

Fischer and Al-Issa (2012) published a brief report which extended Hofstede's framework to Arab countries. Hofstede has made generalisations regarding the cultural values of Arab countries by presenting them as a single cultural 'Arab World' (Hofstede, 1980a, 2001; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede et al., 2010). Fischer and Al-Issa's sample consisted of students enrolled at a university in Sharjah, UAE. Despite the opposite score values to those from Hofstede's Arab World, their results point to a similar pattern suggesting that Arab cultures might share similar values. However, instead of admitting that the scores indicated similarities among the countries, Fischer and Al-Issa pointed out the potential variation in cultural values. Moreover, they also questioned the rigorousness of the cultural framework following Baskerville's (2003) criticism of Hofstede.

Similarly, Mangundjaya (2013) studied a state-owned company employing Indonesian people from different cultural backgrounds. The total population of her study was 2025 respondents. She employed a modified version of VSM 94. Mangundjaya was aware of the sampling problem in Hofstede's Indonesian samples, and therefore divided her respondents into ethnicities (Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Minangkabau, Balinese, Ambon and Malay) and tested whether they generated different results or scores. The results indicate that all ethnic groups were characterised by large power distance, individualism, moderate preference for avoiding uncertainty and masculinity. Compared to Hofstede's findings, Mangundjaya's results differed regarding individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity (Mangundjaya, 2013). She argued that shifts in values were due to the organisational culture promoting the values of individualism and masculinity. However, since Mangundjaya only studied a single company and all ethnic groups showed strong similarities in the dimensions scores, the study cannot be generalised. Therefore, Mangundjaya (2013) recommends future research in multiple organisations rather than a single one.

In 2014, a doctoral dissertation was published on the cultural values and leadership style of managers from Javanese and Chinese Indonesian ethnic groups (Perdhana, 2014). The purpose was to investigate whether Chinese Indonesians exhibited certain values allowing them to be more competitive in business compared to the Javanese (Perdhana, 2014). The study employed VSM 13 to measure the cultural values of Javanese and Chinese Indonesian managers through a set of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. It

was found that Chinese Indonesian managers demonstrated more collectivistic and assertive behaviour and were more comfortable with exhibiting ambitious behaviour than Javanese managers.

In the same year, Weutsink (2014) reported his comparative study of regional cultures in India, which he described as a culturally heterogeneous country. It was found that cultural value differences among regional groups in India reflect economic disparities among the country's regions. He concluded that Hofstede's national cultural framework was able to capture regional cultural differences in India.

Gupta and Bhaskar (2016) investigated the cross-cultural issues that multinational companies (MNCs) might face when operating in India. It was found that in order to be successful MNCs need to show an adequate understanding of the culture of the country, further suggesting that culture is an important aspect of business activities.

3   Research methodology

3.1   Sample

The criteria for respondent eligibility were:

- a person, either man or woman, who is employed in a paid job of any position

- a person who was raised, from 0 to 10 years of age, in an environment representing his or her ethnic group. For example, a Batak is eligible to participate in this study if he or she was raised in the region of North Sumatra.

A total of 699 employees working in a variety of industries were recruited to participate in this study. The respondents mainly resided in Central Java Province. The sample consisted of 436 males (62.4%) and 263 females (37.6%). The sample was relatively young with the age group of 20–24 years old represented by 316 respondents (45.2%). The ethnic composition was fairly distributed: 28.6% of respondents were Javanese, 21.3% Sundanese, 14.3% Batak, 14.3% Minangkabau and 21.5% Chinese Indonesian.

3.2   Value survey modules

The latest iteration of Hofstede's Value Survey Module was issued in 2013 and is known as VSM 13. The module measures six dimensions of national culture. Compared to VSM 08 which measures seven dimensions, VSM 13 has omitted the Monumentalism dimension. Since the purpose of our study was to compare our findings to those of Hofstede, we decided to employ VSM 82 due to its similarities to the IBM Value Survey Questionnaire. The composition of the module is based on research on 116,000 respondents within the IBM Corporation (Hofstede, 1982b).

VSM 82 consists of three parts:

- 23 questions with responses ranging from 1 (of utmost importance) to 5 (of very little or no importance)

- 24 specific questions about culture

- demographic questions about age, gender, ethnicity, education and occupation.

VSM 82 measures four dimensions of national culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism and masculinity vs. femininity. Responses were made through 5-point scale and were calculated using VSM 82's formulas as follows:

Information:

PDI: power distance index

UAI: uncertainty avoidance index

IDV: individualism index

MAS: masculinity index.

3.3   Research procedure

VSM 82 was only available in the original English version. According to English First English Proficiency Index 2016, Indonesia is ranked 32 out of 72 countries, placing the country in the moderate proficiency band. On this level, Indonesian employees are expected to be able to participate in meetings in their area of expertise through passive communication only. They are unable to make proper presentations at work or read advanced texts with ease (English First, 2016). Therefore VSM 82 was translated into Bahasa Indonesia.

After the first draft of translation was obtained, a supervisor produced a revised version used in a preliminary research or pilot testing. Pilot testing was aimed to obtain comments and clarification from the respondents regarding any mistakes in the questionnaire such as mistyped words and unclear terms. In addition, researchers were able to estimate the total amount of time needed to finish a single questionnaire, which was information later used to convince prospective respondents to participate.

The pilot test using the revised draft was conducted in the Masters in Management Department, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Diponegoro (FEB Undip). There were a total of 40 respondents in the test which were divided into two groups. As described above, only students who were employed in a company were eligible to participate in the pilot test. Their responses were included in dataset according to their own ethnic groups.

After the pilot test was done and the new design had been applied, the next stage was data collection. Questionnaires were handed directly to the respondents when possible with the help of research assistants. We also used email and postal services to send the questionnaires to some respondents. Distribution of questionnaires was done between May 2014 and May 2015.

The initial responses amounted to 702. Three responses were omitted due to exceeding the acceptable amount of blank responses of 25% (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). As a result, the total sample of this study was 699 respondents from Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Minangkabau and Chinese Indonesian employees.

4   Results

4.1   Profile of respondents

Table 2 outlines the profile of respondents.

Table 2   Profile of respondents

Variable	J	S	B	M	C.I	N	
Ethnicity	200	149	100	100	150	699	
Gender							
Male	136	77	70	54	99	436	62.4
Female	64	72	30	46	51	263	37.6
Age							
20–24 years old	120	63	44	41	45	313	45.2
25–29 years old	16	23	20	20	33	112	16.0
30–34 years old	16	14	11	14	24	79	11.3
35–39 years old	16	7	6	3	18	50	7.2
40–49 years old	24	30	10	11	15	90	12.9
Over 50 years old	8	12	9	11	15	55	7.9
Education							
Doctorate Degree	0	6	0	0	0	6	0.9
Master's Degree	24	45	14	9	18	110	15.7
Bachelor Degree	100	91	65	72	84	412	58.9
Senior High School	68	7	21	19	48	163	23.3
Junior High School	8	0	0	0	0	8	1.1
Job Position							
Manager of at least one subordinate	40	37	25	17	45	164	23.5
Employee	160	112	75	83	105	535	76.5

J: Javanese; S: Sundanese; B: Batak; M: Minangkabau; C.I: Chinese Indonesian;
N: number; %: percentage based on the total samples (699)
   Source: Research Data 2017

4.2   Results

Contrary to Hofstede's findings, our results show that there are significant differences among ethnic groups in Indonesia, particularly on the dimensions of uncertainty avoidance (UAI) and masculinity vs. femininity (MAS).

Table 3 outlines the results from all ethnic groups, along with the average scores of our total sample and Hofstede's Indonesian scores.

Significant differences are found in the UAI and MAS dimensions. While similarities can be found in the PDI and IDV dimensions. In the UAI dimension, Minangkabau and Chinese Indonesian ethnic groups are characterised by a strong preference for avoiding uncertainties, while Javanese, Sundanese and Batak are characterised by a low preference for avoiding uncertainties. In addition, the Batak score very low on this dimension indicating that Batak people may be more comfortable with uncertain situations.

Another dimension which shows significant differences across groups is the MAS dimension. Chinese Indonesian and Batak score highly in this dimension, indicating that they are a masculine society. According to Hofstede, masculine societies give high

priority to material success, higher social status and recognition. The Minangkabau group scores 39 in this dimension, which categorises it as a feminine culture. As for Javanese and Sundanese ethnic groups, they score 42 and 52, respectively, on this dimension, and are therefore classified as exhibiting a low masculine value.

Table 3   Range of VSM dimensions scores of five ethnic groups

Ethnic Group	PDI	UAI	MAS	IDV
Javanese	61	44	42	28
Sundanese	53	39	52	29
Batak	73	20	73	28
Minangkabau	66	61	39	52
Chinese-Indonesian	64	67	65	38
Indonesian[a]	**63**	**47**	**53**	**34**
Indonesian[b]	**78**	**48**	**46**	**14**

VSM: value survey module; PDI: power distance index; UAI: uncertainty avoidance index; MAS: masculinity index; IDV: individualism index.

[a]Based on the total calculation of the present study.

[b]Based on Hofstede et al. (2010); excluding two newer dimensions long term orientation (LTO) and Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR)

   Source: Research Data 2017

The present study also yields similarities among ethnic groups, particularly in the PDI and IDV dimensions. All ethnic groups are categorised by strong power distance (Table 3). Differences in scores might indicate the degree of tolerance to power inequality distribution. For instance, the Batak group is the most hierarchical, while the Sundanese is the least.

As for the IDV dimension, all ethnic groups are shown to have collectivistic values. The exception is for the Minangkabau ethnic group scoring 52 (on the moderate level of the continuum), possibly indicating a higher importance of the nuclear family in its kinship system.

Next, all 699 responses were recalculated into new dimensions scores labelled as 'Indonesian[a]' (Table 3) to represent an aggregate value for all Indonesian employees. According to the results, Indonesia is identified as exhibiting large power distance (PDI score 63), low preference for avoiding uncertainty (UAI score 47), low masculinity (MAS score 53) and collectivistic value (IDV score 34). To some extent, these findings might indicate that Hofstede's Indonesian findings were accurate despite the lack of research design and planning (Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, and House, 2006 as cited in Perdhana, 2014) and a small number of respondents (Perdhana, 2014). In his findings, Indonesia is described as having large power distance (PDI score 78), low preference for avoiding uncertainty (UAI score 48), low masculinity (MAS score 46) and collectivistic value (IDV score 14).

Finally, Table 3 also allows an overall comparison among our Javanese and average Indonesian sample, and Hofstede's Indonesian sample. As seen, the three cultures present similar characteristics: large power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance, low masculine and collectivist. The evidence can be a source of a debate: whether Hofstede's

unidentified Indonesian samples were merely Javanese or whether the culture of the ethnic majority can certainly represent the culture and values of the entire country.

5   Discussion and conclusion

5.1   Are Hofstede's Indonesian samples merely Javanese?

This study examined five major ethnic groups in Indonesia. Overall, the results were able to capture significant within-country cultural differences. In addition, Table 3 also revealed striking similarities among our Javanese and Indonesian groups (averaged from the total samples), and Hofstede's Indonesian sample. This leads to a first question of whether Hofstede's Indonesian samples were merely Javanese. According to Perdhana (2014), Hofstede may have only used respondents of Javanese descent in his study. The extensive use of Javanese cultures in Hofstede's publications is further evidence to this claim. Our findings reveal that the Javanese ethnic exhibits large power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance, low masculinity, and collectivist, features that closely match Hofstede's own Indonesian findings.

The second question raised by our results is whether the culture of the ethnic majority can represent the culture and the values of the entire country. Many researchers have adopted this approach, either in explaining the Indonesian culture in general or in comparing Indonesian culture with those of other countries (Liddle, 1996; Goodfellow, 1997; Irawanto, 2009; Irawanto et al., 2012). Our results have experimentally supported this approach by revealing scores producing similar patterns or categories to those in Hofstede's findings (Table 3).

In summary, our evidence suggests that Hofstede's findings are accurate in terms of describing typical Indonesian values. However, cultural variation within the country must be taken into account when relying on his dimension scores to understand Indonesia's cultural values. We recommend users of Hofstede's framework to supplement their research planning with the latest findings on the cultural values of Indonesia's ethnic groups and subcultures.

The present study argues that as long as many ethnic groups of Indonesia remain unstudied, the nature and character of Indonesian cultural values will also remain a topic open to debate. The key to the investigation of intercultural interactions is to constantly question the reliability and generalisability of cultural findings. One must, therefore, take our findings as an initial guide to cultural features of five ethnic groups in Indonesia, rather than as an ultimate profile of cultural variation in the country.

5.2   Javanese and Batak scores comparison

In Hofstede's (2010) 3rd edition of Cultures and Organisations, two ethnic groups from Indonesia are mentioned: Javanese and Batak. Interestingly, we discovered that in this book Hofstede chose to ignore some cultural differences among Indonesian ethnic groups. Despite admitting to cultural variation in Indonesia, Hofstede provided no attempt to fix the issue of generalisation:

> "Indonesians agree that especially on the tough-tender dimension, ethnic groups within the country vary considerably, with the Javanese taking an extreme position toward the tender side. The Dutch consultant said that even

some of the other Indonesians were surprised by the Javanese's feelings. A Batak from the island of Sumatra said that he now understood why his Javanese boss never praised him when he himself felt that praise should have been due."
(Hofstede et al., 2010, p.158)

Our findings provide, to some extent, answers to why a Batak described in Hofstede's book feels that way about a Javanese boss. Our evidence shows that the Batak group displays a high score of masculinity dimension (73), compared to a feminine score of only 42 for the Javanese group (Table 3). In a feminine culture, praising a good performer within a team might disrupt the confidence of other team members, and thus the Javanese boss may prefer not to praise his or her Batak subordinate in public.

5.3   Implications

The implications of our study can be classified into two categories:

1   *Practical implications*. Since the present study drew samples from employees with paid jobs, the results obtained can be meaningful for both managers and employees working with people coming from Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Minangkabau and Chinese Indonesian.

   The study identified significant differences among ethnic groups, particularly on the uncertainty avoidance and masculinity dimensions. At the workplace, this can translate into different behaviours by the employee. For example, as Minangkabau and Chinese Indonesian employees score high on the uncertainty avoidance dimension, they will exhibit more anxiety toward uncertainty compared to the Javanese, Sundanese and Batak.

   On the masculinity dimension, only two ethnic groups are categorised on the 'tough' side: Batak and Chinese Indonesian, with Javanese, Sundanese and Minangkabau on the 'tender' side. These results show that Batak and Chinese Indonesian prefer a direct approach to communication. On a masculine society, feelings are expressed rather than hidden. Unlike the Batak and Chinese Indonesian, Javanese, Sundanese and Minangkabau people prefer to preserve harmony through words less likely to hurt someone's feelings.

   Overall, our findings revealed that all five ethnic groups exhibit large power distance and collectivistic nature. At the workplace, boss and subordinates often cultivate a family like a relationship where the former acts as a father figure and expects subordinates to follow orders without questioning.

2   *Theoretical implication*. Our study presents empirical validation for claims of significant differences in cultural values among ethnic groups in Indonesia.

5.4   Limitations

- *Generalisability*. We only studied five out of the total 31 major ethnic groups in Indonesia. Although the overall findings or the average scores from the respondents are seemingly agreeing with Hofstede's findings, it still remains to be seen whether Hofstede's Indonesian dimensions scores are able to represent cultural variations among other Indonesian ethnic groups.

- *VSM 82*. VSM 82 revealed significant differences in cultural values among ethnic groups. However, this early module can only measure four main dimensions of culture. VSM 13 is the most recent version and measures two additional dimensions: long-term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint.

- *Criteria of respondents*. Our eligibility criteria were that respondents should be paid employees, and to be raised for the first 10 years of life in an environment in which his or her ethnic groups was originated. Therefore our results may not be able to represent the cultural values of persons working in very specific jobs with a strong occupational culture, such as an accountant or a pilot.

- *Research method*. Employing VSM was appropriate to our purpose of assessing whether a national cultural framework could describe cultural differences among ethnic groups in Indonesia. However, this method may not be adequate to identify the distinctive characteristics of each ethnic group.

5.5 Conclusion and direction for future research

This study was conducted with the aim of answering the following questions:

- What are the cultural values of Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau, Batak and Chinese Indonesian employees?

- Are Hofstede's Indonesian findings still relevant?

To answer the first question, our study investigated the cultural values of the ethnic groups by employing Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework and revealed the following key findings:

- Javanese's dimension scores show the exact same categories to those of our average Indonesia scores and Hofstede's Indonesian scores.

- The Sundanese group is the least hierarchical among the ethnic groups studied. On other dimensions, however, it shows similarities with Hofstede's Indonesian scores.

- The Batak group is the most hierarchical, the least annoyed by uncertainties, and masculine, which points to significant differences to the Javanese.

- The Minangkabau group shows a strong preference for avoiding uncertainty are the least collectivistic, and the least masculine.

- The Chinese Indonesian group also shows a strong preference for avoiding uncertainty and was revealed to be a masculine society.

The second question to answer is whether Hofstede's Indonesian findings are still relevant. On the basis of the findings of this study, we argue that Hofstede's Indonesian scores are only able to describe one ethnic group: the Javanese. According to his findings, Indonesia showed large power distance, collectivism value, low masculinity and low preference for avoiding uncertainty. Such descriptions are perfectly matched by our Javanese findings. However, we argue that when it comes to understanding other major ethnic groups' cultures, Hofstede's Indonesian scores fail to deliver.

In conclusion, the evidence shows that Hofstede's national cultural framework has been able to capture within-country cultural differences. However, a different approach should be undertaken when addressing other research questions. The design of our study is suitable for identifying cultural differences among ethnic groups in Indonesia. Since our results have revealed that there are cultural values differences within a nation, future studies must attempt to overcome our methodological limitations and provide further evidence relevant to the field of cross-cultural management.

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