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# COMPARING SUB CULTURE WITHIN NATION: SYNERGIZING ETIC AND EMIC

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#### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present the possibility to conduct cross cultural leadership research within a country using the combination of etic and emic approach. Early cross cultural research only focus on etic approach, until the publication of GLOBE Research Project's second book which presents the emic from 25 societies. Since the idea of "national culture" has been widely adopted by cross-cultural researchers, the focus of most cross-cultural research is to compare culture and leadership styles between countries. This attempt will make aggregation on national data, thus, abandon the sub-culture and complexity inside the nation. Using triangulation, this paper present an alternative idea in conducting cross-cultural leadership research: by comparing the cultural values and leadership styles among ethnic groups to be applied in countries with large cultural diversity.

Keywords: etic and emic, cross cultural leadership, sub-cultural comparison

#### SARIPATI

Tujuan dari artikel ini adalah untuk memaparkan peluang dalam melakukan perbandingan kepemimpinan lintas budaya dalam suatu negara dengan menggabungkan pendekatan eric dan emic. Sebelum publikasi GLOBE Research Project yang menggunakan pendekatan emic terhadap masyarakat di 25 negara, studi-studi awal di bidang lintas budaya hanya berfokus pada pendekatan etic saja. Peneliti-peneliti yang menggunakan pendekatan etic mengadopsi konsep "budaya nasional", yang menyebabkan penelitian mereka membandingkan budaya dan gaya kepemimpinan antar negara. Hal ini kurang tepat, karena pendekatan etic cenderung mengabaikan keberagaman suku bangsa yang ada di dalam suatu negara dan data yang diperoleh akan dihitung dengan agregat. Melalui triangulasi, artikel ini menawarkan sebuah alternatif dalam melakukan studi kepemimpinan lintas budaya, yaitu dengan mengkombinasikan pendekatan etic dan emic untuk membandingkan nilai budaya dan kepemimpinan diantara masing-masing kelompok etnis yang terdapat dalam suatu negara.

Kata kunck etic dan emic, kepemimpinan lintas budaya, perbandingan sub-budaya



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Kata kunci: etic dan emic, kepemimpinan lintas budaya, perbandingan sub-budaya

# **Etic and Emic: Two Approach in Studying Culture**

Culture has long been recognized as a critically important factor in social science research.

Understanding culture is important, especially when observing the behavior of a group of people,



and make a prediction about it (Hofstede, 1991; Matsumoto & Juang, 2007; Segall, 1979). The importance of culture was reflected from its hundreds of definition; which resulted from the wide debate among scholars in anthropology, sociology, and psychological background (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Social researchers acknowledge that culture is an antecedent to human thought and behaviour (Schweder, 1990; Berry et al., 1992; Triandis, 1994).

There are two common approaches in studying culture: etic and emic. Etic are cultural characteristics that are universally present, while emic refer to specific characteristic that lies within a culture. Berry (1969) has stated that conducting emic approach means to study behaviour within a system, examining only one culture at a time, discovering structure, and using criteria that are relative to internal characteristics. On the other hand, etic approach involves studying behavior from a position outside the system, examining two or more cultures and comparing them, imposing a structure created by analyst, and using criteria that are considered absolute and universal (Berry, 1969). Researches in psychology and sociology are generally etic, since the goal is finding universal associations that transcends particular situation; while researches in anthropology are considered emic, as the attempt is to find specific characteristics of culture (DeLameter, 2006).

## The Domination of Etic Approach in Cross Cultural Research

National culture is defined as the collective mental programming of the people of any particular nationality (Hofstede, 1980). People in particular nation shared a national character that reflects their cultural mental programming. In order to understand, measure and compare culture, cross cultural scholars have developed several cultural frameworks. These frameworks are useful for



comparing one society (country) with another. Among the scholars in this field, some notable

names are Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Edward T. Hall, Fons Trompenaars and Geert Hofstede.

Framework proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) test whether a society has the same

view in life through five basic assumption: human nature, relationship with surrounding

environment, time, activity (work) and human relations. The next framework, proposed by

Edward T. Hall (Hall & Hall, 1990), stated that a community can be distinguished from others by

considering: (1) their view to the time and space, and (2) their context. Trompenaars (1993)

present five dimensions of culture: Universalism versus Particularism, Individualism versus

Collectivism, Neutral versus Affective, and Specific versus Diffuse.

The most widely used cultural framework in the field of social science was proposed by Geert

Hofstede. His research involved 116,000 respondents from 40 countries, which then expanded

into 160,000 respondents in 50 countries. Hofstede found that national culture can explain

differences in attitudes and values related to organizational behavior, rather than just knowing

the position in the organization, occupation, age and gender (Hofstede, 1980).

To identify the cultural differences, Hofstede use seven cultural dimensions: power distance,

uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and

short term versus long term orientation. Later, Hofstede et al. (2008) added two new dimensions

which are indulgence versus restrain and monumentalism versus self effacement. The definition

for each cultural dimension is as follows:

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# 1. Power Distance

Power Distance is the extent to which less powerful members of organizations/institutions accept that power is distributed unequally. This reflects the values of the less powerful members in society and also those who have more power (Hofstede, 2001).

# 2. *Uncertainty Avoidance*

Uncertainty Avoidance is the extent of how people would feel threatened by uncertain situations, creating trust or institutions to avoid this uncertainty (Hofstede, 2001).

# 3. Individualism / Collectivism

Individualism is the tendency of people to watch themselves and their close relative only. Hofstede's measure the degree of individualism into two poles of continuum: the lower the degree of individualism means that people are tending to be collectivist. Collectivism is the tendency of people to join in a group or collective and taking care for one another in exchange for loyalty among them (Hofstede, 2001).

# 4. *Masculinity / Femininity*

Masculinity is a situation in which the dominant values in society are "success, money and possessions". Hofstede's masculinity dimension measures the difference into two poles of continuum, so that the lower the degree of masculinity means that a society is "feminine". In other side, femininity reflects a situation in which the dominant values in the society are "concern to others, harmony and tranquility of life" (Hofstede, 2001).

# 5. Short term / long term orientation

Hofstede and Bond (1988), develop one more dimension called "Confucian dynamism".

These dimensions reflect the values taught in Confucianism as the orientation of time,



truth, prudence and thrift. Hofstede, then referred this dimension as "long-term orientation versus short term orientation". In other words, this will help to understand how every society have different point of view regarding time. Some people are future oriented, while some others tend to present-oriented. Western researchers tend to call this dimension as "time orientation", because of the tendency that a society will pay more attention to long-term or short term in their lives (Hofstede, 2001).

# 6. *Indulgence / restrain*

This is one of the two new dimensions added to Value Survey Module by Hofstede et al. (2008). Indulgence stands for the social order which allows relatively free fulfillment of some desires and feelings, particularly those that have to do with leisure, amusement with friends, spending, consumption and sex. Restraint, stands for a society which controls such fulfillment, and where people feel less able to enjoy their lives (Hofstede et al., 2008).

# 7. Monumentalism / Self Effacement

Monumentalism stands for a society which rewards people who are, metaphorically speaking, like monuments: proud and unchangeable. Its opposite pole, Self-Effacement, stands for a society which rewards humility and flexibility (Hofstede et al., 2008).

To measure the cultural dimensions, Hofstede uses The Value Survey Module (VSM). The VSM has undergone various revisions, from the VSM 80, VSM 82, VSM 94 and the latest revision is VSM 08. The underlying reason behind the development of VSM was "...for comparing culturally determined values between people from two or more countries or regions..." (Hofstede, 1994, p. 1). VSM 08 consists of 34 questions, whereas the first 28 questions form



seven clusters of four questions each. Each of the clusters representing the seven dimensions of

culture defined by Hofstede (1984), and Hofstede and Bond (1988) and Hofstede et al. (2008).

Despite the wide range of cultural framework to measure national values, all major framework

presented in this section clearly represents etic approach. Frameworks proposed by Kluckhohn

and Strodtbeck, Fons Trompenaars, Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede aims only to measure the

cultural characteristics that are universally present. With this approach, cultural research will

never be able to reveal the distinctive characteristics that exist in the culture.

**Integrating Etic and Emic: GLOBE Research Project** 

The growing interest in studying culture has raises an attempt to linking culture with leadership,

more than three decades ago (Dickson, Hanges, & Lord, 2001). It is also the period when

Hofstede (1980) stated that the practice in management and organization is very much affected

by national culture and values. Since then, the field of cross-cultural leadership has drawn the

attention from numerous scholars (e.g. Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2002; Den Hartog, House,

Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, & Dorfman, 1999; Dickson, Den Hartog, & Mitchelson, 2003; House

et al., 1999; House, Wright, & Aditya, 1997; Pillai, Scandura, & Williams, 1999).

In 1990s, social scientists and management scholars from 62 cultures created "The Global

Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness" (GLOBE) Research Project, which aim

to study cross cultural leadership (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004, p. 11). The

GLOBE Research Project holds Implicit Leadership Theory as its foundation, stating that

"individuals have implicit beliefs, convictions, and assumptions concerning attributes and

behaviors that distinguish leaders from followers, effective leaders from ineffective leaders, and

moral leaders from evil leaders" (House et al., 2004, p. 16).

According to Javidan et al. (2004), each culture develops its own culturally implicit theory of

leadership. That is why, researchers (e.g. Beyer, 1999; Conger, 1999; Dickson et al., 2003; Pillai

et al., 1999) find that leadership style that effective in United States sometimes becoming

ineffective – or negative – when implemented in another country. From this perspective, it is

understandable that the needs of further study in other cultural settings are needed. As Brain and

Lewis (2004) statement that the majority of leadership and management theories, have been

developed in the USA, by Americans, for the American cultural setting, and these theories may

not have universal application in other cultures.

The main attention of GLOBE Research Project is to compare leadership and organizational

behavior effectiveness across cultures. They determine the dimensions of national culture in

order to analyze its impact on leadership and organizational behavior. The instrument used by

the GLOBE Research Project; Form Alpha, represent their nine dimensions of national culture as

follows:

1. Uncertainty Avoidance

To what extent members of the organization (society) try to avoid uncertainty and rely on

the norms, rituals and practices of the bureaucracy to reduce the uncertainty of events in

the future.



# 2. Power Distance

To what extent members of the organization (society) expect and agree that power should be distributed unevenly.

## 3. Collectivism I: Institutional Collectivism

To what extent organizations and community encourage and give reward to collective action and collective distribution of resources.

# 4. Collectivism II: In-group Collectivism

To what extent an individual shows pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or their family.

# 5. Gender egalitarianism

To what extent the organization or society minimizes role differences and discrimination based on gender.

## 6. Assertiveness

To what extent individuals in an organization or society is assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.

## 7. Future orientation

To what extent organization / individual in society agree to defer immediate gratification for future benefits.

## 8. Performance orientation

To what extent the organization or society encourages and rewards the member of the group for their performance improvement and / or their good performance.

# 9. Humane orientation



To what extent individuals in an organization or society encourage and give rewards to an individual's because they are honest, generous, friendly, caring and kind to others.

(House, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2001, p. 496).

GLOBE Research Project's researchers attempted to classify some countries into certain clusters and pay less attention to the differences that exist between specific countries (nations). Clustering will reduces the number of comparison and simplifies the research process. In addition, the organizations that have expanded into other regions with similar cultures tend to be

more successful than those who expand into regions with different culture.

Unlike the previous cultural framework proposed by Kluckhohn and Srodtbeck, Hofstede, Hall and Trompenaars, GLOBE Research project's publications comprises of etic and emic approach. Their first publication; "The GLOBE study of 62 societies" (House et al., 2004) represent the etic side while the second publication, which present the specific characteristics of 25 countries, represent emic approach (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007). With these publications, GLOBE Research Project could be argued as the most comprehensive research for cross cultural leadership, presenting both the etic and emic findings.

Gap Revealed: The Need for Emic Research

Despite the trend in cross cultural research which give more emphasis toward etic research, there is an inevitable need for researchers to give more attention toward emic approach in studying culture. Many researchers (e.g. Von Glinow et al., 1999; Gentry et al., 2010; Kolthoff et al., 2010; Shimoni, 2011) argues that utilizing emic approach is inconsequential, because of the



argument that people within a country will have similar cultural values and shares the same

national culture.

Although it is accurate that society within a nation is bounded by the same national culture,

things might be slightly different for country with culturally complex society. Hofstede et al.

(2010, p. 337) stated that "many countries, especially large ones like Brazil, China, India,

Indonesia, and the United States, can be divided into regions differing along geographic,

climatic, economic, linguistic, and/or ethnic lines ". With regard to the use of etic instrument and

quantitative methodology in cross cultural research, researchers has indicated that national data

in cross cultural studies using quantitative methods are often been aggregated (Den Hartog et al.,

1999; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 1999). This aggregation result in the failure to capture the

detailed information about the distinctive characteristics of subcultures.

To give an example about the importance of studying subculture using emic approach, best

example can be drawn from Indonesia. The country consists of hundreds of different cultural

groups, spreading in hundreds of different islands whereas each group representing larger sub

cultural group and have their own mother language. Although it is bounded by the same national

principle and same national language, people can easily distinguished one cultural group with

another based on their dialects, behavior, tone of voice and physical appearance. In short, it is

argued that the cross cultural research by aggregating national data will not be able to capture the

sub cultural characteristics in a culturally complex nation such as Indonesia. The complexity of

Indonesia could be depicted on Appendix A, B, C.

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According to Dickson et al. (2001), research on cross-cultural leadership needs further refinements by giving more attention to the appropriate levels of analysis. Appropriate levels of analysis might consist of individual, dyad, organization, industry or society (Dickson et al., 2001). The other refinements is with regard to the issue of multiculturalism – the management of sub-cultures within a nation, which is not considered by early cross-cultural researchers such as Trompenaars or Hofstede (Jacob, 2005).

The need for sub-cultural comparison, which represent the emic approach, was demonstrated by Hofstede et al. (2010). They compared the cultural values among Brazil's 27 states. The findings show that although bounded by the same national culture, Brazilian people in the Northeast (Afro-Brazilian) and the North (native Indian) are showing remarkable difference in the degree of masculinity (Hofstede et al., 2010). This finding made obvious that inside a national culture, there is sub-culture that need to be given attention.

Although comparing sub-cultures within a nation could be conducted by utilizing the major cultural instrument introduced earlier in this paper, there is caveat that need to be given attention: no cultural framework could reveal the distinctive characteristic of a society. With regards to this aspect, Hofstede stated that comparing sub culture within a nation using his cultural instruments (VSM) alone is "too coarse a net for catching the finer cultural nuances between Brazilian states" (Hofstede et al., 2010). He suggests that such issue could be solved by adding the locally defined items will give any sub-cultural comparison study become more importance for the society in that country. Since there is a lack attention given to the sub-cultural comparison within a single country, the opportunity to conduct research in this area is still widely open.



# Conclusion

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Assessing cultural differences inside a large, culturally complex country is very possible. Future research should combine etic and emic approach in order to be able to present the country's unique cultural nuances. GLOBE Project's second publication (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007) could be an example on how cross-cultural research which focus on emic approach were conducted. The fact that Indonesia's culture has not been presented in the GLOBE Project's second publication becomes an opportunity for Indonesian scholars to investigate and present the unique cultural characteristic of Indonesian subcultures to the global society.

Future research with the aim to present characteristics of Indonesia's subcultures could utilize mixed methods in the data collection procedures. At the present, various instrument to measure and compare culture and leadership are widely available, such as Value Survey Module (Hofstede et al., 2008), Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio, Bass and Jung, 1995), Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz, 1992) or GLOBE Project's Alpha and Beta Questionnaire (GLOBE Project, 2006a, 2006b). To strengthen the emic aspect, qualitative approach such as interview, case study or observation could be used to describe the uniqueness of each subculture. The use of mixed methods is considered as the most ideal method for cross-cultural research. Using qualitative data alone will attracts criticism for being too subjective, and pure quantitative methods in cross cultural research will not be able to catch a fine cultural nuances (Hofstede, Garibaldi de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure, & Vinken, 2010), since it rely too much on the statistical data.



To enhance research validity, triangulation could be used. Cohen et al. (2007) describe triangulation as "the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour". It is should be noted that when comparing sub culture within a nation, it is better if the researcher already have adequate knowledge about the culture studied. In conclusion, the ideal framework for comparing and investigating culture could be presented as follows:

# **Insert Figure 1 here**

Figure 1. Proposed Framework for Comparing and Investigating Culture

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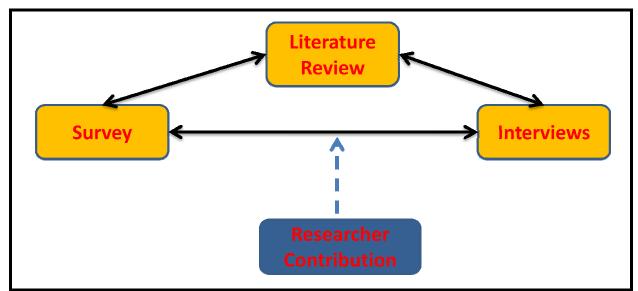
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Figure 1. Proposed Framework for Comparing and Investigating Culture





# APPENDIX A

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# Ethnic Groups numbering over 1,000,000 according to the 2000 census (to nearest thousand and nearest full percentage)

Ethnic Group	Number	Percentage
Javanese	83,866,000	41.7
Sundanese	30,978,000	15.4
Malay	6,946,000	3.4
Madurese	6,772,000	3.3
Batak	6,076,000	3.0
Minangkabau	5,475,000	2.7
Betawi	5,042,000	2.5
Buginese	5,010,000	2.5
Bantenese	4,113,000	2.1
Banjarese	3,496,000	1.7
Balinese	3,028,000	1.5
Sasak	2,611,000	1.3
Makassarese	1,982,000	1.0
Cirebon	1,890,000	0.9
Chinese	1,739,000	0.9
Remaining 86 ethnic groups in	36,819,000	16.1
the census		

Source: The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, London, (2003)



# **APPENDIX B**

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Ethnic Groups constituting over 10% of the population in each first-order administrative division according to the 2000 census (to nearest full percentage)

Aceh	Acehnese 50%, Javanese 16%	
Bali	Balinese 89%	
Banten	Bantenese 47%, Sundanese 23%, Javanese 12%	
Bengkulu	Javanese 22%, Rejang, 21%, Serawai 18%	
Gorontalo	Gorontalo (Hulandalo) 90%	
Jakarta	Javanese 35%, Betawi 28%, Sundanese 15%	
Jambi	Malay 38%, Javanese 28%, Kerinci 11%	
Jawa Barat	Sundanese 74%, Javanese 11%	
Jawa Tengah	Javanese 98%	
Jawa Timur	Javanese 79%, Madurese 18%	
Kalimantan Barat	Sambas 12%	
Kalimantan Selatan	Banjarese 76%, Javanese 13%	
Kalimantan Tengah	Banjarese 24%, Javanese 18%, Ngaju 18%	
Kalimantan Timur	Javanese 30%, Buginese 18%, Banjarese 14%	
Kepulauan Bangka Belitung	Malay 72%, Chinese 12%14	
Kepulauan Riau	see Riau	
Lampung	Javanese 62%	
Maluku	Kei 11%, Butung (Buton) 11%, Ambon 11%	
Maluku Utara	no single group over 10%	
Nusa Tenggara Barat	Sasak 68%, Bima 13%	
Nusa Tenggara Timur	Atoni Metto 15%, Manggarai 15%, Sumba 13%	
Papua	Javanese 12%	
Riau15	Malay 38%, Javanese 25%, Minangkabau 11%	
Sulawesi Selatan	Buginese 42%, Makassarese 25%	
Sulawesi Tengah	Kaili 20%, Buginese 14%	
Sulawesi Tenggara	Butung(Buton) 23%, Buginese 19%, Tolaki(Lakilaki)	
	16%, Muna 15%	
Sulawesi Utara	Minahasa 33%, Sangir 20%, Bolaang Mongondow 11%	
Sumatera Barat	Minangkabau 88%	
Sumatera Selatan	Malay 31%, Javanese 27%	
Sumatera Utara	Batak 42%, Javanese 32%	
Yogyakarta	Javanese 97%	

Source: The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, London, (2003)



# **APPENDIX C: Ethnic Groups in Indonesia**



Source: based on the Ethnic Group Map displayed on the National Museum of Indonesia, Jakarta.

