

The Investigation of the Relationship between Cultural Values and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Organizational Commitment (OC) and Personal Benefit (PB) in Accounting System of Iran

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Abstract: This research aims to study the relationships between cultural values and ethical dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Organizational Commitment (OC) and Personal Benefit (PB) in accounting system of Iran. The cultural values criteria in this study include Power Distance Index (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Individualism (IDV) and Masculinity (MAS). For measuring the cultural values, Hofstede questionnaire (1991) and in order to collect data for CSR, OC, and PB, Singhapakdi *et al.* (1996), Hunt *et al.* (1989), and Clikeman and Henning standard questionnaire (2000) were used, respectively, because of their high validity and reliability. Research sample consists of 115 accepted companies in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) during the period of 2004-2010. The regression models and econometric software EViews 6 are used to test the hypotheses. Research findings indicate that there is a weak correlation between cultural values and ethical dimensions of CRS, OC, and PB that results in the rejection of research hypotheses. In addition, among the variables of cultural values, UAI has the most and MAS index has the least impact on CSR.

Key words: Corporate social responsibility, individualism, masculinity, organizational commitment and personal benefit, power distance, uncertainty avoidance

INTRODUCTION

Countries` culture is one of the most important factors of accounting values in national and international level that should be considered in accounting researches. Recently, there has been propensity for applying behavioral theories in accounting researches that shows interactions between accounting and the environment. Differences in national cultural values may be a factor of differences in accounting procedures. However, it is expected that cultural environment as a national or regional system including language, sect, norms, education, social organizations, technology and accounting elements to have complex interactions (khoshtinat and Kasempour, 2006). By exploring researches have been conducted regarding culture and accounting variables, we observed that there are so many researches developed respecting to investigation of cultural values effect on the accounting variables; however, none of these researches has not studied ethical issues that is one of the interesting and critical subjects in accounting. Therefore, considering the results of the previous researches, the aim of the present study is to

introduce ethics in cultural and accounting researches. In other words, this study investigates the relationship between cultural values and ethical dimensions including CRS, OC, and PB.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Although it seems that everyone has the same perception about culture definition and they consider it as concepts such as believes, norms and values, there are several definition in anthropology science (Modares and Dilami, 2004). One of these definitions considers culture as a set of believes, values, perceptions and thinking method that organization members have co-perceptions about them; and this is what educated to all fresher as an acceptable phenomenon. Culture implies unscripted roles of an organization (Mirsepasi and Danaee, 2006). Here, we represent the definition that Hofstede (1991) presented; in his view, culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from another. He presented four social value dimensions by conducting a comprehensive

research during 1980 to 1991. In addition, he introduced the fifth dimension in 2001. The followings list these values.

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI): UAI is the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. Economic sanctions and countries' business limitations along with not having strategic plan and goals affect on people's uncertainty to a future. In other words, UAI is defined as an excel level of structured situations over unstructured situations from the members of society view (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2010).

Masculinity (MAS): Masculinity refers to societies which in that member's social roles are distinguished by genders. In this case, rough and aggressive roles and financial successes are dedicated to men and emotional and caring about the quality of life roles belong to women. In contrast, femininity refers to the distribution of roles between the genders. In this case, both men and women are aggressive and emotional and care about the quality of life. Therefore, there is aggressive and emotional behavior in both men and women (Farhangi *et al.*, 2007).

Individualism (IDV): In individualist society, people look after themselves and their immediate family only. In other words, people care the benefits of themselves and their immediate family only. Versus, in collectivist society, people belong to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty.

Power distance index (PDI): PDI is the level of members' participation in decision-making and policy-setting. In a society with high PDI, lower rank members have not propensity to make a close relationship with upper rank members. While, in a society with low PDI, managers are more accountable and feel more responsibility for public and lower and upper rank members have a close and intimate relation (Etemadi *et al.*, 2009). In other words, PDI is defined as the degree of inequality between the members of society postulating the normality of society (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2010).

Long-term orientation (LTO): Values associated with LTO are thrift and perseverance; while values associated with Short Term Orientation (STO) are respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations. De Mooij and Hofstede (2010), Yeh and Lawrence (1995) assert that Long Term Orientation is inseparable from IDV value; however, in the present study we survey the first four dimensions relationship with cultural dimensions.

Moreover, by exploring the ethics literature it is obvious that scholars and professionals interested in ethical issues. These studies are separated into two parts:

- Researches related to ethics education.
- Researches about ethics development in profession level.

Literature related to ethics development in profession level examines the ethical consideration applied by practitioners. The pioneer researchers in this regard are Kohlberg (1984), Forsyth (1980), Clikeman and Henning (2000).

Jefferey (2006) states ethical decision-making structure in researches of ethics as followings:

- Recognition of ethical issues
- Analysis of ethical issues
- Shaping ethical wills

Commitment in ethical issues: The main theories in firms' social responsibility are legitimacy, stakeholders, and political economy theories that all explain the issue that managers have tendency to disclose firms' social responsibility for the reasons such as gaining organizational legitimacy and or avoiding stakeholders' pressure. However, legitimacy theory puts emphasis on setting the role and standards on this regard. In addition, there are both ethical and managerial branches in the stakeholder theory. Ethical branch of stakeholder theory explains how organizations should treat their stakeholders. This view emphasizes on organization's responsibilities. In contrast, managerial branch of stakeholder theory engages in need to manage the given groups of stakeholder (Frougi *et al.*, 2008). As the content of this theory implies, since considering the firm's responsibility makes a good vision in stakeholders about firm's managers. However, it is expected that managers who engage more in earnings management to have higher social responsibility and vice versa. OC is another variable of this study, which is defined by Porter *et al.* (1974) as a relative degree of determining a person's identity by an organization and his or her participation in it. In this definition, OC consists of three factors:

- Faith in goals and organization values
- Tendency to work hard for organization
- Desire for staying in there

Considering the aforementioned conceptual framework, in continues, a summary of researches in this regard is presented.

Hofstede cultural dimensions are widely used in previous researches empirically and theoretically. For example, Hofstede cultural variables application in ethics development in global market by Rallapalli (1999), in firms' social responsibility by Arnold *et al.* (2007) and in

decision making by Vitell *et al.* (1993) are among these researches. Williams and Zinkin (2008) argue that in societies with high level of PDI, the level of ethical behavior is high.

Christie *et al.* (2003) in a cross-cultural survey studied the effects of cultural values on managers' views in relation with ethics in India, Korea and the US. They showed that in a society with high IDV and low PDI, the sensitivity for unethical activities is high. Moon and Franke (2000) surveyed the effect of Hofstede cultural dimensions on practitioners of marketing. They found that in a society with high level of UAI such as Korea, the sensitivity for unethical activities of suppliers and customers is high. In another survey regarding the effect of cultural values on marketing experts' perceptions about ethics, Blodgett *et al.* (2001) observed that UA negatively, IDV, and MAS positively affect on ethical sensitivity to stakeholders.

Goodwin *et al.* (2000) showed that there is a relationship between IDV, UAI and firms' ethical decision-making. As if, people in countries with high level of PDI, regard earning management unethical. They argue that if earning management is a way to achieve material goals, in this state, it is expected that earnings management to be higher and acceptable in a society with high UAI; and vice versa, earning management is less acceptable if it is a way to minimize future opportunities. Clements *et al.* (2010) in a survey titled 'the impact of cultural differences on the convergence of international codes of ethics' found that in an organization with high UAI and IDV, there is a less possibility of adopting international codes of ethics. Moreover, in these sorts of organizations, there is a less possibility that international code of ethics to be accepted.

Cohen *et al.* (1995) presented evidence indicating that cultural value of IDV is related to auditors' ethical judgments as people with individualist orientation end up with different ethical results in comparison with people with collectivist orientation. If people act for self-interest, it is expected that people with high level of IDV to regard earning management as a way to achieve self-interest. Shaub *et al.* (1993) in their survey found that realistic auditors are less likely to discover unethical issues than idolism auditors. Aranya and Ferris (1984) define OC as relative power of bonding feel and involvement in an organization and meanwhile try to stay in there.

Jin and Drozdenko (2010) surveyed the relationship between ethics, social responsibility and organizational performance. They showed that organic firms' managers compared to mechanistic firms' managers have high level of ethical and social responsibility. Pagano and Volpin (2005) expressed that company's managers may use social responsibility activities as a way to prevent company from takeover by the capital market and satisfy shareholders by that. Kim and Kim (2010) in a survey regarding comparison of traditional orientation and cultural values effect on the perceptions of the Korean

firms' CSR indicated that traditional orientation and cultural values effect are more important than the Hofstede cultural values. Werner (2009) in a survey titled "CSR initiative addressing social exclusion in Bangladesh" highlighted that CSR has positive persistent effect in developing countries especially in the societies with social exclusion.

Research hypotheses:

- There is a significant relationship between IDV and CRS in accounting system of Iran
- There is a significant relationship between IDV and OC in accounting system of Iran
- There is a significant relationship between IDV and PB in accounting system of Iran
- There is a significant relationship between MAS and CRS in accounting system of Iran
- There is a significant relationship between MAS and OC in accounting system of Iran
- There is a significant relationship between MAS and PB in accounting system of Iran.
- There is a significant relationship between UAI and CRS in accounting system of Iran.
- There is a significant relationship between UAI and OC in accounting system of Iran.
- There is a significant relationship between UAI and PB in accounting system of Iran.
- There is a significant relationship between PDI and CRS in accounting system of Iran.
- There is a significant relationship between PDI and OC in accounting system of Iran.
- There is a significant relationship between PDI and PB in accounting system of Iran

Population and data collection: Research population consists of firms listed in TSE. However, because of high sample size and non-uniformity among companies of TSE, we put some conditions on selecting studied companies as followings:

- Sample firms must have listed from 2004
- Sample firms must not have changed their fiscal period and it must be ended at the end of year
- Sample firms must not be investment or brokerage firm

As a result of these conditions, a population of 115 companies was obtained and studied during the period of 2004 to 2010. For measuring the cultural values, the questionnaire of Hofstede (1991) and in order to collecting data concerning to CSR, OC, and PB, Singhapakdi *et al.* standard questionnaire (1996), Hunt *et al.* standard questionnaire (1989), and Clikeman and Henning standard questionnaire (2000) were used, respectively, because of its high validity and reliability. The questionnaires were distributed among 640

accounting and financial personal of sample firms. Eventually, 540 questionnaires were received and analyzed by Eviews 6 software.

Table 1: Descriptive statistic

Statistic Variable	CSR	OC	PB	IDV	MAS	UA	PD
Mean	3.93	2.84	2.64	0.60	0.622	-0.757	2.473
Median	3.95	2.75	2.61	0.545	0.551	-0.632	2.436
Max	4.4	4.6	3.18	1.08	1.254	1.111	3.78
Min	3.2	1.8	82.2	0.285	0.337	-2.2	1.65
Skewness	0.43	1.22	0.19	0.691	0.213	-0.221	0.429
Kurtosis	3.34	4.48	4.47	2.606	3.334	2.954	3.023
Coefficient Of variation	0.056	0.19	0.087	0.31	0.33	-0.95	0.18

Table 2: Correlation matrix between variables

	PB	CSR	OC	IDV	MAS	UAI	PDI
PB	1						
CSR	0.09	1					
OC	-0.01	0.28	1				
IDV	0.033	-0.016	0.015	1			
MAS	0.031	-0.0001	0.092	0.9	1		
UAI	0.09	0.21	-0.041	0.43	0.37	1	
PDI	0.11	-0.149	0.099	0.051	0.097	0.008	1

Research data analysis: As we noticed before, to test our hypotheses, first, we evaluated research variables through Excel software and then we tested our hypotheses through Eviews software. Descriptive statistics and analyses results are presented in Table 1. Looking at Table 1, you will see that among the dependent variables, UAI has low persistency and on the whole, dispersion of the dependent variable is higher than independent variables which is the main reason that coefficient of variation is low among the survey variables. This shows that other variables other than cultural variables affect on ethics. Table 2 shows that among survey variables, the most coefficient of correlation belongs to UAI and IDV and the least coefficient of correlation is related to MAS and CSR reversely.

RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TEST

Looking at Table 3, you will see that the relationship and the effects of IDV variables on CSR, OC & PB through the liner regression model are analyzed in hypotheses above. In addition, the p-value column shows

Table 3: Results of hypotheses 1, 2 and 3

Dependent variables: CSR, OC & PB			Independent variable: IDV			
Statistical model: Liner regression			Observations: 115			
Period: 200-2010			Sig. level 95%			
H₁- There is a significant relationship between IDV and CSR in accounting system of Iran						
Coefficient of correlation			T-statistic			
Adjusted R ²	R ²	R	Sig.	t	p-value	F-statistic
0.0189	0.0002	0.014	0.9	0.12	0.9	0.014
Y _i = B ₀ + β ₁ X _i			Y _i = 3.94 - 0.019 X _i			
H₂- There is a significant relationship between IDV and OC in accounting system of Iran						
-0.019	0.0002	0.014	0.0000	11.24	0.9	0.013
Y _i = B ₀ + β ₁ X _i			Y _i = 2.8208 + 0.045 X _i			
H₃- There is a significant relationship between IDV and PB in accounting system of Iran						
-0.018	0.001	0.031	0.0000	25.37	0.8	0.058
Y _i = B ₀ + β ₁ X _i			Y _i = 2.67 + 0.04 X _i			

Table 4: Results of hypotheses 4, 5 and 6

Dependent variables: CSR, OC & PB			Independent variable: MAS			
Statistical model: Liner regression			Observations: 115			
Period: 2004-2010			Sig. level 95%			
H₄- There is a significant relationship between MAS and CSR in accounting system of Iran						
Coefficient of correlation			T-statistic			
Adjusted R ²	R ²	R	Sig.	t	p-value	F-statistic
-0.019	0.0056	0.075	0.0000	40.66	0.99	8.22
Y _i = B ₀ + β ₁ X _i			Y _i = 3.94 - 0.0013 X _i			
H₅- There is a significant relationship between MAS and OC in accounting system of Iran						
-0.01	0.0085	0.092	0.0000	11.49	0.50	0.449
Y _i = B ₀ + β ₁ X _i			Y _i = 2.699 + 0.2396 X _i			
H₆- There is a significant relationship between MAS and PB in accounting system of Iran						
-0.018	0.001	0.031	0.0000	26.51	0.82	0.052
Y _i = B ₀ + β ₁ X _i			Y _i = 2.62 + 0.34 X _i			

Table 5: Results of hypotheses 7, 8 and 9

Dependent variables: CSR, OC & PB				Independent variable: UAI		
Statistical model: Liner regression				Observations: 115		
Period: 2004-2010				Sig. level 95%		
H7- There is a significant relationship between UAI and CRS in accounting system of Iran						
Coefficient of correlation			T-statistic			
Adjusted R ²	R ²	R	Sig.	t	p-value	F-statistic
0.028	0.047	0.021	0.1145	1.600		
		0.0000	89.22	0.114	2.57	
$Y_i = B_0 + \beta_1 X_i$			$Y_i = 3.986 + 3.98 X_i$			
H8- There is a significant relationship between UAI and OC in accounting system of Iran						
			0.7656	-0.2996		
-0.017	0.0017	0.041	0.0000	25.32	0.76	0.089
$Y_i = B_0 + \beta_1 X_i$			$Y_i = 2.823 - 0.032 X_i$			
H9- There is a significant relationship between UAI and PB in accounting system of Iran						
			0.51	0.658		
-0.01	0.0082	0.09	0.0000	57.17	0.51	0.4339
$Y_i = B_0 + \beta_1 X_i$			$Y_i = 2.67 + 0.029 X_i$			

Table 6: Results of hypotheses 10, 11 and 12

Dependent Variables: CSR, OC & PB				Independent Variable: PDI		
Statistical Model: Liner Regression				Observations: 115		
Period: 2004-2010				Sig. Level 95%		
H10- There is a significant relationship between PDI and CRS in accounting system of Iran						
Coefficient of correlation			T-statistic			
Adjusted R ²	R ²	R	Sig.	t	p-value	F-statistic
			0.2811	1.089		
0.035	0.022	0.14	0.0000	23.81	0.281	1.186
$Y_i = B_0 + \beta_1 X_i$			$Y_i = 4.119 - 0.074 X_i$			
H11- There is a significant relationship between PDI and OC in accounting system of Iran						
			0.4748	0.719		
-0.0091	0.0098	0.098	0.0000	6.000	0.518	
$Y_i = B_0 + \beta_1 X_i$			$Y_i = 2.547 + 0.1215 X_i$			
H12- There is a significant relationship between PDI and PB in accounting system of Iran						
			0.422	0.809		
-0.0065	0.012	0.1	0.0000	14.067	0.6551	
$Y_i = B_0 + \beta_1 X_i$			$Y_i = 2.506 + 0.057 X_i$			

that the p-value is higher than 5% so in all the hypotheses, null hypothesis is accepted showing that IDV does not affect CSR, OC, and PB. Considering the positive sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypotheses 2 and 3 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, IDV has a positive weak effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In summary, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB increases very slightly by increasing the level of IDV in the members of society. On the other hand, taking into account the negative sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypothesis 1 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, IDV has a weak negative effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In other words, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB decreases very slightly by decreasing the level of IDV in the members of society. On the whole, because of very weak correlation between variable, you can simply ignore it.

Looking at Table 4, you will see that the relationship and the effects of MAS variables on CSR, OC, and PB through the liner regression model are analyzed in above

hypotheses. In addition, the p-value column shows that the p-value is higher than 5% so null hypothesis is accepted in all the hypotheses, showing that MAS does not affect CSR, OC, and PB. Considering the negative sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypothesis 4 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, MAS has a weak positive effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In summary, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB decreases very slightly by decreasing the level of MAS in the members of society. On the other hand, taking into account the positive sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypotheses 5 and 6 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, MAS has a weak positive effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In other words, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB increases very slightly by increasing the level of MAS in the members of society. On the whole, because of very weak correlation between variable, you can simply ignore it.

Looking at Table 5, you will see that the relationship and the effects of UA variables on CSR, OC, and PB

Table 7: Summary of the results

	CSR	OC	PB
IDV	-	+	+
MAS	-	+	+
UA	+	-	+
PD	-	+	+

through the liner regression model are analyzed in above hypotheses. In addition, the p-value column shows that the p-value is higher than 5% so null hypothesis is accepted in all the hypotheses, showing that UAI does not affect CSR, OC, and PB. Considering the negative sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypothesis 8 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, UA has a weak positive effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In summary, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB decreases very slightly by decreasing the level of UA in the members of society. On the other hand, taking into account the positive sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypotheses 7 and 9 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, UA has a weak positive effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In other words, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB increases very slightly by increasing the level of UAI in the members of society. On the whole because of very weak correlation between variable, you can simply ignore it.

Looking at Table 6, you will see that the relationship and the effects of PDI variables on CSR, OC, and PB through the liner regression model are analyzed in above hypotheses. In addition, the p-value column shows that significance coefficient is higher than 5 per cent so null hypotheses is accepted in all the hypotheses, showing that PD does not affect CSR, OC, and PB. Considering the negative sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypothesis 10 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, PDI has a weak positive effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In summary, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB decreases very slightly by decreasing the level of PDI in the members of society. On the other hand, taking into account the positive sign of β_1 in the estimated regression model of hypotheses 11 and 12 and coefficient of correlation columns, we can interpret that although the correlation between independent variable and dependent variables is very weak, PDI has a weak positive effect on CSR, OC, and PB. In other words, correlation coefficient of CSR, OC, and PB increases very slightly by increasing the level of PDI in the members of society. On the whole, because of very weak correlation between variables, you can simply ignore it.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION REMARKS

In the present study we tried to survey as to whether Hofstede cultural dimensions affect on ethical values in accounting system of Iran. To do so, the correlation between each Hofstede cultural dimension and CSR, OC, and PB was surveyed. Summary of the results is presented in Table 7. As Table 7 illustrates, the results of the present study show a very weak correlation between cultural variables and CSR, OC, and PB, which results in rejecting the survey hypotheses and indicates that there is not a significant relationship between cultural values and ethical dimensions. The potential explanations about rejecting hypotheses are demonstrated as below.

IDV and ethical dimensions: IDV and CSR: With respect to negative and weak relationship between IDV and CSR, we can say, in the Iranian firms, increasing IDV in manager results in decreasing of CSR. This may stem from paying more attention to IDV and ignoring stakeholders' benefits.

IDV and OC: With respect to positive and weak relationship between IDV and OC and considering negative relationship between IDV and CSR, we can interpret that Iranian firm's managers are committed to organization only in order to satisfy stakeholders.

IDV and PB: As it is mentioned before there is a weak positive relationship between IDV and PB indicating that individualist managers consider individual benefits instead of collective benefits.

MAS and ethical dimensions:

MAS and CSR: With respect to negative and weak relationship between MAS and CSR, we can say, in the Iranian firms, increasing MAS in managers results in decreasing of CSR.

MAS and OC: With respect to positive and weak relationship between MAS and OC and considering negative relationship between MAS and CSR, we can interpret that Iranian firms' managers are committed to organization only in order to satisfy stakeholders.

MAS and PB: According to the results of this hypothesis, we can say in the Iranian firms increasing MAS in managers is for only increasing manager's PB. These results consist with previous hypotheses results.

UAI and ethical dimensions:

UAI and SCR: The positive relationship between UAI and CSR indicates that increasing of UAI results in increasing of CSR. Considering the results of previous

hypotheses, this increasing may be short-term and for satisfying the stakeholders.

UAI and OC: Negative and weak relationship between UAI and OC shows that organization members' commitment is low facing UAI.

UAI and PB: According to the results of this hypothesis, UAI increasing leads to increase paying attention to PBs and ignore collective benefits.

PDI and ethical dimensions:

PD and SCR: The results of this hypothesis indicate that increasing of PDI in the Iranian firms results in decreasing of CSR. The reason may be result from not co-operating in decision making and not awarding of low level managers and personal from decisions and organization strategy in the organization high level.

PDI and OC: The results of this hypothesis indicate that increasing of PDI and not co-operating of low level managers and personal in strategic decision making increases unreal OC.

PDI and PB: According to the results of this hypothesis, PDI increasing leads to increase PB so we can say PDI increasing in the Iranian firms leads managers to consider PB other than organizational benefits.

SUGGESTION REMARKS

Even though, the results of the present survey indicate a weak effect of cultural values on ethical dimensions including CSR, OC, and PB and since it affects on financial reporting and investors decision; therefore, considering that there is not a integrated code of ethics in Iran, it is suggested that Iran audit organization and TSE and other involved organizations set a suitable code of ethics in order to increase managers knowledge and prevent from unethical accounting. In addition, it is suggested that investors and participants of TSE consider non-financial variables such as culture and ethics along with financial variables.

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