Transformational Leadership:  
The Influence of Culture on the Leadership Behaviours of Expatriate Managers

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ABSTRACT

One of the basic reasons that the authors investigated cross-cultural leadership was to determine the extent to which leadership behaviours can be influenced by cultural values. Some researchers suggest that certain leadership behaviours are likely to be particular to a given culture, whereas others argue that there should be certain structures that leaders must perform to be effective, regardless of cultures. This study was conducted to determine the possible relationships between the work-related values of subordinates and the leadership behaviours exhibited by expatriate managers. Ninety-one Thai subordinates, direct-report of expatriates, responded on the instruments called the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and the Value Survey Module (VSM). Major results indicate that the culture of Thai subordinates has a very limited role in predicting the leadership behaviours of expatriate managers. Furthermore, the study seems to provide evidence to support a near universalistic position for the transformational-transactional paradigm.

Keywords: Leadership, cultural values, transformational leadership, expatriate management

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1. INTRODUCTION

Multinational corporations (MNCs) seeking a competitive advantage in the management of their companies are increasingly relying on the appointment of expatriate managers to carry out headquarters’ policies in the host markets. However, many expatriate appointments are unsuccessful. One of the reasons may be cultural differences. Because of cultural differences, the question is whether expatriates should adjust their style of leadership to conform to the cultural background of subordinates. Given this case, some researchers believe that leadership behaviours should be particular to a certain cultural environment (Hofstede, 1995), whereas others argue that the underlying constructs of effective leadership tend to be similar across cultures (Levitt, 1995).

That Australian companies consider Thailand one of their important investment bases is indicated by the continued, steady growth in trade between the two countries. There are still few studies, however, of Australian expatriates working in Thailand. To date, the most relevant studies are those by Thompson [1981] and Edwards, Edwards, and Muthaly [1995]. Although both studies selected Australian expatriates as the target population, the studies were limited to providing guidelines for effective leadership behaviour for Australian expatriates.

Australia and Thailand were identified as having different cultural values when described by Hofstede’s [1984] four cultural dimensions. Although Australia is located in the Asia-Pacific region, it has a British historical background and is heavily influenced by Western cultures (Harris and Moran, 1996). Thailand, on the other hand, shares a common background with Eastern cultures. These differences suggest that the two cultures would tend to diverge from a common model of leadership. Understanding the influence of culture on leadership behaviours would be a valuable contribution to the theory of cross-cultural leadership and to the management practices of expatriate managers in Thailand.

The purpose of this study is to determine the linkages between the cultural values of host-nation subordinates and the leadership behaviours exhibited by expatriate managers. More specifically, it seeks to answer a research question about the extent to which the variance in three leadership behaviors exhibited by Australian managers can be explained by four cultural values of Thai subordinates. Two prominent theories were used in the current study. The Hofstede [1984] four cultural model was adopted to determine the cultural values of Thai subordinates, while transformational leadership [Bass and Avolio, 1997] was used to capture the leadership behaviours of Australian expatriate managers.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is organized into four parts: Hofstede’s cultural framework (2.1), Bass and Avoilio’s transformational leadership (2.2), culture-specific versus culture-universal (2.3), and transformational leadership in the cross-cultural setting (2.4).

2.1. Defining Culture: Hofstede’s Cultural Framework

Culture can be defined by several terms. In fact, Kroeber and Kluckhohn [1952] gathered more than 160 distinct definitions of the word “culture” and catalogued it into seven separate groups. Perhaps the best-known work is that of Hofstede [1984], whose survey of 88,000 respondents in 66 countries generated a 33-item questionnaire that measured four cultural dimensions.

*Power distance* described the extent to which inequalities were accepted among the people of a society. In countries with high power distance, people accepted and expected differences in power among them, whereas in countries with low power distance, the majority expected that the differences in power should be minimized.

*Uncertainty avoidance* indicated the extent to which people in a society feel threatened by unpredictable or unknown situations and thus “[try] to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules… and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise” [Hofstede, 1995, p. 195].

*Masculinity*, with its opposite pole, Femininity, reflected the distribution of roles between sexes that different societies exhibited in different ways. Hofstede’s [1984] analysis revealed that the dominant values of people in a masculine society were assertive and competitive, whereas members of a feminine culture valued more nurturing, caring, and modesty.

*Individualism*, with its opposite, Collectivism, described the degree to which individuals in a society were integrated into groups. In an individualistic society, the ties between individuals were loose. People were supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families. In a collectivistic country, people were described as living within a tight social framework.

Hofstede’s cultural framework, according to Mead [1998, p. 43], provided “the best there is” of a conceptual benchmark for understanding culture in many societies or countries. The model not only showed the significant relationships between its dimensions and several areas of general management [see, for example, Katz and Seifer, 1996, for motivation systems; and Boyacigiller, Kleinberg, Phillips, and Sackmann, 1996, for decision making], but also its relationships with leadership behaviors [e.g., Blunt and Jones, 1997; Elenkov, 1997].
2.2. Leadership: Bass and Avolio’s Transformational Leadership

Although the constructs of the transformational leadership model are not new and could be found in the works of earlier management theorists [Humphreys and Einstein, 2003], transformational leadership was recognized as a new and current approach to leadership [Northouse, 1997]. Based on the work of Burns [1978], Bass [1985] identified three major leadership behaviours: laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership.

**Laissez-faire** represented an absence of leadership. A laissez-faire leader showed no concern and responsibility for the results of his or her projects. Followers working under this leader were usually left to their own responsibilities and might need to seek assistance and supervision from alternative sources [Dubinsky, Yammarino, Jolson, and Spangler, 1995].

A **transactional** leader identified and clarified his or her expectation to followers and promised rewards in exchange for the desired goals. To achieve the goals, the transactional leader needed to clearly determine and define the role and task required of the followers. A transactional leader also exhibited his or her behaviour when involved in corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement.

**Transformational leadership** was a process in which the leaders took actions to try to increase their followers’ awareness of what was right and important. This process was associated with motivating followers to perform “beyond expectation” and encouraging followers to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group or organisation. By working harder for a transformational leader, his or her followers could develop their skills by using their own decisions and taking greater responsibility [Den Hartog, Van Muijen, and Koopman, 1997].

Several authors have confirmed that transformational leadership behaviour was, on average, highly positively correlated with subordinates’ satisfaction, extra effort, and effectiveness, whereas transactional leadership was generally viewed as being positively linked to performance outcomes. For laissez-faire, it had been found consistently to be negatively correlated with all of the measures of performance outcomes among followers [see, for example, Kirkbride, 2006; Ingram, 1997; Medley and Larochelle, 1995; Bass and Avolio, 1997].

2.3. Culture and Leadership: Culture-Specific versus Culture-Universal

One of the main debates among cross-cultural management scholars was that of how well the application of management practices could be transferred across cultures. On the one hand, it was believed that the significant changes of technology, communication, transportation, and free-market capitalism had resulted in cultures’ becoming more alike [Levitt, 1995]. On the other hand, it was argued that culture was steeped in a deep value system that was unlikely to change; thus, management practices needed to be tailor-made to fit diverse cultural backgrounds [Hofstede, 1995].
These conflicting viewpoints were also applied to the study of leadership when culture was used to explain leadership behaviour. Two terms used by Triandis [1994] to distinguish the different types of cross-cultural studies were “emic” and “etic.” Emics referred to ideas, behaviours, and concepts that were culturally unique or specific, whereas etics referred to ideas, behaviours, and concepts that were culturally universal.

In terms of leadership, the emic approach assumed that different leadership prototypes or characteristics would be expected to occur in societies that had different cultural profiles. In contrast, the etic approach suggested that, although differences between cultures might exist, there were certain underlying structures or behaviours that leaders had to perform to be effective leaders, regardless of cultures.

2.4. Transformational Leadership in a Cross-Cultural Setting

A limited number of studies have examined the relationships between culture and transformational leadership. Many of those, however, were conceptual investigations. For example, Jung, Bass, and Sosik [1995], based on their review, proposed that several characteristics of collectivistic cultures should enhance an easier emergence of transformational leadership than would be the case in individualistic cultures. Dorfman [1996] also believed that the basic behaviours recognised in transformational leadership, such as inspiration, motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual challenge, were seen as a “core function” of outstanding leaders that should be similar around the world.

Based on their empirical data in the U.S. and Taiwan, Spreitzer, Perttula, and Xin [2005] found that cultural values play a significant role in the relationships between transformational leadership and leadership effectiveness. Madzar [2005] also found that transformation leadership seems to be a meaningful determinant of subordinates’ information-seeking across five countries.

Bass [1997] believed that transformational leadership should travel well across cultures. The universality of transformational leadership, according to Bass [1977] was based on the fact that leaders who practiced transformational leadership were more effective than those who displayed transactional or non-leadership behaviours, regardless of cultures, countries, and organisations. Bass [1997] also acknowledged that ‘universal,’ in his meaning, was a universally applicable conceptualization. That is, although the concept of transformational leadership appeared to be universally valid, the specific behaviours associated with each leadership factor might vary to some extent, particularly from one country to another.
3. PRESENT INVESTIGATION AND ITS HYPOTHESES

As previously mentioned, the studies of Thompson [1981] and Edwards et al. [1995] only investigated the general experience of Australian expatriates in Thailand, and both studies conducted their research by relying mainly on qualitative approaches that might lead researchers to use their personal judgments when it came to interpreting the results [Sekaran, 2000]. The present study, therefore, will differ from the previous studies by: (a) investigating the leadership behaviours of Australian expatriate managers; (b) linking those leadership behaviours to the cultural background of Thai subordinates; (c) drawing on two well-recognized theoretical models, transformational leadership [Bass and Avolio, 1997] and four cultural dimensions [Hofstede, 1984]; and (d) using a quantitative approach.

Reviews of cross-cultural leadership [e.g., Dorfman, 1996; Bass, 1990; Den Hartog et al., 1999] had raised the basic question: Were there universally endorsed prototypes of ideal leaders, regardless of culture? In fact, their studies of cross-cultural leadership showed the conflict of viewpoints between “culture-specific” and “culture-universal” approaches. Regarding the two approaches, Chemers [1997] argued that, if an investigation concerned leadership at the general or basic function, then the universal perspective was likely to be confirmed. However, if leadership was examined at the level of specific behaviour, then culture seemed to play a strong role.

Chemers’ [1997] proposition seemed to be consistent with previous literature investigating the influence of culture on leadership, which found that culture was likely to have a very limited role in the transformational-transactional paradigm at the principle level [see Drofman, 1996; Den Hartong et al., 1999; Bass, 1997], whereas specific behaviours might vary across cultures [Jung et al., 1995]. Furthermore, transformational leadership, according to Bass [1997] and Den Hartog et al. [1999], tended to show that leadership behaviours were “culture-free” when considering different types of universals. Accordingly, the following three hypotheses were proposed:

_Hypothesis 1:_ that the four cultural dimensions of Thai subordinates will not significantly explain the variance in the transformational leadership behaviour exhibited by Australian managers.

_Hypothesis 2:_ that the four cultural dimensions of Thai subordinates will not significantly explain the variance in the transactional leadership behaviour exhibited by Australian managers.

_Hypothesis 3:_ that the four cultural dimensions of Thai subordinates will not significantly explain the variance in the laissez-faire leadership behaviour exhibited by Australian managers.
4. METHODOLOGY

This discussion of methodology covers sample (4.1), instruments (4.2), and methods (4.3).

4.1. Sample

Thai subordinates who worked under Australian expatriates in Thailand were identified as the target population. According to the Directory of Members of the Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce in Bangkok, 95 Australian expatriates working in Thailand met the criterion for participation in this study. It was revealed that, at the time, there were 221 Thai subordinates who “directly reported” to 95 Australian managers. As a result, these 221 were treated as the population of Thai subordinates in this study. This suggested that the ratio of 2 Thai subordinates per 1 Australian manager (221 divided by 95 = 2.3) should be used in the study. Consequently, the ratio produced the sample size of 190 direct-reporting Thai subordinates. This sample size represented 86% of the total population.

Initially, this study attempted to calculate a suitable sample size by considering other formulas or methods; for example, the formula for calculating the sample size based on a known population size developed by Krejcie and Morgan [1970]. Within this formula, a 95% level of confidence and a 5% degree of error were adopted. The formula was:

\[ n = \frac{\chi^2 \cdot NP \cdot (1-P)}{d^2 \cdot (N-1) + \chi^2 \cdot P \cdot (1-P)} \]

\[ n = 3.841 \times 221 \times 0.2 \times (1-0.2) / [0.05^2 (221-1) + 3.841 \times 0.2 \times (1-0.2)] \]

\[ n = 115.86, \text{ or the sample size would consist of } 115 \text{ Thai subordinates.} \]

Considering the sample size above, the ratio of Thai subordinates per 1 Australian manager would be 1:1 (115 divided by 95 = 1.2), which was not recommended for the lower-level raters because of the protection of the anonymity of the raters [Bass and Avolio, 1997]. As a result, two Thai subordinates were selected by each Australian superior to complete the questionnaires.

4.2. Instruments

Leadership behaviours displayed by Australian expatriates were measured by the “Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire” (MLQ 5x-short) developed by Bass and Avolio [1997]. The MLQ 5x-short contained 45 items, tapping nine conceptually distinct leadership factors. Five scales were identified as characteristics of transformational leadership (idealized influence attributed and behaviour, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation). Three scales were defined as characteristic of transactional leadership (contingent reward, management-by-exception-active, and management-by-exception-passive). One scale was described as non-leadership (laissez-faire). Participants were asked on the questionnaire to judge how frequently expatriate managers displayed their behaviours, using this five-item
scale: 0 = not at all, 1 = once in a while, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, and 4 = frequently, if not always.

The Values Survey Module (VSM) was used to identify the four cultural dimensions of the Thai subordinates [Hofstede, 1984]. The VSM was a product of an international attitude survey program held between 1967 and 1973, using about 117,000 survey questionnaires from 66 countries. It produced the scores of the four cultural dimensions; namely, power distance (PDI), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), individualism (IDV), and masculinity (MAS). The VSM used in this study consisted of 14 items selected from the original VSM, but shorter, to overcome the low response rate to mailed questionnaires [Sekaran, 2000]. The three questions measuring PDI and the three questions representing UAI were kept in the short version. The difference was that the 14 work goal items were reduced to 8 in this version. Four work goal items represented the MAS dimension, and another four items measured the IDV dimension. In order to minimize cultural and language problems, the questionnaires were first translated formally from English to Thai by a Thai native translator from the Royal Thai Consulate General in Melbourne, and then, when completed, independently re-translated back to English by the researcher.

4.3. Method

To answer the research question, a series of multiple-regression analyses was employed. Multiple-regression analysis provides statistical results showing how much of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained when several independent variables are examined [Punch, 1998]. In the multiple-regression equation, various values for the dependent variable are predicted by the corresponding values for the independent variables when the intercept and regression coefficients are constants. In addition, the analysis also statistically computes the estimate effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable while simultaneously controlling for the effects of other independent variables [Singleton, Straits, and Straits, 1993].

In this study, the power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and individualism cultural dimensions were presented as the group of independent variables while transformational, transactional, and non-leadership behaviour was treated separately as dependent variables.

The analysis used a two-step approach proposed by Haire, Rolph, Ronald, and William [1998], particularly recommended when the data analyst has little previous knowledge about relationships among the set of variables. In the first step, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was initially used to test the overall effect of the set of independent variables (i.e., power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance) on the set of dependent variables (transformational, transactional, and non-leadership). Then, a set of multiple-regression analysis was conducted separately to test hypothesis 1, 2, and 3 concerning the possible effect of the four cultural dimensions on the three individual leadership behaviours.
5. RESULTS

A reliability check for both the English MLQ and Thai MLQ was conducted to provide evidence that the leadership instruments, especially after being translated from English to Thai, produced the data for which they were designed. As Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was provided as a standard measure of reliability, 45 items were included in the calculations to identify reliability coefficients for the English and Thai MLQs. The values of Cronbach alpha produced were alpha = 0.86 for the original MLQ and alpha = 0.87 for the translated MLQ. The reliability values gained from both MLQs were greater than 0.70, indicating an acceptable statistical testing level [Nunnally, 1967]. It also indicated that the scales were highly reliable and that the reliability of the Thai translated version was similar to that of the English version. The VSM instrument, when checked for reliability, produced the value of reliability coefficient (alpha) = 0.60. This reliability value was slightly below Nunnally’s [1978] standard of 0.70. It is noted that a low reliability value was one of the major concern about the VSM instrument [see, for example, Helgstrand and Stuhlmacher, 1999; and Kuchinke, 1999].

5.1. Participants

Ninety-one useable questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of approximately 48%. A similar number of male and female Thai subordinates participated in this study. There were 44 (48.4%) male participants and 47 (51.6%) female, aged relatively young (82.4% below age 39), and the majority had university experience (83.5% with at least bachelor’s degree or better). The average age of Thai participants was between 30 and 39 years, and a bachelor’s degree was the mode level of their education. The results also indicated that 49 (53.8%) Thai subordinates held positions at the middle-management level. Most participants (88.0%) had been working for their present organisations for longer than one year. The mode employment period with their present companies was more than 3 years.

5.2. Effects of Cultural Dimensions and Leadership Behaviours

The results in Table 1 indicate that the main effects of PDI, UAI, MAS, and IDV were found to be not statistically significant, and that changes in the four cultural dimensions did not significantly affect the three leadership behaviours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Effect</th>
<th>Pillai’s Trace</th>
<th>Wilks’ Lambda</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>Hypothesis df</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDI</td>
<td>1.405</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>1.190</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.937</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAI</td>
<td>1.781</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.132</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>1.659</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1.792</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.937</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDV</td>
<td>2.387</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.485</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.422</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PDI = power distance. UAI = uncertainty avoidance. MAS = masculinity. IDV = individualism
Subsequently, a series of multiple-regression analyses was conducted to test the extent to which the variance in transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership behaviours can be explained by the four cultural dimensions. To predict the goodness of fit of the regression model, the multiple correlation coefficient (R), R Square ($R^2$), and F ratio were examined (Table 2).

### Table 2

**Results of Multiple-Regression Analysis of Transformational, Transactional and Laissez-faire Leadership Behaviours as Dependent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Transformational Betas</th>
<th>Transactional Betas</th>
<th>Laissez-Faire Betas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>.326*</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>-.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>-.070</td>
<td>-.122</td>
<td>-.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple R</td>
<td>.358</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square ($R^2$)</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F ratio</td>
<td>3.169</td>
<td>.875</td>
<td>1.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant F</td>
<td>.018*</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>.123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant level at the 0.05

Considering transformational leadership as a dependent variable, the Multiple R of 0.358 indicated that the set of cultural dimensions had positive relationships to transformational leadership behaviour. The value of $R^2$ (0.128) was the variance in transformational leadership accounted by the four cultural dimensions. The F ratio of 3.169 was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. In effect, the model suggested that 12.8% of the variance in transformational leadership behaviour was significantly explained by the four independent dimensions.

To determine which independent variable/s in the multiple-regression equation was a significant predictor of transformational leadership, we examined coefficients. Table 2 shows that the power distance dimension was an only significant predictor of transformational leadership behaviour ($B1 = 0.326, p < 0.05$), but that the other three dimensions were not. The beta value of the power distance dimension indicated that, when the cultural dimension was changed, transformational leadership also positively changed. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

For transactional leadership, the multiple R of 0.198 indicated a weak positive relationship between the set of cultural dimensions and transactional leadership. The $R^2$ value of 0.039 and the F ratio of 0.875 at the non-significant level suggested that the set of independent variables had little and non-significant importance in contributing to transactional leadership. When examined, the beta coefficients showed that each of the four variables was not a significant predictor.
of the transactional dependent variable. As a result, hypothesis 2 was fully supported.

Similar to the results obtained from those in the transactional leadership regression model, the value of $R^2$ (0.080) and the F ratio of 1.872 at non-significant levels suggested that the variation in laissez-faire leadership was not significantly explained by the four independent dimensions. The beta coefficients also suggested that none of the independent variables were significant predictors of the laissez-faire leadership. As a result, hypothesis 3 was fully supported.

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

The results indicated that the four cultural values of Thai subordinates had a very limited role in explaining the variance in transformational, transactional, and non-leadership behaviours exhibited by Australian managers. The very limited influence of the cultural dimensions on the three major leadership behaviours seemed to support the universality of the transformational-transactional paradigm proposed by Bass [1997].

Transformational leadership, according to Bass and Avolio [1997], raises subordinates’ awareness of the importance of desired outcomes, stimulates subordinates’ views of their work from new perspectives, develops subordinates to higher levels of their ability and potential, and motivates subordinates to transcend self-interest for the good of the organisation. These leadership behaviours seem to be the ideal leadership behaviours for subordinates across countries or cultures.

That transformational leadership helps increase subordinates’ satisfaction, enhance their effort, and allow them to be more effective has been reported by several studies, whether they were conducted in Asia [e.g., Singer and Singer, 1990], North America [e.g., Sosik, 1997], Europe [e.g., Geyer and Steyerer, 1998] or Asia-Pacific [e.g., Ingram, 1997]. When transformational leadership was conducted in comparative cross-national studies, the attributes associated with transformational leadership were seen as contributing to outstanding leadership worldwide [Hartog et al., 1999]. Similar results were also found to apply in a variety of organisations such as in the military [Atwater and Yammarino, 1993], health [Medley and Larochelle, 1995], and informational technology [Thite, 1999]. Data even came from the study of leaders at different levels, such as in a sample of teachers [Ingram, 1997], middle managers [Carless, Mann, and Wearing, 1996], and executive leaders [Church and Waclawski, 1998].

6.1. Transformational Leadership and Its Universality

Transformational leadership could be seen as one aspect of a universal leadership model (Figure 1). The model was developed as a result of reviewing the seminal works in cross-cultural leadership literature such as Bass [1997], Dorfman [1996], and Den Hartog et al. [1999].
The model in Figure 1 presents two important forces in enhancing the universality of transformational leadership: internal- and external-driven forces. The internal-driven force refers to the contents or attributions that operate within transformational leadership in contributing to universal leadership. These attributions include four components: simple universal, systematic behaviour universal, functional universal, and flexibility [Bass, 1997].

**Figure 1. The Universality of the Transformational Leadership Model**

The second factor is externally driven environmental forces that help to boost the perceptions of transformational leadership worldwide. For the internal driven forces, the universality of the transformational leadership is associated with three different types of universal phenomena. Transformational leadership was consistent with the type of “simple universal” that was described as a phenomenon, which is constant throughout the world. In this regard, transformational leadership, regardless of cultures, has been perceived as the most desired leadership behaviours when compared with the other two leadership behaviours.
The type of “systematic behavioural universal,” explaining the relationship about “if-then” outcomes across cultures, also can be found within transformational leadership. For example, the findings by Muenjohn and Armstrong [2001] revealed that, although Australian expatriates and Thai subordinates had different cultural backgrounds, both groups held the same perception that, if a leader exhibited transformational leadership behaviours, he or she seemed to be perceived as more effective, satisfied, and increasing extra effort than the three factors of transactional leadership and a non-leadership factor.

The type of “functional universal” seems to exist within transformational leadership. The functional universal existed when laissez-faire leadership behaviour produced the same outcomes. Leaders who frequently avoided responsibilities or decision-making were perceived as ineffective and dissatisfying leaders, regardless of cultures.

The flexibility of transformational leadership is also included to represent the internal-driven force in the model. The term “flexibility” refers to an ability to practice both the participative and directive styles of transformational leadership [Bass, 1997]. The flexibility of transformational leadership could allow leaders to adapt their behaviours to conform to the requirement of their subordinates’ culture. For example, transformational leaders may adjust their leadership styles to be more associated with directive rather than participative in a society with a high power distance and where the directive approach is preferred by subordinates.

As indicated earlier in Figure 1, two external environmental forces also contribute to the universality of transformational leadership. The first external force is the convergence of subordinate’s perception of leadership worldwide. There is a tendency for powerful forces, such as information technology, to drive the world toward a converging commonality [Levitt, 1995]. This informational technology, according to Ohmae [1994], not only internationally transfers information or communication, but also carries people’s perceptions from one country to another. As a result, people’s perceptions tend to become more alike on many phenomena, such as the perception of ideal leadership behaviours. This might explain why John F. Kennedy was admired by people in Eastern cultures and Mahatma Gandhi was admired by Westerners [Bass, 1997].

The underlying assumption of the second external force is that the pre-requisite of being an effective leader is becoming more alike across cultures. In the 21st century, leaders are required, regardless of their cultures, to emphasize their behaviours of providing a vision of the future, encouraging innovative ideas or perceptions, coaching the development of individual capability, and empowering their followers. All of these behaviours are central to transformational leadership [Bass, 1997]. With no exception, leaders are required to meet this requirement by developing their leadership behaviours to be consistent with transformational leadership.
6.2. Transformational Leadership and Expatriate Managers

Since expatriates often hold positions at senior level, their leadership ability is one of the prerequisite factors that contribute to the success of expatriate managers [Katz and Seifer, 1996]. Expatriates who practice transformational leadership have high levels of expectation and self-confidence and are thus willing to work harder to accomplish difficult goals. They are likely to view the overseas assignments with the excitement and challenge that make them see overseas assignments as a positive opportunity to develop themselves. According to Morrison and Beck [2000], expatriates who had self-confidence and positive attitudes were reported to perform well in their overseas operations.

The ability to develop interpersonal relationships with the host-nation subordinates has also emerged as an important factor in successful expatriate managers [Jordan and Cartwright, 1998]. With transformational leadership, expatriates build quality relationships with their subordinates through “individualized consideration” by giving subordinates personal attention, understanding subordinates’ individual differences, and making subordinates feel valued as receiving special treatment. Through these positive relationships, transformational expatriates will be able to investigate the basis for the host country’s cultural differences and better understand the causes of their subordinates’ behaviours.

Expatriate managers who frequently exhibited transformational leadership and those who frequently exhibited transactional leadership seem to emphasize different goals. Under contingent reward transactional leadership, once rewards were not provided or subordinates felt the rewards did not appeal, subordinates might lack the incentive to perform to their full potential. Working under expatriates who closely controlled their subordinates could also make subordinates more dependent on their superiors’ ability and knowledge [Cervone and Wood, 1995] and that might reduce subordinates’ self-efficacy and self-achievement [Heslin, 1999].

Contrary to those who practice transactional leadership, transformational expatriates raise subordinates’ self-confidence and self-esteem by providing challenging work and learning opportunities for their subordinates. As a result, subordinates are more likely to be willing to develop their own abilities and be able to take on leadership roles themselves. In particular, subordinates in multinational corporations are required to rely more on themselves than on their expatriate superiors. Expatriates can be rotated or relocated back to their home headquarters, but organizational activities sometimes need to be maintained by the subordinates in the host countries. Therefore, expatriate managers should lead their subordinates in a way that improves subordinates’ self-development. The practices of transformational leadership appear to serve this purpose.

Expatriate training is another essential process that increases the chance of success for expatriates. In terms of leadership training, multinational corporations ideally should train their expatriates’ leadership skills to conform to a variety of different cultures. To achieve this objective, however, the
corporations might need patience and a long-term perspective [Adler and Bartholomew, 1992]. It could take time for expatriates to acquire the various sets of leadership skills that are required to be effective in different cultures.

Alternatively, perhaps the best option for corporations is to provide leadership training programs designed to build universal leadership skills so that expatriates could practice these skills without being affected by the host cultures. In this case, transformational leadership could be one form of universal leadership that MNCs should consider including in the leadership development programs for their expatriates. As a result, expatriates could develop their leadership skills and become transformational leaders. They will then be able to lead subordinates in effective and satisfactory ways in whatever cultures they are assigned. McFarlin and Sweeney [1998, p. 55] supported this point:

“...The most successful international manager in the future will be a transformational leader. ... This suggests that managers around the world should be trained to become transformational leaders.”

7. CONCLUSIONS

The findings revealed that the four cultural dimensions had no significant impact on the transformational, transactional, and non-leadership behaviours, with the exception of the small positive impact of power distance on transformational leadership. These results, therefore, led to partially support hypothesis 1 and fully support hypotheses 2 and 3. In general, the very limited influence of the cultural dimensions on the three major leadership behaviours seemed to support the universality of the transformational-transactional paradigm proposed by Bass [1997] and the “etic” approach [Triandis, 1994].

It may not be appropriate to conclude that the nature of leadership behaviours should be totally treated as a universal phenomenon. The degrees of cultural values influencing leadership behaviours should depend on how one defines or views “leadership.” However, when leadership behaviours were captured by transformational leadership, as in this study, culture seemed to play a limited role. The universality of the transformational leadership model proposed in this study serves as a basic explanation and contributes to a better understanding of how the internal and external forces contribute to a near universalistic position for transformational leadership.

Although this research provided some interesting results, there are some limitations and recommendations for future research arising that should be recognized and addressed. The investigation of the current study employed specific theoretical frameworks: Bass’s transformational leadership and Hofstede’s four cultural dimensions. Since the relationships between culture and leadership behaviours are still sensitive and unresolved issues [Dorfman, 1996], whether other theories may produce either similar or different results remains an open research question.
Further research might focus on one of the core cultural dimensions such as femininity since some authors have argued that transformational leadership is inherently more feminine than masculine [e.g., Bass, Avolio, and Atwater, 1996]. Also, future research may wish to address other factors that influence leadership behaviours, such as the personality attributes of both leaders and subordinates. On transformational leadership, some previous studies had reported the significant contribution of individual differences from leaders and subordinates of the same cultural background [e.g., Atwater and Yammarino 1993; Howell and Avolio, 1993]. The personality attributes of successful leaders may also vary substantially as between cultures and help to understand the wider implications of leadership styles.

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