COVID and Cross-Cultural Management: Is There Synergy or Discord across West- vs. East-Developed and Newly Industrialized Economies?

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**Abstract**

The unprecedented Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) since its outbreak in late 2019 has affected most economies and lives in many different ways. While everyone has tried to find a way to respond to the crisis, it is still challenging for us to understand how this virus is developed, how it can be effectively calmed, and, if needed, co-exist with human life without unrepairable harm, and where it will take us. The shocks from this contagion are real and tremendous as they not only require immense resources to fight against the virus, but they also give us an ordeal to learn to be resilient and work together for a global relief. The speed of COVID recovery does not only rely on the tangible infrastructure such as medical rescue and public-health administration, along with the stimuli from the economic and financial mechanism, it also pivots on whether a nation could lead its citizens to move forward cohesively based on, somewhat intangible but powerful, its cultural norms and common belief.

As coronavirus is invisible, making it especially hard to predict and trace, it increases challenges for public-health administrators and front-line medical workers to exercise disease control effectively. When COVID epicenters shifting from East to West were fast-evolving and elusive, some thought that most countries might face the same threat and pace of virus spread given its menacing infectivity, while in fact, it was somewhat tamped down in the East after the first few months followed by a rigorous attack like a "wild-fire" in the drought across the West. Inspecting two groups of developed and newly industrialized economies (NIEs) across these regions, where each suffered different degrees of COVID invasion by different disease responses, this study aims to analyze cross-cultural practices founded on the Hofstede cultural classification. In the empirical findings, it is believed that effective pandemic control is most likely resulted from a collaborative culture, reflected in long-term orientation, low individualism, high power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, and low self-indulgence, where early and inclusive compliance of state-mandated safety measures is adopted by all citizens of a country, while the risks of failing intervention due to any form of civil defiance may prevail in a contrary and uncooperative culture. Policy-makers of public and private sectors are recommended to identify and assess the anomalies and successes in West- vs. East-epidemic prevention and control so that as facing the forthcoming or post-COVID crisis management, they could take the pragmatic cultural traits into consideration.