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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP BASED ON VALUES OF LOCAL ETHNIC CULTURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY.

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#### Abstract

The power of culture in each country is very influential in shaping the characters of people in organization especially leader. A good leadership will affect the organizational performance. This study aims to identify the values of local ethnic culture and its role in shaping characteristics of effective leadership in South Korea, Indonesia and New Zealand. The method was adopting qualitative method by analyzing literatures on local culture of Korean in South Korea, Bugis in Indonesia, and Māori in New Zealand. The study found that similar characteristics of the three local ethnic cultures are the basic characteristics in forming characteristics of effective leadership especially in the region of Asia Pacific.

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#### Introduction:-

Culture resides at multiple levels, from nations, civilizations, organizations to groups (Schein, 2004) and it is generally defined as “the enduring sets of beliefs, values, and ideologies underpinning structures, processes, and practices that distinguishes one group of people from another” (Walker & Dimmock, 2002, p. 16). Murray & Kluckhohn (1953) also stated that culture may offers a lot of potential life for an unforgettable experience to every human being. Therefore, Hofstede (1997) believed that culture as a software of mind of every people.

Each country has a clearly difference of culture and character which is obtained through a process of exploration and discovery of its identity (Hofstede, 2001). Hence, the cultural identity of the nation can affect the characters, attitudes and behavior of individual in society, especially the leaders.

The leaders are called as cultural heroes because leadership reflects the dominant culture of a country (Hofstede, 2001). Global world now requires the contemporary leaders to work across cultures and nationalities without compromising their own values (Katene, 2010). The leaders who have an excellent mindset, good behavior, holy life, elate, foresight and courage to make changes, will succeed in protecting and maintaining the social values of the cultural community as well as forming a great nation and civilization (Jusoh, 2009).

The cultural differences are mainly reflected in terms of its values (Hofstede, 1997). An anthropologist Kluckhohn (1967) defined "value" as a concept, explicitly or implicitly, the specificity characteristics or features of either individuals or groups, who want to influence the selection of the mode, meaning and the appropriate action. While

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Rahim (2012) interpret "value" in all the standards which is used as decision-making, intangible, or abstract, such as customs, normative habits, moral, ethics, self-esteem, ideas, knowledge and so on.

The advantages of local culture's values in shaping the leadership can be considered among some of the world community. As with South Korea, a country that is able to generate and maintain its unique culture and traditions. Although the Western culture is strong enough to affect people's lives in South Korea, especially in urban areas, but the ethics-based culture of Koreans such as honesty, hold promise, appreciate and respect the elders are stillexist. In Indonesia, the implementation of local cultural traditions which indeed contain positive values has brought much success to the leadership both nationally and locally. Meanwhile, in New Zealand, the culture has been expanded through globalization. But in fact, even most of the population now are living in urban, a lot of their literatures and arts are still rural theme.

#### **Objective of the Study:-**

The purpose of this study is to identify the values of local ethnic culture and its role for shaping the characteristics of effective leadership in selected countries of Asia-Pacific region such as Korean in South Korea (East Asia), Bugis in Indonesia (Southeast Asia), and Māori in New Zealand (Oceania).

#### **Methodology:-**

In this study, qualitative method approach was adopted by analyzing the related literatures with the local ethnic culture of Korean, Bugis, and Māori.

#### **Findings:-**

##### **Leadership characteristics in Korean culture**

South Korea is among the countries in East Asia that the most attracted the world today. It includes as one of the attracted countries in the world which has shown and proven its success, particularly in the field of art, culture and technology. It is not surprising when the country is among the countries that are considered to be successful in business management. In business management, each elements of the organization certainly has the role, particularly the efficiency of its leaders. Upholding the spirit of hard work consistently is one of the factors of the success in South Korea.

Although South Korea is regarded as a country that is the most internationalized in Asia, but many Koreans who still maintain their traditional culture, the traditions, customs and cultural practices which still appeared very significant in business and government organizations (Lee, 2012). Traditional culture has been considered as the root of Korean cultural identity (Yim, 2002).

South Korea with almost 99 percent of the population are Korean ethnic (Rini, 2012), has the principles of cultural values that are still practiced everyday in society. Through these practices, the country managed to showcase the rich cultural heritage. One of the Korean culture principles which is very effective in their personality is *inhwa*. *Inhwa* refers to "harmony". *Inhwa* is one of fundamental values in Korean culture which very effective for the leadership in South Korea.

According to Widyahartono (2008), the Confucian influences practicing organizations in South Korea both in business and government. From Confucian beliefs, *inhwa* was drawn. *Inhwa* is one of Korean culture principles that emphasize the harmony among human (Lee, 2012). *Inhwa* showed the following characteristics:

1. Loyalty to a hierarchical structure.
2. Obedience, loyalty, love and gratitude to parents, especially the mother as a symbol of sacrifice and kindness who always unselfish.
3. The harmony within and between groups.
4. Leaders are role models.
5. Moral values are more appreciated than merely skill and competence.

On the whole organization in South Korea emphasizes the harmony among human, loyalty, cooperation, a sense of unity or solidarity, responsibility, dedication, hard work, creativity, originality, and personal development (Widyahartono, 2008). Korean people are very loyal to their parents, the elders, and the authority figures such as the kings, the leaders of the organization, and all the people in the highest position of hierarchical structure. Koreans usually like to give a positive answer and show reluctance by giving direct refusals to maintain a harmonious

environment as reflected of *inhwa*. In organizations, subordinated loyal to the leaders and the leaders is concerned with the welfare of subordinates. Leaders who base their leadership with *inhwa* is always willing to sacrifice to prioritize public interest over private interests alone. Here we see that the *inhwa* usually exist in an unequal rank (hierarchical structure), prestige and power. *Inhwa* also teaches the value at which each party has a responsibility to support the other party or people and make them happy. Therefore, Lee (2012) in his study concluded that by understanding and practicing the culture, customs and traditions of Korean, the effectiveness and success will be reached.

#### **Leadership characteristics in Bugis culture:-**

Indonesia, as one of eleven countries in Southeast Asia, has approximately thousands ethnicities. Each ethnic has pure cultures and traditions with positive values inside. This country which consists of 34 provinces, has characteristics are marked by the diversity of its local ethnic culture. One of them is culture of Bugis ethnic.

Bugis people or called as Buginese is the biggest population in the eastern area of Indonesia which originally comes from and largely stay in South Sulawesi province, Indonesia. They had a core and original culture that has existed since a long time ago until today that is called *siri'*. *Siri'* reflects the character and personality of Buginese (Hamid, 2003).

The concept of *siri'* is difficult to be translated into the other languages, including the Indonesian language. Although no single word is perfectly suitable and appropriate to translate and make sense of *siri'* but it was often interpreted generally as shyness and self-esteem (dignity) by most of society in South Sulawesi. Andaya (2004) also argued that aspects of shame and dignity in *siri'* culture must always be balanced and complementary. More described by Marzuki (1995) that aspects of shame and dignity in *siri'* are like two chemical components which are soluble and belong each other in compounds and melting together in symbiosis. Hence, Hamid (2003) stated that *siri'* is a system of attitudes that cause embarrassment when the honor or dignity has been dropped.

*Siri'* is abstract and very sensitive to the Buginese. It is ideology and symbol of cultural value that are applicable in all class of society (Fahmid, 2012). *Siri'* places human on the level of respect and noble position in the life of world (Abdullah, 1985). The higher of person's status and position in all kinds of organizations (e.g. family, society, company, government, etc.), the stronger of *siri'* attached to him/her (Hamid, 2003). Behaving well and properly, and also avoiding bad morals in social and law are a symbol of the establishment of *siri'*. Therefore, *siri'* demands honesty, loyalty, and discipline.

*Siri'* which is inherent in personality of Buginese already contains values, either generally or specifically. Hamid (2003) stated that, common values of *siri'* include: recognizing the equality of rights and obligations among people, wise and caring people, uphold humanitarian, brave stand for truth and justice, love and proud of nation, working hard. Meanwhile, specific values in *siri'* are emotional vocabularies which are tied to social community as something complex of tastes. Rahim (2011) concluded that the values embodied in *siri'* include: honesty, trustworthy or responsibility, fairness, intellectuality or intelligence, tactful, traditionalism, diligence or hard work (so as not poor), and bravery.

Bugis leadership is limited by the rules of the local wisdom (culture), especially the cultural values of *siri'*. Buginese were boosted by *siri'* to be a wise leader, persevere in the struggle, never give up when faced with a tough challenge, and must be fair and honest with everyone in any business (Abdullah, 1985).

#### **Leadership characteristics in Māori culture:-**

New Zealand is considered as the last island that inhabited by humans because of its remoteness. It is an island nation that located in the southwest of Pacific Ocean and the southeast of Australia.

New Zealand's native people are called Māori. The lives of Māori has been much influenced by traditional cultures from the earlier generations (Katene, 2010). At this time, Māori have been living together with the other ethnic groups in building modern New Zealand and advanced the concept of diversity. However, Māori is still developing its own distinct culture. Culturally, Māori people live communally, sharing, and strongly maintaining traditional values.

In Māori culture, leadership is determined by a combination of leaders who is legalized by collective input (Marsden, 1988). To understand the leadership of Māori in New Zealand society, it is necessary to understand the principles relating to the interpretation of traditional leadership. Leadership in Māori is still hierarchy and according to the class system, but traditional Māori society still expects that the leader is appeared of the group (Rito, 2006). Therefore, the community work together with leaders or their principals for the same purpose.

Katene (2010) argued that traditional and contemporary Māori leadership is characterized by leaders who share the vision, mission and actions agreed upon and respected for their loyalty and confidence of his followers, both individually and as a group through their inspiring leadership. Therefore, the future leaders of Māori that is needed is must be educated, politically wise, sophisticated, qualified, strong, committed to their people, and well-grounded in basic of Māori culture (New Zealand Te Puni Kōkiri, 1992).

One of the cultural values that form the basis of life for Māori is called as *wairua*. *Wairua* is interpreted as the spirit or soul. It is a cultural beliefs, practices and values that exist in daily life and cultural vitality that is embedded in the services and program of Māori (Kennedy et al., 2015). There are seven principles of *wairua* which include: 1) the feelings associated with it (*mauri*); 2) respect to others (*aroha ki te tangata*); 3) generosity and sharing with others (*manaaki ki te tangata*); 4) care (*kaitiakitanga*); 5) concern (*kia tūpato*); 6) cleaning spirit (*whakanoa*); and 7) knowledge, collective wisdom, and enlightenment (*mōhiotanga, mātauranga, and māramatanga*). Kennedy et al. (2015) expect the exploration experience in research will give support to other Māori's evaluators to reflect on how *wairua* woven into their culture responsive assessment practices.

Based on the traditional culture of Māori, New Zealand Te Puni Kōkiri (1992) identified the key elements in the leadership for leader of new Māori which are summarized as follows: 1) the strength of a leader reflects the strength of the group because a strong leader is within or close to his people; 2) a leader is the servant of people (servant leadership) which means people oriented leadership, mandate from people and responsible to the people, often seen among the people, serve the people, care for the people, and speak on behalf of the people; 3) a leader strives to ensure, enhance, and strengthen the integrity, continuity and development of Māori society and culture; 4) modern leader needs to consult frequently with the *iwi* (social organization unit in community fraternal of Māori) and dependant upon reliable information and advice; 5) leadership requires cooperation between traditional leaders and specialists.

Katene (2010) found that the leadership system of Māori is still relevant until today. Māori have built considerable capability and competitive advantage through leading and managing cultural diversity. The mark of leadership success for a Māori is providing leadership based on traditional principles while managing the interface (Mead, 2006). Therefore, Harmsworth et al. (2002) believed that the leaders of Māori who often occupy several positions, roles and different responsibilities are to meet the needs of culture and organization for the development of a sustainable future.

### Discussion:-

Based on our findings, it was identified the leadership characteristics contained in each local ethnic culture of Korean in South Korea, Bugis in Indonesia and Māori in New Zealand, as listed in Table 1.

**Table 1:-** Leadership characteristic of local ethnic culture (Korean, Bugis, Māori)

Korean South Korea	Bugis Indonesia	Māori New Zealand
loyalty	dignity	fairness (in sharing)
discipline	morality	generosity/caring
respect	honesty	traditionalism
morality	loyalty	cooperation
solidarity/cooperation	tactful/wise	servant (for people)
trustworthy	trustworthy/responsibility	intelligence
bravery (in sacrifice)	diligence (hard work)	responsibility (trustworthy)
intelligence	bravery	hard work
creativity	fairness	boldness/bravery
traditionalism (originality)	intellectuality/intelligence	honesty
fairness	traditionalism	integrity
dedication/diligence/hard work	discipline	

The list of leadership characteristics of three local ethnic cultures that has been shown by Table 1. particularly showing the similar characteristics such as: trustworthy, diligence (hard work), bravery, intellectuality (intelligence), fairness, and traditionalism. These six characteristics, as the result of comparison of the local ethnic culture in South Korea, Indonesia, and New Zealand, are the basic characteristics for shaping effective leadership. Each characteristic can be described as follow:

1. **Trustworthy** means responsible leader in carrying out the duties, interests and aims of the organization; using the power and authority to the decent and correct things according to the rules; and strengthen the loyalty and responsibility for people.
2. **Diligence** refers to a leader who is hard-working; diligent; enterprising; conscientious in carrying out his activities; and never feel tired or bored to seek knowledge and continue the studies.
3. **Bravery** mentions to a leader who is bold; fearlessness; bravely face the challenges as well as threats; will not withdraw in facing the adversity (not a coward); and volunteer their time, energy and material for common aims.
4. **Intellectuality** is also called as intelligence which means that a leader should be educated; has intellectual ability, mental capacity, and understanding; has balance of logic, emotional, and spiritual.
5. **Fairness** means leader who is not arbitrary; does not favor any party or person; putting things in the right places like the appointment of the expert officers in the field; keeping one's right or something like employees receive services and benefits commensurate with their sacrifices and performance in an organization.
6. **Traditionalism** refers to the upholding or maintenance of tradition which means that leaders establish an activity with positive values grounded indigenous cultural traditions to be adapted and implemented within the leadership without conflict with the related law.

Nurfitri et al. (2015) found that the basic values to be a leader are diligence, bravery, intellectuality, and fairness. However, to be an effective leader, the basic values of leadership must be developed. Each leader should not be satisfied and limited only with a common leadership, but must act more effectively to increase the level to become effective leader which then finally achieving best performance and can become successful leader. Therefore, the six characteristics (trustworthy, diligence, bravery, intellectuality, fairness, and traditionalism) as listed and described above are the initial and main values as leadership characteristics that must be held to be effective in leading an organization.

According to Likierman (2009), effective leadership is viewed through the achievement of organization. Meanwhile, Widodo (2008) believed that successful leadership is viewed through the achievement and maintenance of organization. Hence, it can be concluded that effective leadership is not necessarily successful leadership but successful leadership is certainly effective leadership. However, effective leadership is the key step before achieving the successful leadership.

### Conclusions:-

The most important characters of leadership may vary in different cultures and countries. The values of local ethnic cultures have given much influences in forming characteristics of leadership to be effective for reaching great performance. Finally, the great performance will produce the success of leadership as the main objective of every leader. The successful leadership reflects the successful organization where the leader leads.

Every culture has its unique characteristics which contains positive values that can be developed. Therefore, the other study can explore more about the uniqueness and distinctiveness of culture in each country especially that are considered as successful countries. Identifying the culture's characteristics, role and influence in every community life and especially in leadership is proposed to be studied, investigated and disclosed in greater depth continuously.

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