

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT: MANAGING MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES IN SINGAPORE

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Abstract

It is not sustainable for construction projects in Singapore to rely merely on a Singaporean workforce due to the low participation rate of indigenous workers. A typical construction site in Singapore thus comprises migrant workers from several countries. This gives rise to the need for diversity management on construction sites to ensure social sustainability. The aim of this research is to examine styles that project managers adopt when managing multi-cultural migrant workers in construction projects. The specific objectives are to: investigate the socially sustainable managerial practices adopted by project managers when dealing with migrant construction workers from China, India and Thailand; and identify if there are any differences in management practices when dealing with migrant construction workers from different countries. The research method is questionnaire survey, and data were collected from project managers who had managed migrant workers in Singapore. In-depth interviews were also conducted to confirm the statistical results. The research found that project managers tend to use task-oriented more than relation-oriented management style to achieve social sustainability. The management practices that are significantly implemented include requiring workers to be punctual, giving assertive instructions, providing close supervision and enforcing rules so that social sustainability can be maintained on construction sites.

Keywords: Social sustainability, diversity, leadership, management.

INTRODUCTION

A construction project usually requires a large number of workers. In Singapore, relying on indigenous workers to undertake construction work is not sustainable because Singaporeans eschew this sector of the economy. Official statistics show that the construction sector in Singapore is the most reliant on migrant workers as it attracts only 6.1% of resident workforce (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2000). On a typical site, construction

workers may hail from countries like Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. This suggests the need for construction projects to be managed in a socially sustainable manner, taking into account cultural diversity as a result of the workers coming from different countries.

Gilbert et al. (1996) defined social sustainability as practices to ensure that the cohesion of society and its ability to work towards common goals are maintained, and that individual needs should be met. Using inappropriate management practices can render projects to be managed in a socially unsustainable manner, which would result in serious consequences such as stress among the workforce, confusion, frustration and conflict which translates into lower morale, productivity, quality problems and higher accident rates (Loosemore and Lee, 2002). It is thus essential for project managers to apply appropriate management practices in order to effectively lead a multi-cultural construction workforce in a socially sustainable manner.

The aim of this research is to examine leadership styles of project managers when managing multi-cultural migrant workers in construction projects. The specific objectives are to: investigate the socially sustainable managerial practices adopted by project managers when dealing with migrant construction workers; and identify if there are any differences in management practices when dealing with migrant construction workers from different countries. The purpose of identifying leadership styles and management practices is to inform project managers who are going to manage sites with migrant workers from several countries on the more effective practices and styles to achieve social sustainability.

The scope of research covers Singapore resident project managers' management of migrant construction workers from mainland China, India and Thailand on construction sites in Singapore. It is widely observed that the largest percentage of migrant workers come from Singapore's nearest neighbour, Malaysia, though published statistics is not readily available. Malaysians have similar culture to Singaporeans due to geographical proximity and historical links, and therefore, they are excluded from this study. Chinese, Indian and Thai workers are the next three major nationalities on Singapore's construction sites and are therefore selected for this study. The terms Chinese, Indian and Thai in this paper refer to workers' nationalities. Singapore resident project managers, who are the subject matter experts to inform this research, are project managers, construction managers and supervisors who are Singaporeans or permanent residents of Singapore who are not from India, China or Thailand, and who had personally supervised migrant workers from these countries. For brevity, they are generally referred to as 'project managers'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The effectiveness of a project manager is a vital component in the success of construction projects (Enshassi and Burgess, 1991). Anderson (1983) defined effectiveness as the manager's ability to supervise and manage subordinates. Laufer and Jenkins (1982) suggested that management has a direct and indirect impact on the level of productivity. The direct impact can be achieved by planning and controlling construction activities while the indirect impact is attained through a good interrelationship between managers and their subordinates that may raise the motivation of the work force. In Singapore, project managers have the additional responsibility of managing cultural diversity among migrant construction workers to ensure social sustainability.

The most common cross-culture management challenge is to facilitate culturally-diverse people to work together which requires special skills and sensitivities (Child, 1994). Cross-cultural management studies have provided several leadership styles to cope with cross-cultural differences. Among these, Contingency Theories (Fiedler, 1964; Hersey and Blanchard, 1969) appear to be the most relevant.

Contingency Leadership Theories

Fiedler's (1964) Contingency Theory of Leadership asserts that group performance is contingent on the leader's psychological orientation and on three contextual variables: group atmosphere; task structure; and leader's power position. Further, group performance is a result of interaction of leadership style and situational favorableness. Leadership effectiveness is the result of interaction between the style of the leader and the characteristics of the environment in which the leader works.

Hersey and Blanchard's (1969, 1977) Situational Leadership Theory rests on two fundamental concepts: Leadership Style and the individual or group's Maturity level. It states that there is no single 'best' style of leadership. Effective leadership is task-relevant and the most successful leaders are those who adapt their leadership style to the maturity of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influence.

Based on contingency theories, two leadership styles are identified: task-oriented leaders; and relation-oriented leaders (Enshassi and Burgess, 1991). **Task-oriented** leaders are those who are mainly concerned with planning, work organization, control, efficiency, and productivity, while **Relation-oriented** leaders are those who give priority to managing internal relationships among employees and themselves, and to an understanding of cultural differences between their subordinates (Enshassi and Burgess, 1991). Task-oriented leaders are predicted to be most effective in either highly favorable or unfavorable situational conditions while relation-oriented leaders should be more effective in the intermediate range of favorableness (Barrow, 1976).

Managing cultural diversity

Cultural diversity has been studied by Hofstede (1980, 1984, 2001). He operationalized culture into 4 dimensions: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism vs collectivism; and masculinity vs femininity, and subsequently added long-term orientation. He has provided indices of these dimensions for many countries, including China, India, Thailand and Singapore. The indices for the countries are different from each other, suggesting cultural dissimilarities among these nations, leading to differing values, beliefs and practices among the migrant workforce on construction sites in Singapore.

Project managers should understand the cultural differences of their subordinates in order to be effective as cultural heterogeneity has a considerable impact on their effectiveness. Low and Leong (2001) designed an Asian organizational managerial framework to manage cultural diversity. They found that an effective leader possesses the ability to influence group members towards the achievement of goals. Thus, effective management of a culturally diverse workforce ultimately contributes to the overall effectiveness of the manager and productivity of the company.

In managing a culturally diverse workforce, differences in cultural traits among workers of different countries have to be recognized in order to understand their mindsets and behaviour, so that supervisors can manage migrant workers effectively. This calls for managers to

develop and implement practices aimed at improving the effectiveness with which the organization utilizes diverse work force, i.e. diversity management. Gilbert et al. (1999) defined diversity management as a complete organizational cultural change designed to foster appreciation of demographic, ethnic and individual differences. It is argued that the challenges within competitive, dynamic and increasingly global markets are best met by an effectively managed workforce that has a diverse experience and knowledge (McCuiston et al., 2004; Seymen, 2006). Bergen et al. (2005) found positive impact of diversity while Curtis and Dreachslin (2008) found diversity impacts performance negatively.

Gap in knowledge

Many leadership studies in construction have been undertaken. Muller and Turner (2010) examined the leadership competency profiles of successful project managers. Toor and Ofori (2008) put forward authentic leaders as a new breed of construction project leaders who possess positive values, lead from the heart, set highest levels of ethics and morality and go beyond their personal interests in the well-being of their followers. These and many other studies did not address cross-cultural management in detail, and did not study management of construction workers. Wong et al. (2007) investigated cross-cultural leadership perceptions and power relationships of Chinese and Western expatriate project managers in multinational construction firms in Hong Kong. While they studied intercultural interactions, it was at the professional level, and not how construction workers are managed.

To effectively manage migrant workers from different cultures, it is important to know what leadership styles and management practices should be adopted. Otherwise, problems such as poor productivity and communication difficulties caused by different work ethics, culture and customs between managers and migrant workers would arise (Son, 2005). However, despite the need for project managers to manage a culturally diverse workforce, insufficient studies have been done to identify the more effective practices to manage migrant construction workers from different nations and different cultures. One study by Han et al. (2008) of foreign construction workers focused on their low performance due to regulations, qualifications and management systems. The study did not investigate leadership styles for migrant workers from different nations.

It is not known if different leadership styles need to be adopted for migrant workers from different countries. There is a lack of information and empirical data with respect to the effectiveness of project managers in managing multi-culture migrant workers. The fieldwork was therefore undertaken to investigate the practices adopted to manage migrant workers and explore how project managers may be more effective in cross-cultural management on construction sites.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research adopted a two-pronged approach: questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews. The purpose of the questionnaire survey was to test whether the managerial styles identified from the literature review are adopted by project managers when dealing with migrant construction workers, and whether the practices differ when migrant workers come from different countries. The purpose of the interviews was to confirm and elaborate on the statistical results.

The data collection instrument comprised a questionnaire which was pre-tested. The first part

of the questionnaire contained demographic questions, while the second part contained structured questions relating to practices adopted in managing workers of different nationalities, developed based on the literature review. The respondents were required to rate the extent to which the practices described the way they managed migrant workers from mainland China, India and Thailand on construction sites in Singapore. The majority of the questions required respondents to rate on a 5-point scale, where 1= strongly disagree; 3= neutral; and 5= strongly agree.

The population comprised project managers, construction managers, professionals and supervisors who had supervised migrant workers in Singapore. The sampling frame was government registered construction firms. Emails and follow up telephone calls to 90 randomly selected Singapore registered construction firms were made to invite participation in the study. 32 responded via a mixture of emails and face-to-face interviews, giving a response rate of 36%.

The second research prong involved face-to-face in-depth interviews with three subject matter experts who had personally supervised migrant workers extensively. They have worked in the construction industry for more than 8 years.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Characteristics of the sample

The characteristics of the interviewees are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Designation		
Senior Management	4	13
Middle Management	20	62
Professional	8	25
Gender		
Male	32	100
Female	0	0
Experience (years)		
Up to 10	11	34
11 – 20	15	47
> 20 years	6	19
Nationalities of workers supervised		
China	31	97
India	32	100
Thai	24	75
Malaysia	30	94
Philippines	23	72

All the respondents are Singapore residents and had supervised at least 4 different nationalities of migrant workers. The majority of the respondents are in middle management (site managers, project/construction managers, site supervisors and site engineers) and had

more than 10 years of experience in the construction industry (average = 15 years). None of the respondents belong to these 3 nationalities.

Qualities of effective project managers in diversity management

The t-test results on the qualities required for the effective management of migrant workers are shown in Table 2. The results show that with the exception of ‘ability to gain authority over workers by instilling fear’, all the other qualities are significantly important ($p < 0.05$). Effective project managers need to, in descending order of importance: be able to give clear and firm instructions; possess high technical ability; be able to build and maintain relationship with workers; be able to understand the language spoken by migrant workers; be able to understand culture variation; and be able to motivate workers.

The findings show that the top two qualities relate to task-oriented leadership style, indicating that this style is important for managing a multi-cultural migrant work force effectively. Relation-oriented leadership styles, though important, are perceived to be of lower importance, given their relatively lower means. Gaining authority by instilling fear is not emphasized (mean= 2.44; $p= 0.001$). This may be due to the prevalence of high collectivism and low individualism in the cultures of migrant workers (Hofstede, 1980). High collectivism culture would place high emphasis on building relationships and therefore it is not appropriate to control these workers by instilling fear. Instilling fear is also not correct as people may find ways to get back at their managers and hide information to protect themselves from punishment (Maccoby et al., 2004).

Table 2: *Qualities required in managing a foreign workforce*

Quality	Mean	Std. dev	T-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Leadership style
Ability to give clear and firm instructions	4.66	.483	19.416	.000	Task-oriented
High technical ability	4.28	.634	11.428	.000	Task-oriented
Ability to build and maintain relationship with workers	4.22	.832	8.285	.000	Relation-oriented
Understanding the language used by the foreign workers	4.06	.669	8.984	.000	Relation-oriented
Understanding cultural variation within the work force	3.75	.880	4.822	.000	Relation-oriented
Motivating workers by linking rewards to performance	3.53	.950	3.164	.003	Relation-oriented
Ability to gain authority over workers by instilling fear	2.44	.878	-3.626	.001	Task-oriented

Leadership styles of project managers

Based on two leadership styles (task-oriented and relation-oriented), 14 management practices were operationalized. Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point scale the extent to which they practiced each of these on different nationalities of migrant workers. The means and t-test results for each nationality of workers are shown in Table 3.

For the t-test, the population mean was fixed at 3 (on a 5-point scale) and the significance level for the two-tailed test was set at 0.05. If the t-test results showed that $p < 0.05$ and the t -value is positive, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is then concluded that the management

practice is used significantly frequently. If the t value is negative, and $p < 0.05$, it is concluded that the management practice is significantly seldom adopted.

To find out if project managers' use significantly different practices to manage different nationalities of construction workers, independent-sample t test of equality of means was conducted. Three independent-sample t tests were conducted to compare differences in managing: Chinese and Indians (test 1); Chinese and Thais (test 2); and Indians and Thais (test 3). Results show that there is no significant differences in the way project managers manage workers of different nationalities. This is despite Hofstede's (2001) indices showing that Chinese, Indians and Thais have dissimilar cultures. The absence of dissimilarity among people of different cultures was also detected by Wong et al. (2007) when they compared the leadership styles of Chinese and Westerners working in Hong Kong. One possible explanation for the lack of significant difference is that the migrant workers have made intercultural adjustment (Wong et al., 2007), negating the need for project managers to manage each nationality differently. Another explanation is that the project managers are unaware that they need to manage cultural diversity. This may not be the case as Table 2 shows that respondents had indicated that understanding cultural variation within the work force is an important quality for project managers. The third explanation is that project managers prefer to have one style of management for all workers on the same construction site (equal strokes for different folks) so that there is no perception of unfairness.

Table 3: One sample t -test results on management practices

Code	Management Practices	Chinese			Indians			Thais		
		Mean	t-value	Sig.	Mean	t-value	Sig.	Mean	t-value	Sig.
R1	I maintain good relationship with my subordinates.	4.06	7.679	.000	4.25	7.721	.000	4.00	5.624	.000
R2	I try to make my subordinates as satisfied as possible with their work.	3.65	4.758	.000	3.25	1.312	.199	3.43	2.472	.022
R3	I try to be as approachable to my subordinates as possible.	3.77	4.509	.000	3.88	5.074	.000	3.48	2.712	.013
R4	I try to be as fair and equal as I can in dealing with subordinates.	4.42	9.790	.000	4.31	9.515	.000	4.30	7.144	.000
R5	I hold meetings to discuss work related problems.	2.90	-.392	.698	3.06	.284	.778	3.13	.514	.613
R6	I encourage good work through friendship with my subordinates.	3.23	1.650	.109	3.22	1.648	.109	3.22	1.417	.171
R7	I encourage feedbacks from subordinates.	3.61	4.249	.000	3.53	3.283	.003	3.48	2.712	.013
T1	I practice close supervision.	3.71	5.346	.000	3.75	5.906	.000	3.78	6.258	.000
T2	I give clear and assertive instructions.	4.45	11.970	.000	4.16	8.099	.000	4.26	9.766	.000
T3	I reiterate and enforce rules to maintain discipline.	4.06	7.283	.000	4.28	11.428	.000	4.39	13.371	.000
T4	I use threats and punishment to encourage good work.	2.35	-3.420	.002	2.09	-4.844	.000	2.48	-2.313	.030
T5	I put emphasis in getting a lot of work done.	3.90	6.368	.000	3.81	5.890	.000	4.00	5.624	.000
T6	I insist on workers coming to work on time.	4.32	10.493	.000	4.53	12.069	.000	4.43	10.388	.000
T7	I expect subordinates to follow instructions without debate.	3.45	2.306	.028	3.38	2.104	.044	3.74	4.715	.000

DISCUSSION

Management practices relating to task-oriented leadership style

Respondents were asked the extent to which seven management practices relating to task-oriented leadership described the style they adopt in managing migrant construction workers.

Six of these were significantly practised by project managers on the three nationalities of construction workers. These are: supervising closely (T1); giving clear and assertive instructions (T2); reiterating and enforcing rules (T3); emphasizing on getting high quantity of work to be done (T5); insisting on punctuality (T6); and expecting subordinates to follow instructions without debate (T7). The results suggest that project managers use task-oriented leadership style to a significant extent. This agrees with Giritli and Oraz (2004) who found that management personnel in the construction industry perform the authoritative style of leadership more frequently than all other styles.

Only one task-oriented management practice was significantly not applied by project managers to all three nationalities of workers – using threats and punishments to encourage good work (T4). The finding supports the concept that discipline should be the last recourse to reinforce the application of safe work practices when all else (training, guidance and encouragement) failed (Hislop, 1999). Teo and Ling (2010) have also found that introduction of penalties and punishments for offenders/ repeat offenders do not help in enhancing worksite safety.

Management practices relating to relation-oriented leadership style

Respondents were also asked the extent to which they applied seven other management practices relating to relation-oriented leadership style. Four of these practices were used by project managers to manage all three nationalities: maintain good relationship with subordinates (R1); be friendly and approachable to subordinates (R3); be fair and impartial with subordinates (R4); and encourage feedback from subordinates (R7). The finding suggests that relationship cultivation by project managers is important, which agrees with Wong et al. (2007) who also found the importance of interpersonal relationships for effective leadership.

Table 3 shows that project managers try to make their Chinese and Thai workers be as satisfied as possible with their work (R2), but do not practice this with their Indian workers. This may be because Indian nationals have higher individualism score (48) than Chinese and Thai nationals (both at 20) (Hofstede, 2001). This is discussed later.

Two practices are not significantly used by project managers for all 3 nationalities: holding staff meetings to discuss work related problems (R5) and befriending workers to encourage good work (R6). As construction sites are not immune from disputes and complaints, holding staff meetings to discuss problems may turn the meetings into a complaints session. Those who had no problems may also be affected by the complaints, leading to lower morale. One subject matter expert shared that instead of holding meetings, project managers prefer to hold face-to-face discussions with the worker who is upset. He shared that:

“We prefer to talk to the aggrieved worker to address his complaints and get to the root of the problem. This grievance resolution method goes as close to the source as possible. It also prevents collective bargaining or class-action suit.”

As for eschewing friendship with subordinates, this is consistent with the finding that project managers prefer the task-oriented leadership style. Friendship is not encouraged because project managers may fear that their subordinate-friend might try to take advantage of the friendship, or that it may be awkward for project managers to boss people whom they have social ties with (Nefer, 2008).

Power distance

Hofstede's (2001) scores for power distance for China, India, Thailand and Singapore are 80, 77, 64 and 74 respectively, suggesting that these countries are large power distance societies as compared to the UK and USA which have 35 and 40 points respectively. The people in large power distance societies accept a hierarchical order in which everybody requires no justification for his position while people in small power distance societies expects power to be equally distributed and demand justification for power inequalities (Hofstede, 1984). With the high power distance culture of Chinese, Indian and Thai workers, Table 3 shows that project managers are employing appropriate task-oriented leadership style like close supervision (T1) and enforcing rules to maintain discipline (T3). Workers from these 3 countries are more likely to uphold hierarchies and comply with authorities as they come from high power distance cultures. It appears appropriate for project managers to apply more authoritative leadership styles when managing these workers.

Even though the three nationalities have relatively large power distances, project managers still significantly try to be as fair and equal as they can in dealing with workers (R4). The results show that project managers do not encourage good work through friendships with workers (R6). This is consistent with the high power distance that the Chinese, Indian and Thai workers are used to. These workers would be comfortable with the hierarchical management structure. Singaporean project managers are also comfortable to exercise task-oriented leadership style with a vertical organizational structure because Singapore also has a high power distance index. There is therefore a good fit between the task-oriented leadership style displayed by project managers and migrant workers' acceptance of this style based on power distance indices.

Uncertainty avoidance

Hofstede (2001) found that Chinese, Indians, Thais and Singaporeans' uncertainty avoidance scores are 30, 40, 64 and 8 respectively. The scores suggest that these 3 nationalities of construction workers are more uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity than Singaporeans. The findings in Table 3 suggest that Singapore project managers are well aware of this, and try to reduce uncertainty for their migrant workers by strict rules and measures such as insisting workers come to work punctually (T6) and supervising closely (T1). Insisting on punctuality appears to be very important practice as it is ranked first for managing Indian and Thai workers, and third for managing Chinese workers. Punctuality has been found to be one of the 'red flags' to indicate an employee is in serious trouble, which may eventually lead to pronounced behavior changes such as hostility toward authority, being chronically disgruntled, finding fault, blaming others for misfortunes, making destructive criticism, and threats (Magyar, 2003). Project managers' emphasis on punctuality is therefore the right management practice.

Uncertainty is also avoided or reduced by giving clear and assertive instructions (T2). This practice is ranked first for managing Chinese workers. While these migrant workers may be able to tolerate some unfairness due to the propensity to accept a hierarchical order (high power distance), project managers are mindful not to create dissatisfaction (R2) because they have low uncertainty avoidance.

The results in Table 3 support Hofstede's (2001) uncertainty avoidance findings. Chinese, Indian and Thai construction workers appear to require rigid codes of belief and behavior. People from societies with high uncertainty avoidance usually reject deviant persons and ideas (Hofstede, 1984), and favour structure and predictability and conflict is frowned upon (Gold, 2005). The findings also show that even though Singapore project managers have

very high tolerance for ambiguity, they have flexibly minimized uncertainty for their migrant workers in order to accentuate their job performance. This indicates the practice of contingency leadership style (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969).

Individualism vs collectivism

India's individualism score is 48, while China, Thailand and Singapore have the same score of 20, as against the UK and USA's scores of 89 and 91 respectively (Hofstede, 2001). The relatively low score for China, Thailand and Singapore suggests that people from this collectivism social framework expect their relatives, community, or other interest groups to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 1984). They are also less individualistic at the work place. As Indians have the highest individualism score among the 3 groups, Table 3 shows that project managers do not significantly try to make them as satisfied as possible with their work. The higher individualism may cause some Indian workers to care more about themselves, leading to weak relationships with co-workers. Project managers may have therefore deemphasized satisfying Indian workers as much as possible so as not to encourage more individualist behaviors.

The interviewees shared that they have observed high collectivism within a nationality group. The workers from the same country often form their own "social clusters" and developed team spirit within the clique naturally. Very low individualism and strong collectivism is not necessarily good because it may give rise to group think (Janis, 1972). Table 3 shows that project managers significantly encourage feedbacks from all groups of workers (R7). This may help to discourage group think by providing avenues for workers to be heard. The presence of groupthink is also indicated by Ogunlana and Chang (1998). They found that good relationships with workmates are more important to workers than gaining recognition and being "distinguished from the flock".

The results show that project managers do not hold staff meetings to discuss work related problems (R5). One interviewee explained that:

"Asian workers come from collectivist societies that exhibit more cooperative behavior. If we hold meetings to discuss work related problems, they may still not voice out their problems as they do not want to be seen as trouble makers. They are afraid their jobs may be jeopardized unnecessarily when they have many mouths to feed back home."

The finding agrees with Ogunlana and Chang (1998) who found that participating in decision making is one of the lowest ranking motivators for workers. Their study showed that "lack of communication" is not a powerful "demotivator" of work.

Masculinity vs femininity

Masculinity stands for society's inclination towards achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material success, while femininity stands for a preference for relationships, modesty, caring for the weak and the quality of life (Hofstede, 1984). China, India, Thailand and Singapore's Masculinity scores are 66, 56, 34 and 48 respectively (Hofstede, 2001). In comparison, the UK and USA's scores are 66 and 62 respectively, indicating that China and India are more similar to these societies in this aspect. The scores suggest that China and India's societies may put more emphasis on work goals and assertiveness, while Thailand and Singapore put more emphasis on personal goals and nurturance.

Table 3 shows that project managers do make significant efforts to try to make Chinese

workers as satisfied as possible with their work (R2). This is important as they have high masculinity index, and the traditional work role model of male achievement, control and power are important to these workers (Ng et al., 2009). When workers are satisfied, their performance would also improve (Ng et al., 2009).

LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of the study is that the responses were based on project managers' ratings on a 5-point Likert scale. Each respondent may apply the management practices to a different extent from another. The second limitation is that while ratings of respondents were amalgamated and a mean rating computed for each nationality of workers, it cannot be generalized that all workers from the same nation should be treated in the same way. Project managers should still treat each worker as a unique individual and find the best way to manage each of them, in accordance with Contingency Leadership theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969).

CONCLUSION

With a low participation rate of Singaporeans as construction workers, a typical construction site in Singapore comprises migrant workers from several countries for it to be sustainable. This study investigated the leadership style adopted by project managers in managing migrant workers from China, India and Thailand working in Singapore's construction industry using a survey research design.

Among the 3 nationalities of workers, Chinese workers would generally have the highest masculinity traits and lowest uncertainty avoidance. These suggest that they may be more inclined towards assertive and competitive behaviors, and are comfortable with unstructured situations. The implication is that to manage Chinese construction workers, project managers may need to adopt task-oriented leadership style by: giving assertive instructions (T2) and enforcing rules (T3) to control their high masculinity; and emphasizing punctuality (T6) and getting a lot of work done (T5) in order to "get the message across" effectively.

Indian workers have the highest individualism among the 3 nationalities of workers. This suggests that they are less integrated and cohesive. The implication for project managers is that task-oriented leadership style needs to be adopted and the relevant management practices include: enforcing punctuality (T6) and rules (T3) strictly.

Thai workers have the lowest masculinity and highest uncertainty avoidance scores when compared to Chinese and Indians. The generally modest and caring culture indicates the need for project managers to apply relation based leadership style. With their high uncertainty avoidance, it is recommended that project managers give Thai workers the clearest instructions at work (T2).

The findings suggest that Singapore project managers practice contingency theory leadership to a large extent. Their very low uncertainty avoidance score enables them to practice contingency leadership, by being both task-oriented and relation-oriented at the same time. There is no need for them to rigidly adhere to one style to achieve social sustainability on site. With Singapore's moderately high power distance index, the outcome is project

managers use more task-oriented leadership in the supervision of the workers. Singapore project managers are also deemed to be more feminine than masculine. They are therefore observed to also practice relation-oriented leadership.

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