FATAL ACCIDENT RATES ACROSS NATIONS AND THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

Fred A. Infortunio
fred.infortunio@ge.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of Uncertainty Avoidance (a stress correlate) to the rates of fatal accidents across nations for the 30-year period between 1969 and 1998. The fatality rate data was collected and provided by the International Labor Office (ILO), an office of the United Nations. The ILO provided a vast amount of data but unfortunately, this data could not be immediately studied in one large data set. Seven categories of data were studied. The data sets were provided for the construction industries, the manufacturing industries, the mining industries, the utility industries, transportation industries, the agricultural industries, and trade industries. The largest single data set included 30 countries and overall the data for 43 countries were used. The analysis is based upon chi-square tests of the direction of the average fatality rates relative to a high-low Uncertainty Avoidance ranking. The study showed that fatal accident rates were significantly related to uncertainty avoidance. The outcomes of the tests showed that the Hofstede dimension provided a viable underlying schema for the analyzing of accident rates across nations. It appears that national cultures, regional, industrial, organizational anxiety ratings may turn out to be a grounding point for the study of upper level organizational culture dimensions as they relate to safety cultures or climates.