

Indulgence Versus Restraint

Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory identifies and explains various cultural values. One of these values is the extent to which a cultural group is willing to be more indulgent or restrained, which means how interested a culture is in enjoying life versus following strict social norms. In Hofstede's theory, this value is called the "indulgence-versus-restraint" cultural dimension.

More-indulgent societies are comfortable with the idea of people pursuing pleasures and having fun, and they place great importance on individual leisure time. More-restrained societies, on the other hand, have a tendency to suppress, or put aside, personal desires. Restrained cultures often have strict moral values and carefully regulated social norms. The degree to which a society is indulgent versus restrained is important for managers and employees to keep in mind when working abroad because it helps them to determine how to behave in certain situations.

Nations that rank high on the indulgence scale include Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, the United States, Canada, and Australia. In fact, most of North America and South America are composed of indulgent countries. In Europe, Great Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands also rank high on the scale. Some of the cultural values of these societies include a strong interest in happiness, a perception of control over one's own life, optimism, extroverted attitudes toward strangers, and a firm belief in freedom of speech. In addition, these societies tend to be more flexible when it comes to social rules about sex. They also tend to have higher crime rates but smaller police forces. It is important to note that not all of these characteristics apply to every country that ranks high on the indulgence scale, and of course, these characteristics represent just a range of behaviors and attitudes that might be present.

According to Hofstede's theory, nations that are on the opposite end of the spectrum are more restrained. In these countries, generally speaking, there is a weaker sense of overall happiness and a belief that one is not in control of one's own destiny. Many of these societies do not place a great deal of importance on leisure time, and compared to indulgent societies, restrained societies are more pessimistic. In addition, Hofstede's research found that many people in restrained cultures are introverted—or at least not overtly friendly—toward strangers. So, for example, people may not be as likely to smile at or greet strangers. The countries that fall into this category include some Asian nations, as well as many countries in the Middle East. In Europe, those countries in eastern Europe tend to be more restrained than those in western Europe.

In addition, cultures in restrained societies place more importance on national stability than on free speech, and because of this, many of these nations have lower crime rates but larger police forces than those found in indulgent societies. Of course, restrained countries are also very different from one another in many ways, and the characteristics mentioned here, like those of indulgent countries, vary from place to place.

1. What is the main focus of Geert Hofstede's "indulgence-versus-restraint" cultural dimension?

- A. How much a culture values hard work over relaxation.
- B. The extent to which a culture enjoys life versus following strict social norms.
- C. How interested a culture is in saving money versus spending it.
- D. The difference between individualistic and collective societies.

2. According to the text, what is a key characteristic of a more-indulgent society?

- A. A tendency to suppress personal desires.
- B. A focus on national stability over free speech.
- C. Comfort with people pursuing pleasures and having fun.
- D. Strict moral values and carefully regulated social norms.

3. What does the text suggest is a common attitude in restrained societies regarding personal happiness?

- A. A strong interest in achieving overall happiness.
- B. A belief that one is fully in control of one's own destiny.
- C. A weaker sense of overall happiness.
- D. A focus on happiness through individual leisure time.

4. Which of the following countries is listed as ranking high on the indulgence scale?

- A. An Eastern European country.
- B. A country in the Middle East.
- C. Mexico.
- D. An Asian nation.

5. In restrained societies, how is the importance of leisure time generally viewed?

- A. It is considered a top priority for all citizens.
- B. It is not given a great deal of importance.
- C. It is balanced equally with work time.
- D. It is seen as a necessary part of a healthy life.

6. The text mentions that indulgent societies tend to have higher crime rates but smaller police forces. What is the corresponding situation in restrained societies?

- A. Lower crime rates and smaller police forces.
- B. Higher crime rates and larger police forces.
- C. Lower crime rates and larger police forces.
- D. Higher crime rates and the same size police forces.

7. What is one of the cultural values of societies that rank high on the indulgence scale?

- A. Introverted attitudes toward strangers.
- B. A belief that one is not in control of one's own life.
- C. A firm belief in freedom of speech.
- D. Strict social rules about sex.

8. The word "suppress" in the context of restrained societies (paragraph 5) is closest in meaning to:

- A. Encourage.
- B. Express.
- C. Put aside.
- D. Celebrate.

9. Why is the indulgence-versus-restraint dimension important for managers working abroad?

- A. It helps them determine how to behave in certain situations.
- B. It helps them decide which language to speak.
- C. It helps them choose the best time for a vacation.
- D. It helps them understand the country's economic policies.

10. Which region is generally described as having more restrained countries?

- A. North America.
- B. Western Europe.
- C. South America.
- D. Eastern Europe.