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Zakir Khandaker, Nam Anh Ta Quang

An investigative study of a conflict arising from cultural differences at workplace

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Thesis abstract

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In this thesis, an in-depth look was taken at a conflict that took place at a restaurant located in Seinäjoki, Finland between two individuals of different nationalities. The purpose of the thesis was to look for indication of cultural differences in the origination and escalation of the conflict, as well as identifying the possible errors in conflict management methods.

The theoretical framework for the thesis includes theories of cultural dimensions by Professor Geert Hofstede, theories of cross-cultural business behavior by Richard Gesteland, theories of conflict management by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann.

Qualitative research methods were used for this study. Individual interviews with the conflicting parties were conducted in order to gather thick description which was later analyzed and weighed against the theoretical framework laid out in the thesis.

Based on the analysis, it was concluded that the vast differences in cultures that existed between the conflicting parties, created and escalated the conflict, as well as caused the failure to resolve the conflict in a satisfactory manner. A guideline for future conflict avoidance and resolution was suggested at the end of the thesis.

¹ Keywords: culture differences, cultural dimensions, conflict resolution, conflict, cross-cultural communication

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Terms and Abbreviations

IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
TKI	Thomas-Kilmann Instrument
CRS	Conflict Resolution Style(s)
MBTI	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

1 Introduction

Since the very beginning, human civilization has always without any exception maintained a certain attribute which is, it's ever-changing. As the flock of primitive humans evolved into today's space venturing civilization, the challenges faced by humans evolved as well. Mankind now, is not just fighting to survive; they are striving to thrive. This constant strife to excel, to reach greater height of excellence or success has ushered us into a time in which the world is gradually becoming a global village. Which in turn means that what once was the norm, a homogenous workplace consisting of people from the same area, is a thing of the past. We live in a world where a person from a country located in the furthest east of the planet retains the possibility to move to a country located in the furthest west and work there. That is to say that in modern-day workplaces, the possibility of employees from different nations and therefore different cultures is a very common matter. Which brings us to the topic of our thesis. In this thesis, we have discussed what culture is and how it plays its role in human life; what is cultural difference and how it can create conflict at workplace. We have begun with describing the following concepts:

1. Culture and its impact
2. Cultural differences and diversity
3. Dimensions of cultural differences
4. Models of cultural dimension and their interpretation
5. Conflict and conflict resolution methods

Then we have defined our methodology for the thesis. Due to the nature of the case study, we adopted the qualitative method of data collection. Next, we presented our case study in which we investigated a conflict that took place at "Company A", located in Seinäjoki, Finland. We have conducted separate interviews with all the parties involved, i.e. the employee, the manager and the assistant manager using a questionnaire tailored for the case study. The information collected from the interviews was in the form of statements from the parties involved. Upon completion of acquiring the data or statement, we proceeded to analyze the case study determine key factors that led to the conflict and its outcome. These key factors were then measured against the theoretical groundwork laid out in the thesis. The conflict was broken down to key events and

analyzed as well. Based on the analysis, we presented our findings, where we drew conclusion on whether or not this conflict was a product of cultural differences.

Comparing the series of events described in the statements with the theories we came to a conclusion there are several key cultural differences present between the parties involved which created the conflict and contributed to the escalation of the conflict leading to the outcome.

In conclusion, we proposed a guideline for the company involved which they can follow in order to prevent and mitigate future conflicts arising from cultural differences.

1.1 Research Problem

The main theme of this thesis is cross-cultural communications. The modern workplaces are getting increasingly multicultural. Adopting and utilizing a multicultural workforce can present the employers with unforeseen challenges. The differences in cultures that may be present between coworkers and managers can potentially lead to conflicts with counterproductive outcomes. There are four key concepts in this thesis which are conflicts; conflict resolution methods; cultural differences and lastly, the correlation of cultural differences and conflict in the case study presented. In order to keep the research within its scope we focused on the following issues in this thesis:

- Identifying the role of cultural differences in the conflict presented in the case study in order to determine the key cultural dimensions that created and escalated the conflict.
- Identifying the conflict resolution methods that could have been effective in the conflict presented in the case study
- Proposing guidelines for resolution of future conflicts originating from cultural differences.

Throughout the thesis, we have addressed these issues with respect to theories of cross-cultural communications, in order to, determine the underlying cause of the conflict. The conflict itself was analyzed with relevant theories available.

1.2 Literature review

In order to understand the key concepts and address the research problems, we resorted to relevant theories available on the topics. There are several extensive researches available in each subject matter. Due to the nature of the thesis topic, it was required that the theoretical framework for the thesis includes researches on cultural differences, as well as conflict resolution. For the theoretical framework on cultural differences, the researches by Professor Geert Hofstede and Richard Gesteland were heavily relied on. Regarding theories on conflict resolution, researches by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann will be the main focus.

Professor Geert Hofstede is one of the pioneering researchers in the field of cross-cultural communication. He conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. He analyzed a large database of employee value scores collected within International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) between 1967 and 1973. The data covered more than 70 countries, from which Hofstede first used the 40 countries with the largest groups of respondents and afterwards extended the analysis to 50 countries and 3 regions. (Hofstede Insights)

Richard R. Gesteland is a globalization consultant and leading speaker providing corporations and associations with experience-based training in negotiating and managing across cultures. (Everipedia). In his book *Cross-Cultural Business Behavior – A guide for Global Management*, he presented a comprehensive analysis of culture for a number of countries which enabled us to expand upon the thesis topic and reach to our results.

Both the authors have collected data from large samples and possess vast experience in the field of business. The theories provided have been the basis of cross-cultural

education in institutions all over the world including Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences.

Since, our topic involved two individuals of different nationalities, it was necessary to delineate the cultural differences existing between them as specifically as possible. These researches enabled our theoretical framework to achieve that end.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is a conflict resolution model that was based on 40 years of research and conduction by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann who were both professors of management at the University of Pittsburg. Their work has been a top tool for conflict resolution, supported by hundreds of studies and sold over four million copies worldwide. TKI is known for its simplicity and accessibility which focuses on the hypothesis that each individual has their own conflict-handling style which might not be optimal all the time. Instead, the best method relies on situations and environment (The Myers-Briggs Company)

The escalation of the conflict we studied was mainly caused by differences in choices of conflict-handling styles. Therefore, TKI acts not only as a tool to identify each subject's choices of styles but also a guideline to lead the case to a better direction.

2 Theories

As it's apparent from the topic that there are two main components here. Firstly, the cultural differences and then the conflict that originated from cultural differences. Which is why in order to understand and address this conflict as well as suggest solutions to possible future conflicts of such sort, it's required that we investigate the theories pertaining to culture; cultural differences and dimensions; diversity; conflicts and conflict resolution methods. In this section we will present theories relevant to the topics mentioned above.

2.1 Culture

Culture can be defined as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. (Merriam-Webster). It's a very broad term that encompasses almost all the factors that govern our everyday lives. There are several elements of culture. The major elements of culture are as follows:

1. Symbols:
2. Language
3. Norms
4. Values
5. Artifacts. (Sociology: Understanding and Changing the Social World, April 8th, 2016, p. 72)

There are two basic components of culture: ideas and symbols on the one hand and artifacts (material objects) on the other. The first type, called nonmaterial culture, includes the values, beliefs, symbols, and language that define a society. The second type, called material culture, includes all the society's physical objects, such as its tools and technology, clothing, eating utensils, and means of transportation. (Sociology: Understanding and Changing the Social World, April 8th, 2016, p. 72). From this we can outline the vastness of the concept of culture.

2.1.1 Impact of Culture

Culture plays a very important role in the lives of its members or in other words, the respective cultures we are from, defines us. According to Dr. Marianna Pogosyan, an intercultural consultant specializing in the psychology of cross-cultural transitions, one of the widely studied traits to interpret cross-cultural differences in behavior, cognition, and emotion is self-construal. Self-construal refers to how we perceive and understand ourselves. Western cultures promote an independent self-construal, where the self is viewed as a separate, autonomous entity and the emphasis is on the self's independence and uniqueness. East Asian cultures, on the other hand, foster an interdependent self-construal, with a self that is more relational, harmonious and interconnected with others (Pogosyan, 2017). In other words, culture defines how we look at the world and our self-portrayal in our minds which in turn defines how we behave, how we approach matters, our decision making processes and our overall personality. It is stated that according to the developmental psychologist Raeff (2010, 31-36), culture has impact on our relationships as it determines how we enter and maintain a relationship. Furthermore, culture defines how different traits such as humility, self-esteem, politeness etc. are valued. It determines our perception of hardship and definition of success as well as, how we express our emotions, according to Raeff, (2010, pp. 31-36)

2.2 Cultural Differences and Diversity

Cultural differences are the various beliefs, behaviors, languages, practices and expressions considered unique to members of a specific ethnicity, race or national origin. Some examples of cultural differences as they pertain to the workplace include employees who are younger or older than their co-workers, employees who hold higher degrees than others in the workplace and individuals who grew up in either metropolitan areas or small towns. It is said that "employees often have more similarities than they do differences, but those differences can sometimes outweigh the similarities". (The Mighty Recruiter)

This brings us to diversity. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, diversity means, the condition of having or being composed of differing elements (Merriam-Webster).

However, in a business context diversity has a more specific meaning. According to encyclopaedia.com, in a workplace, diversity means employing people who may be different from each other and who do not all come from the same background. The differences may be those of national origin, physical appearance, religion, education, age, gender, or sexual orientation. (Diversity in the workplace, 2020)

According to Brian Chan (2020), there are four diversity type dimensions which are as follows:

1. Internal types such as race, age, national origin, physical and mental ability etc.
2. External types such as interests, education, experiences etc.
3. Organizational types such as job function, management status, seniority etc.
4. World View types such as cultural events, politics, history etc.

On the surface it might seem as if having a homogenous workforce or workplace is much more convenient a strategy of conducting business, as it often doesn't require learning new skills to cope with a diverse workplace. However, the opportunity cost of such strategies is higher than one might think. According to The Forbes Global Diversity and Inclusion Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce report, A diverse and inclusive workforce is necessary to drive innovation, foster creativity, and guide business strategies. Multiple voices lead to new ideas, new services, and new products, and encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Today, companies no longer view diversity and inclusion efforts as separate from their other business practices and recognize that a diverse workforce can differentiate them from their competitors by attracting top talent and capturing new clients (Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce, 19). Which means that having diversity at workplace crates new possibilities. Which is why in modern corporate culture, having a diverse workforce is very popular as it is unavoidable.

However, adopting a culturally diverse workforce is not without some challenges. According to an article published by Central Christian College of Kansas, "Challenges come in a variety of settings, and language or cultural barriers often stand in the way. Miscommunication or misinterpretation can hamper team progress and create unnecessary conflict in the workplace". (CCKK Online, 2018). Which is why it is of

paramount importance that the employees are educated or trained in cross-cultural communications. It can be dubbed as a preventive measure for possible conflicts at workplace.

Anne Loehr on A Deeper Look at Cultural Awareness in the Workplace has stated:

Being aware of the common differences between cultures increases trust, improves work relationships and streamlines projects. It also improves communication, which is the backbone to any successful team. When coworkers are curious enough about each other to learn about cultural similarities and differences, and treat one another's differences with respect, the positive effect on engagement is powerful. (Anne Loehr, [ref 15 November 2020])

2.3 Cultural Dimensions

In order to outline differences between cultures, a commonly used term is "cultural dimensions". According to Hofstede-insight.com, the cultural dimensions represent independent preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguish countries (rather than individuals) from each other. (Hofstede Insights)

There are several methods of comparing the cultural dimensions of different countries. Such as,

1. Hofstede cultural dimensions
2. Gesteland's theory of cultural differences

A detailed account of these models are as follows.

2.3.1 Hofstede Cultural Dimensions – 6D model

Hofstede Cultural Dimensions are one of the most recognized studies on cultural differences and how they impact workplace. Professor Geert Hofstede, the creator of the studies, collected data from IBM's employees between 1967 and 1973 which consists of people from over 70 countries, 40 of which were the largest groups of respondents were first used to

develop the theory and later on the research extended to 50 countries and 3 regions. The six dimensions of national culture are based on extensive research studied by Professor Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov and their research teams (Hofstede Insights).

The model consists of the following dimensions:

Power Distance Index

Power distance is defined as the extent “to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”. How a society understand the concept of inequalities among people is the fundamental issue of this dimension

People from a high Power Distance culture accept hierarchical order in which each of them has a place in the social hierarchy without any reason. In contrast, people from a low Power Distance culture strive to distribute power equally and inequalities of power are not well-received

Individualism Versus Collectivism

Individualism culture can be defined as “a preference for a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families”

On the contrary, Collectivism, means the tendency of “a tightly knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular ingroup to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty”

This dimension is reflected on how one’s self-image emphasized “I” or “we”

Masculinity Versus Femininity

Culture of Masculinity represents a preference for “achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success”. Meanwhile, culture of Femininity, represents a preference for “cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life”. A masculine culture is more competitive than a feminine culture while a feminine culture is more consensus-oriented

Uncertainty Avoidance Index

The Uncertainty Avoidance dimension represents how much people can tolerate ambiguity, in which they accept and embrace something unknown, different to them or are willing to take risks. It is question of how people deals with the uncertainty of the future, whether they should control it or let it happen

Countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance index strongly obey to principles, laws, regulation, beliefs, traditions and behavior, and are not tolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. Lower indexed countries exhibit more flexibility towards changes and differences. (Hofstede Insights)

Long Term Orientation Versus Short Term Orientation

The links with the past and the challenges of the present/future are two important concepts in every society. However, how they prioritize these two existential goals can be different

Societies from short-term-oriented culture favor time-honored concepts such as traditions and norms, while being skeptic of changes.

Societies from long-term-oriented, on the other hand, are more pragmatic and more positive towards thrift and efforts in modern education

Indulgence Versus Restraint

This dimensions concern the extent of people's freedom to fulfill their desires. Indulgence culture allow the society to freely give themselves the pleasure and enjoyment of human desires such as having fun. Meanwhile, Restraint culture restricts the society's freedom to gratify their desires

2.3.2 Criticisms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede studies of cross-cultural dimensions have been among the most influential models for cross-cultural business. That being said, the theory did not stand without skepticisms. UKEssays have complied several flaws within the studies, mostly condemning its validity and reliability (UKEssays, 2018). These factors include:

- **Methodology:** Hostede has only used IBM, an international company consisting of middle-class workers as the subjects for his survey to explain a global concept. Moreover, survey is seemingly the only research method he attempted and the survey only concerned the five dimensions theorized by Hofstede which led to the second flaw
- **Overgeneralization of culture:** Hosted has neglected the fact that one country consists of different ethnic groups such as China has 56, and each of them might have different customs and beliefs. Therefore, saying one culture represents one country is not objective
- **Over-simplicity of cultural dimensions**
- **Lack of individuality:** Some of the questionnaires given to IBM were completed within groups and not individually, which means the questionnaires did not accurately reflect the individual's honest mentality
- **Being out-of-date:** Scholars have argued that globalization, technology and time have significantly changed how people react and interact. Hofstede research's results therefore are too old.

2.3.3 Gesteland's Cultural Dimensions

Richard R. Gesteland is a globalization consultant and leading speaker providing corporations and associations with experience-based training in negotiating and managing across cultures. (Everipedia)

According to Gesteland in *Cross-Cultural Business Behavior – A guide for Global Management* (Gesteland 2012, 23-24), there are five patterns of cross-cultural business behavior which are as follows:

Deal Focused vs Relationship Focused:

Gesteland describes members of deal focused cultures to be task-oriented in which the successful completion of a task or is considered of utmost importance. They are considered more direct and on point while carrying out tasks. (Gesteland 2012, 23-24) Some examples of such cultures would be USA, Norway, Finland etc. On the other hand, members of relationship focused cultures are considered to put a lot of emphasis on building rapport between the parties involved in a task or business operation than the task itself. It's necessary to have a personal connection or network in order to conduct business in cultures that are relationship focused. (Gesteland 2012, 23-24). Some examples of such cultures would be that of China, Japan, Middle eastern and south Asian countries.

Low Context (Direct) vs High Context (Indirect) communication:

This correlates to the previous pattern. According to Gesteland, the members of deal focused cultures tend to use low context or direct language which is to say that they get straight to the point whereas their counterparts from high context cultures tend to use vague indirect language, specially, when in their minds, their statements have the potential to offend someone or cause them to lose face. This difference in communication styles often causes confusions and misunderstandings at workplace. (Gesteland 2012, 23-24). Some example of low context cultures would be that of New Zealand, Denmark, Finland etc. whereas the examples of high context cultures would be that of South Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh etc.

Informal (Egalitarian) vs Formal (Hierarchical) Business Behavior:

This pattern relates to the Power Distance Index dimension of Hofstede's model. Informal business cultures often take an egalitarian approach which means the distance in status or power is smaller. However, in formal business cultures, a strict hierarchy can be observed. The members of such cultures can be more status concerned. (Gesteland 2012, 23-24).

Rigid time (Monochronic) vs Fluid Time (Polychronic) cultures:

Punctuality is of paramount importance to the members of rigid time or monochronic cultures. Once the schedules and agenda of a task have been defined, they tend to stick to it above all else. Being late is considered to be unprofessional and rude in such cultures. (Gesteland 2012, 23-24). Examples: Finland, Norway, Sweden etc. On the other hand, in fluid time of polychronic cultures punctuality is not as important as it is to their counterparts. (Gesteland 2012, 23-24). In such cultures, they prefer to have loose schedules. This difference can create major conflicts between members of opposing types working on a common task.

Emotionally Expressive vs Emotionally Reserved Cultures

In emotionally expressive cultures, the members have the full liberty to express how they are feeling about a given situation. These expressions can be verbal, paraverbal or nonverbal. (Gesteland 2012, p 23-24). In such cultures, people tend to express their emotion spontaneously; with enthusiasm and it's taken positively. Examples would be USA, France, Italy etc. However, when it comes to their counterparts, it is expected that the members should be able to subdue and control their emotions. Expressing emotion can be considered unprofessional. (Gesteland 2012, 23-24). Examples would be Finland, Norway, England, Japan etc.

Based on different combinations of these dimensions, Gesteland suggested seven groups of cultures. Which are as follows:

1. Group A: Relationship Focused, Formal, Polychronic, Reserved. Example: India, Bangladesh, Vietnam etc. (Gesteland 2012, p 135-157).
2. Group B: Relationship Focused, Formal, Monochronic, Reserved. Example: Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore. (Gesteland 2012, p 189-209).
3. Group C: Relationship Focused, Formal, Polychronic, Expressive. Example: Arab countries, Turkey, Brazil, Mexico etc. (Gesteland 2012, p 215- 249).
4. Group D: Relationship focused, Formal, Polychronic, variably expressive. Example: Russia, Poland etc. (Gesteland 2012, p 257-263).
5. Group E: Moderately Deal-Focused, Formal, variably monochronic, Emotionally expressive. Example: France, Italy, Spain etc. (Gesteland 2012, p 277-291).
6. Group F: Moderately Deal Focused, Formal, Variably Monochronic, Reserved. Example: Baltic countries. (Gesteland 2012, p 305).
7. Group G: Deal-Focused, Moderately Formal, Monochronic, Reserved. Example: Finland, Sweden, Norway. (Gesteland 2012, p 331-345).

2.4 Conflict

Conflict can be simply defined as a clash in interests. Conflicts arise when at least 2 individuals, within or outside an organization, have different, or opposite goals which affect each party's interests (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, 435), resulting in disputes. It is an inevitable part of human nature and human societies, as each individual, or organization is shaped by the environment that is manipulating their circumstances, which creates different personalities, goals and desires. Conflicts can be for personal, interpersonal or general causes. If not handled properly, conflicts can be devastating to the relationships of the conflicting parties.

Conflicts usually occur in workplace, between individuals and between groups. The reasons could vary, but they are generally caused by disputes over control, scarce resources and status. Workers could argue on how schedules, or task are distributed, how unequal in efforts of each individual are, or just simply on how two employees dislike each other. The outcomes of workplace conflicts are various, both beneficial and harmful to the companies. However, in general, companies suffer loss of money dealing with conflicts. According to CPP (2008, 2), American companies are estimated to lose \$359 billion spent on conflict handling annually. According to Andra Picincu in *The Effects of Workplace Conflict* (2019), outcomes of conflicts come in 4 common tropes: Decreased work performance, lower working spirit, financial loss and poor communication

2.4.1 Types of Conflicts

According to Katie Shonk, there are 3 general types of conflicts: Task conflict, relationship conflict and value conflict (Shonk, 2020)

- **Task Conflicts**

As Shonk explained, task conflict involves disputes over the distribution of work assignments, resources or the differences in policies and instructions interpretation due to different needs, benefits or opinion. For example, a project team can argue over who should be given a specific task.

Shonk also mentioned, while task conflict is the easiest type of conflicts to handle, it might stem from different levels of reasons. It could be personal or emotional. For example, two employees argue on which one of them will go to a conference in Paris, one's motivation could be just simply about wanting to visit Paris, while the other person's motive could be about proving further potentials or the need of a change in work environment.

Task conflict very much relies on leaders' management, by identifying each party's motives. Active listening is one way. Then the leader must evaluate their needs and the company's benefits as he/she engages both parties in a collaborative problem-solving discussions, find a suitable compromise (Shonk, 2020)

- **Relationship conflict**

Relationship conflicts refers to clashes in personalities, styles that hinder the progression of the parties' relationships. Each individual is shaped by different personalities, environment, therefore, conflicts within two or more polar individuals are common (Shonk, 2020). In fact, personality clash was chosen to be the largest source of conflicts in a survey conducted by CPP (2008, 10), representing 49% of surveyed workers

For example, an employee with a laid-back, flexible working style is prone to one with perfectionistic style.

Shonk suggested this situation be dealt with empathy or compassion. Inviting the colleague for lunch and getting to know him/her better is a good way. Create a bond by finding similar interests. Demonstrate your empathy by active listening and mutual understanding. Deliver your arguments with respect. If the conflict remains persistent, the ultimate resort is to ask for the manager's assistance.

- **Value conflict**

Value conflict exists due to disputes in differences in identities and values, which include ethnicities, social norms, politics or religions. (Shonk, 2020). These differences are connected with prejudice, which results in discrimination in work place (Girukwayo, 2018). On a racial level, this practice of discrimination could be referred to as "systematic racism" in workplace.

2.4.2 Consequences of conflicts in workplace

Workplace conflict could bring in both positive and negative outcomes to both the organization and employees, but it always comes with a cost. CPP (2008, p 4) estimated that 2.1 hours were spent weekly to deal with conflicts. In addition, conflicts affect employees, both individually and collectively. This section will specifically discuss both the positive and the negative effect.

Negative effects of workplace conflicts on workplace conflicts

There are various negative consequences for conflicts in different contexts. Huczynski and Buchanan on Organizational Behavior explained that conflict is a crossroad concept, as it is linked between individuals and groups, and relates to various topics in many ways and on many different levels (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2006, p 763). This means the consequences of conflicts are connected among one to many others involved. The following will

demonstrate how conflicts negatively affect individuals, their behavior and their interpersonal relationships.

Effects on individuals	Effects on behavior	Effects on interpersonal relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Hostility • Frustration • Stress • Guilt • Low job Satisfaction • Embarrassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces motivation and productivity • Avoidance of others • Emotional venting • Threats • Aggression • Quitting • Absenteeism • Biases perceptions • Stereotyped thinking • Increases commitment to one's position • Demonizing others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distrust • Misunderstandings • Inability to see other's perspective • Questioning of others' intentions • Changes attitudes towards others • Changes in the quality of communication • Changes in the amount of communication

Table 1 Potential negative effects of conflict on individual, interpersonal relationships, and behavior (J.A. Wall & Callister, 1995, pp. 515-558)

Conflicts affect not only individuals, but also organizations as a whole. The article "*The Effects of Workplace Conflict*" written by Andra Picincu (2019) have summed them up into four general outcomes

- Deteriorating performance: Picincu pointed conflicts can affect productivity on an individual and organizational level. Stress and tension will increase, resulting in further conflicts, poor management, missed deadlines, professional errors. This will

exacerbate a company's productivity, motivation. Moreover, conflicts divide employees into taking sides

- Low employee morale: Conflicts can hinder team motivation and job satisfaction, thus increasing turnover rates. Victims of conflicts could be affected mentally (depression, anxieties, shame, etc) and physically (backpain, cardiac events, high or low blood pressure, etc)
- Revenue loss: There are different ways conflicts can negatively affect a company's overall revenue: it decreases job satisfaction, leading to lower work productivity, thus more costs on training and conflict management. Worse, it might lead to higher turnover rates, meaning more costs are needed for recruitment. If a toxic work environment is made known to the investors or customers, the public image of a company will be less appealing

Poor communication: Picincu deemed this the most popular outcome of work conflicts. She explained that constant arguing will lead to long-term disagreement, poor collaboration. A survey conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit in 2018 on "*Communication barriers in common workplace*" stated that, 55% of the respondents thought poor communication added more stress to them, while 44% responded that it caused project failures or delays, 31% suffered low work morale, and the list goes on (Economist Intelligent Unit, 2018, 3)



Picture 1 The Impact of Poor Communication (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018, 3)

In addition, the following graph, conducted by CPP (2008, 6) will demonstrate the perceived outcomes of workplace conflicts

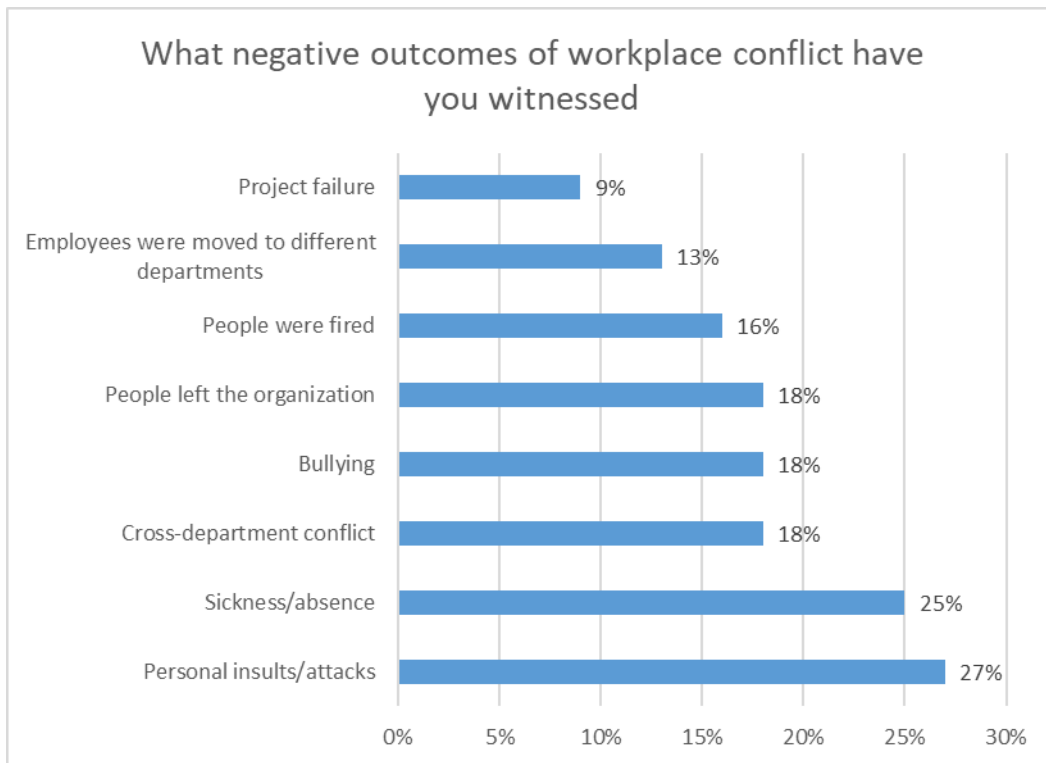


Figure 1 What negative outcomes of workplace conflict have you witnessed? (CPP, 2008, 6)

As demonstrated in the graph, the most popular outcome of work conflict is personal attack/insult, accounting for 27% of the poll, meaning professional conflict, if left unsolved, will most likely lead to personal conflicts.

Positive effects of workplace conflicts and opportunities

Not all conflicts bring out negative results. There are positive outcomes of conflicts in workplace. In fact, when a leader seizes the conflict properly, it opens to lots of opportunities that will even enhance team productivity and performance. Queens University IRC Facilitator Kari Boyle (2017), on her research titled “*5 Benefits of Workplace Conflicts*” believed that engaging efficiently with the conflict is the vital key to unlock beneficial outcomes of it. She also stated:

The more important challenge is to create the space for conflict to occur in a constructive way for people to raise difficult and contentious issues, and for leaders to be exposed to often uncomfortable disagreements. Otherwise,

problems fester, important views are squelched and effective communication is inhibited

On the same research, Boyle has come up with five key benefits:

- **Problem Identification:** Workplace conflict can result in and also result from a deeper problem. Therefore, a competent leader needs to address the roots of these problems. Also, this helps leaders to identify flawed processes or practices that lead to the issues
- **Better problem-solving:** Different perspectives can make it difficult to reach a mutual agreement, but they can shed light on the best proposals. Also, some people are shy from expressing their opinions for fear of conflicts, or some tend to dominate the discussions. By properly constructing discussions and normalizing disagreements, valuable ideas could be brought in a peaceful, workable manner
- **Healthy collaboration and commitment:** Boyle stated that suppressing or avoiding conflicts could only harm workplace relationships as false assumptions about the intentions of the others (bias, favoritism, negligence, etc) can be formed. By making the employees comfortable, respected when raising concerns, the relationships between both parties will be enhanced.
- **Improved productivity:** As discussed previously, diminished work performance is one negative effect of conflicts, and there are mentioned evidences that showed conflicts and conflict solving cost time, energy and money. However, a well-handled conflict will leave room for potential increase in productivity as a satisfying staff will focus on their jobs rather than the conflict.
- **Personal Growth and Insight:** Conflicts open up the opportunities to learn about ourselves and the others. Disagreements reveal each party's intentions, motives, approaches and personalities. Through them we learn how individuals react to similar situations and take that into account to enhance your future collaboration. And from their insight about us, we can become more self-aware.

2.5 Conflict resolution

Conflicts arise in different shapes and forms, when two parties have different perspectives, opinions, demands or purposes. All conflicts need solving in order to prevent their negative outcomes and bring out positive ones. Therefore, conflict resolution is an essential skill that eradicates the detriment of conflicts, which demand careful methods and execution to prevent future connected conflicts and leave rooms for opportunities and improvement. The following sections will define the concept of conflict resolution and explain different approaches of conflict resolution and their consequences.

2.5.1 What is conflict resolution?

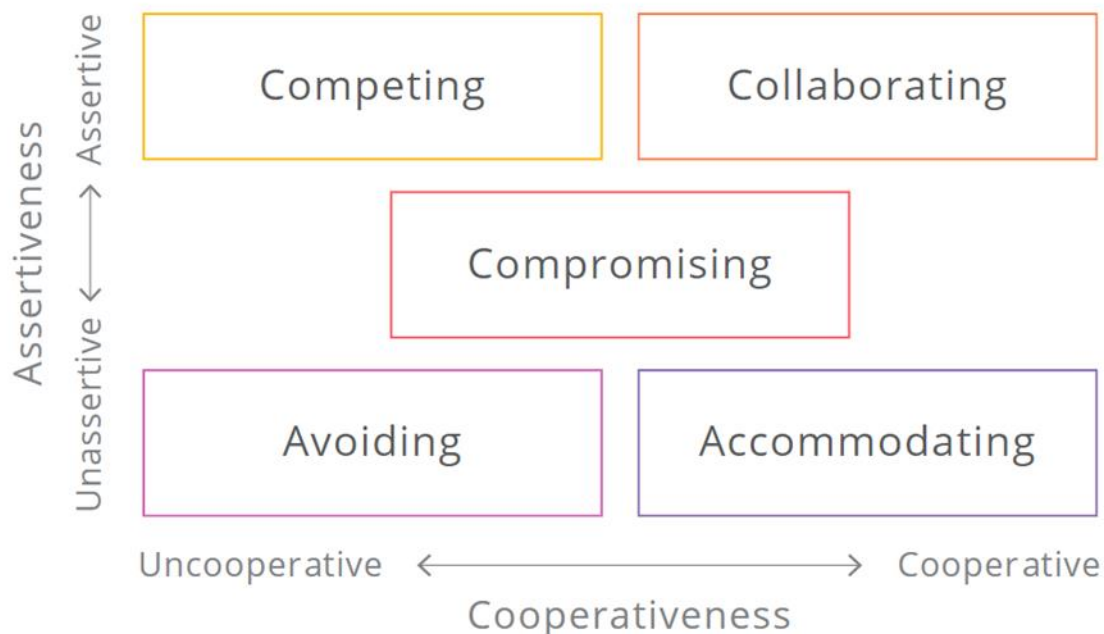
Conflict resolution, defined by Neil Katz & Kevin McNulty (1994, 9), is a process of handling conflicts and negotiating for a solution to produce positive outcomes. The principles of successful conflict resolution rely on two key elements: conflict management and negotiation. These two concepts are interconnected in conflict resolution, as each solves different aspects of a conflict. While conflict management strives to defuse negative emotional energy or attitudes resulted from a conflict, transforming them in a more positive one, negotiation tackle the roots of the conflict, by modifying the structure that starts it while meeting the interests of both conflicting parties. In short, conflict management aims for settlement while negotiation aims for solution (Katz & McNulty 1994, 9-10)

2.5.2 Conflict resolution styles (CRS) – Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

Working in multicultural teams means that there is diversity in human responses that that are shaped by one's own culture, personality, upbringing or practices. Their reactions to conflicts and practices of its resolution are also different. One must grasp cultural understanding to select a suitable CRS in order to react well to the opposed party.

One popular conflict resolution model widely used is the Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument (Thomas, 1976, p. 900) (as known as TKI). In this model, Kilmann classified conflict resolution styles/responses as five types: competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating, compromising. The model uses a matrix which bases the five styles on two dimensions

- Assertiveness: The need to satisfy one's own concerns, at the expense of the opposed party
- Cooperativeness: The will to satisfy others' own concerns, at the expense of your own



Picture 2 Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (The Myers-Briggs Company)

The model doesn't define which style is better than one another. Instead, it presents options for different scenarios of conflicts. Depending on circumstances and the people involved, the conflict should be thoroughly analyzed to selected the most suitable resolution style.

The following guidelines will provide the explanation of five basic conflict resolution styles regarding to its concepts, characteristics as well as its pros and cons, using combined research from *Organizational Behavior: A Strategic Approach* (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, pp. 447-448) and *5 Conflict Styles That Every Project Manager Needs to Know* (Tarik, 2018)

- **Competing** (high assertiveness, low cooperativeness): this style is used when a party is trying to dominate the opposed team. Their objective is to pursue their goal while disregarding or disagree with the opponents'. This style is useful when the situation calls for an immediate, quick and decisive action, or when the opposed team demonstrated noncompetitive behavior (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, 447). However, this comes at the expense of the relationships between party. It is likely to cause tension or resentment between the teams which is detrimental to the work relationships (Tarik, 2018). For example, two students borrow the same book in the library but there is only one copy, both students need it immediately as the due date for their assignments is coming close, so they pressure each other to let them have the book.
- **Accommodating** (low assertiveness, high cooperativeness): this style is opposite to the competing style. In this approach, one party will sacrifice their own concerns in order to meet the other's. This approach is suitable when a party knows he/she can't win, or when his/her concern is not as significant. It can also be adopted in exchange of a favor (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, 448). While this approach can maintain the relationships between the team, it can build up hostility if either the impact on relationships isn't visible or the accommodating party is exploited from times and times (Tarik, 2018). Using the previous example, but this time, student A chooses to let B have the book since A's deadline for his assignment is a few days later than B.
- **Avoiding** (low assertiveness, low cooperativeness): This approach is used when a party chooses to ignore a conflict without regard to both his/her and the other team's concerns. This CRS allows tension from escalating or delay of conflicts until there are effective measures. (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, 448). However, it also allows issues to keep prevailing without being solved which could escalate tension and resentment (Tarik, 2018). Again, back to the previous example, however, this

time there is student C disturbed by the noise A and B made during their arguments. C chose to ignore their conflicts

- **Compromising** (medium assertiveness, medium cooperativeness): refers to an approach in which both parties sacrifice a part of their goals to pursue the other part (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, 448). This CRS is necessary when a temporary decision is needed to minimize the damage, or when collaboration failed. However, this CRS doesn't always satisfy the conflicting parties and doesn't solve the roots of the issue (Tarik 2018). For instance, with the book example, provided that both students have two days left to finish their assignment, student A compromised with student B to let A have the book the first day, then B will have it the second. Both have the book to complete their assignments, but this means they need to fasten to process.
- **Collaborating** (high assertiveness, high cooperativeness): The CRS with the highest value. Collaborating style is used to satisfy both parties' pursuits, which demand them to collaborate to find out the solutions ((Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, 448). It not only maintains the relationships, but it also improves them and eradicate the conflict completely. However, this strategy costs time and energy (Tarik, 2018). For example, after arguing about the book, student A and B come up with a solution: instead of giving up the book to someone, they decide to study together

In this thesis, we believe the TKI is a suitable theoretical background for our case studies as it explores human behavior with utmost universality, transparency and consistency. Moreover, this model also provides us a deeper insight into different cultural behavior regarding to conflict handling which will be discussed later.

2.5.3 Conflict Resolution Outcomes

As explained in section 1, conflict occurs when interests of different parties clash. Conflict exists to prevent these interests from being achieved. Parties engaging in conflict will usually strive to either pursue their goals, at the expense of the opposed party's concerns or maintain the harmony, at their concerns' own expense. Therefore, conflict resolution outcomes resort to a winning/losing spectrum. Four possible outcomes could occur (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2005, pp. 446-447):

- Lose-lose: Neither party successfully pursues their goals.
- Win-lose or Lose-Win: One party's goals are fulfilled, however the other's aren't
- Compromise (Mini-win/ Mini-lose): Both parties sacrifice something to partially achieve their goals
- Win-win: An ideal outcome for conflict resolution. Both parties achieve their goals.

After reflecting these four outcomes on the conflict resolution styles of the TKI, we have found out that they are connected to one another, or in short: each outcome is the result of each conflict resolution style

- Competing: The objective of competing style is to forcing the opposed party to give in so their goals can be achieved. This result in a win-lose scenario
- Accommodating: Described as sacrificing one's concerns to meet other's, this CRS leads to a lose-win scenario
- Avoiding: This CRS refers to withdrawal from conflicts, keeping their interests at bay. This leads to a lose-lose scenario
- Compromising: Both parties give in something in exchange of something else. This CRS results in a mini-win/mini-lose scenarios
- Collaborating: Both parties work their way to meet their needs. In this case, win-win is the outcome.

2.5.4 Criticisms of Thomas-Kilmann Instrument

Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI) despite being one of the most popular conflict resolution model, do suffer from skepticism. Conflict resolution trainer Ron Kraybill, who has used the TKI since the 80s, have found several limitations in the TKI (Kraybill, 2018). Among them, the two limitations that are applicable in this thesis are:

- Negligence of high-context culture: Kraybill found his trainees unable to answer several questions in the TKI due to lack of context. TKI presented to the trainee options that trainees from high-context culture needs context to respond. Kraybill concluded these people approached the conflict with the question "Who are you

conflicting with” instead of “What do you want to do”, or to be clear, these people need to know if the opposed party is younger, older or the same age.

- Negligence of stress: Kraybill argued that stress changed how humans’ brain functions, which shifts their behavior, priorities and declines their problem-solving ability, thus changing their conflict approaches. TKI did not take into account this factor and instead claimed human beings function steadily

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research process

The following graph will demonstrate the process of research used by the authors in this thesis, using a three-step process

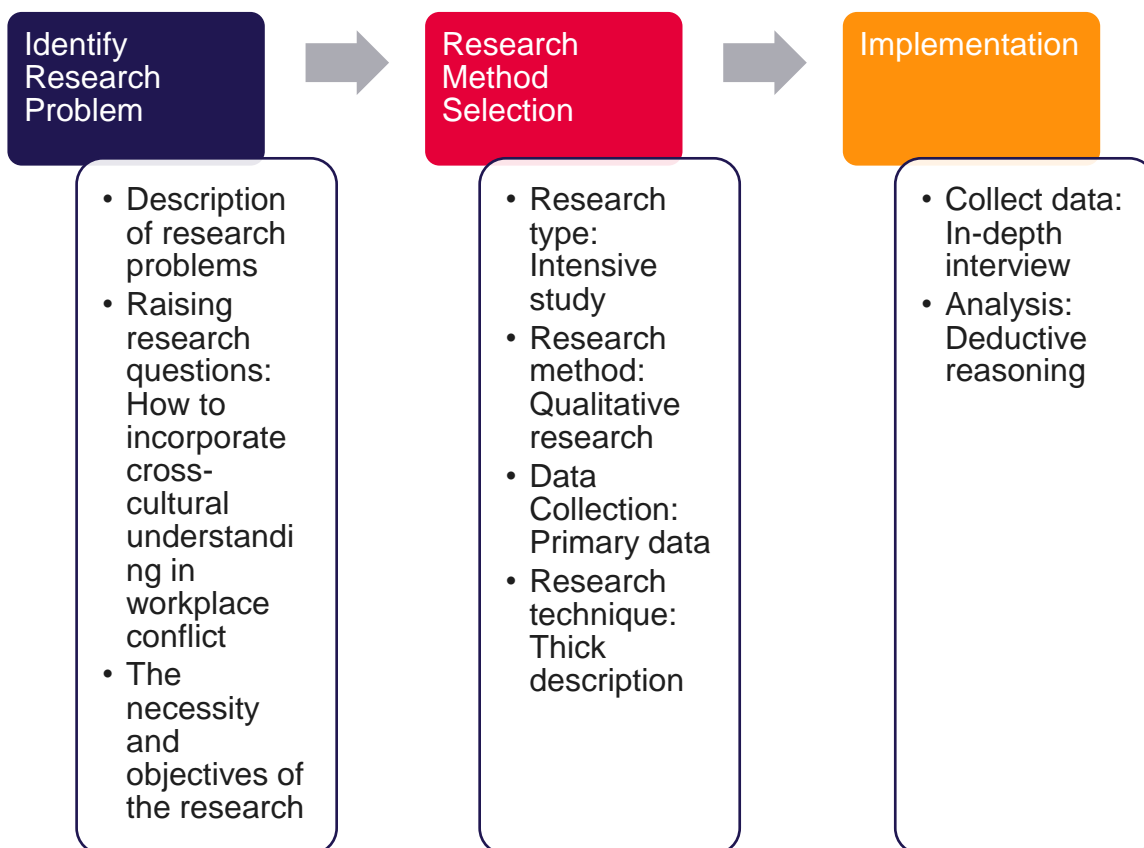


Figure 2 Research Process

3.2 Research method selection

The nature of the research problem will most likely dictate the selection process of the research. In the introduction the research problem has been defined as a specific incident that happened in the studied company and our research aim to dive into the underlying issues within that instance. Therefore, our research design is narrowed down to a case study research.

Case study research, as known as intensive research, is a type of research that explores, discusses and analyzes “only one specific instance of the phenomenon to be studied or only a handful of instances in order to study a phenomenon in depth” which is researched within its own context, time and space (Swanborn, 2010, 3). The opposite type of intensive research is extensive research, a study of generation, broader instances of a phenomenon whose conclusion is drawn by gathering and connecting information of those instances to discover a pattern of the research problem (Swanborn, 2010, 2).

Once the type of research is decided, consideration of research methods should be proceeded. Generally, there are two forms of research methods: qualitative research and quantitative research

- Qualitative research refers to a method of information collection and analysis in order to understand human’s subjective behavior and perceptions in a contextual event. The key feature of this type of method is that its information is in non-numerical form, which means the data is collected through texts, videos, diaries, recordings or interviews (McLeod, 2019)
- Quantitative research, on the other hand, refers to a method of numerical information and analysis in order to establish a patterns demonstrated by variables given by a broader, more objective population and provide a general answer or prediction to the problem (McLeod, 2019)

For example, the success of a song is based on its sales and audience reception. Quantitative study provides data on how many people purchasing the song and how many of them actually like it. Qualitative study on the other hand provides information on why people like the song. In other word, we use quantitative study to “test or confirm” and qualitative study to “understand” (Streefkerk, 2019)

In this thesis, case study is our primary research topic, which involves a specific conflict of two specific co-workers in a specific company in a specific context. The thesis requires accurate and sufficient perceptions from both parties in order to provide solutions and instructions on how to resolute conflict in a multicultural workplace. Moreover, the aim of the thesis is to stimulate cross-cultural understanding in workplace

using our theoretical framework combined with a contextual case study, not to draw any pattern within the said phenomena. Therefore, we have decided to use qualitative research as our research method.

3.2.1 Qualitative research technique – thick description

Thick description will be chosen as a major technique for our qualitative research. Thick description “gives detailed descriptions and interpretations of situations” in order to “describe a situation, but also add details so that readers understand the significant and complex cultural meanings underpinning any observable scenario” (Drew, 2020). By using thick description, we will be able to contextualize the said incident using empirical data and capture the honest emotions, thoughts and perspectives of both conflicting parties, therefore, making it easier to accurately interpret the situation

3.2.2 Data collection

According to QuestionPro, data collection is a process of gathering and interpreting data to provide accurate insights for research (QuestionPro). There are two types of data collection techniques: primary and secondary data. Primary data is explained as data originally made and collected by researcher while secondary data is data written by people other than the researcher. Primary data can be collected by making surveys, interviews, recordings, videos or questionnaires, etc while secondary data exists in the form of already-made sources such as articles, documents, reports, existing videos and researches (Surbhi, 2020)

Since our case study involves conflicting social interactions between two co-workers in a workplace, there was no document on this subject to review. Therefore, primary data is our chosen data collection technique.

The studied incident surrounds only two conflicting workers from different cultures. As a consequence, it is efficient to make in-depth interviews with both parties. In-depth interview is a qualitative research method that involves personal interactions with participants which could be taken face-to-face, over the phone, or through emails

(Steber, 2017). Steber mentioned few factors that make in-depth interviews edge over other research methods, which includes:

- Its ability to gain insightful data from participants
- High quality of sampling
- Understanding of emotions, attitudes, motivations and perceptions
- Fewer number of participants to provide valuable data

By interviewing both opposed parties, we guarantee the objectivity of the data collection process. The interview will include some open-ended questions which require the interviewees to describe the context that led to the conflict, their reactions, their perceptions of the other' reactions, the outcomes of the incident.

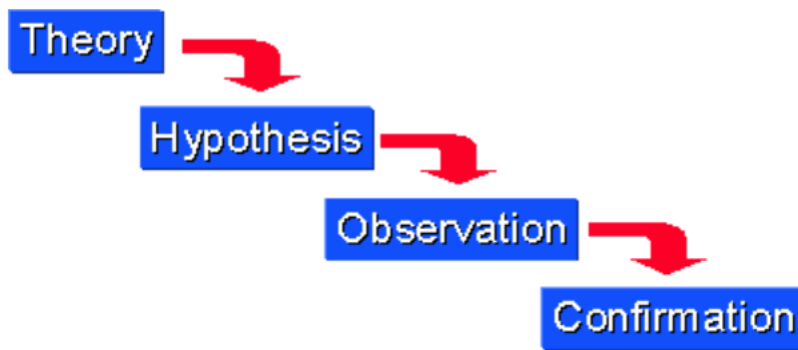
3.3 Implementation

3.3.1 Interview

The interview is conducted one-on-one, face-to-face with the employee on an unannounced date in the form of written document. We have been granted the permission to interview, gather data from both parties on the condition that we do not disclose their and the company's identities and that the interview must not be recorded visually or audibly

3.3.2 Analysis

After the data has been collected and documented, we will proceed on analyzing the empirical data. Deductive reasoning will be our analytic strategy. It begins with starting a theory, followed by observations of details, people and events to test the probabilities of the theory, then finally draw a conclusion of the theory (Trochim, 2020). It is different from its counterpart, inductive reasoning, which starts with an observation followed by pattern-detecting, then drawing conclusion from the pattern.



Picture 3 Deductive reason process (Trochim, 2020)

In our case study, we already had the thought that cultural difference and dysfunctional conflict resolution skills are the contributing factors to the respective conflict. We conducted the interview in order to test the probabilities of the theory. Therefore, our research used deductive reasoning in this case

Our analysis process will begin with profiling each party of the conflict based on their origin and perceived personality. Each party will be analyzed as an integrated individual of their culture using theoretical cultural studies and as a separate individual according to the interviews. Then, we will study on what influenced the escalation of conflict. This is followed by an analysis of conflict resolution attempted by both parties, which will categorize the type of the respective conflict and the style of conflict resolution used in the case

3.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are concepts of necessity to evaluate and test the quality of research. These terms despite being different, are somewhat interchangeable.

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement; or how the same methods produce the same results under the same circumstances or conditions, while validity indicates the accuracy of measurement. A method could be reliable without being valid but if the method is valid, it is often reliable (Middleton, 2019)

The validity of a research is secured if (Middleton, 2019):

- Appropriate methods of measurements are chosen
- Use appropriate samplings

Following these guidelines, we have constructed a proper set of interview questions for our in-depth interview. The interview questions consist of several open-ended questions which investigate the incident regarding to how it happened, how it resulted in, how the involved party reacted to it, and each party's personal opinions on the matter. These questions will give us an accurate glimpse or hints of the existence of cultural differences and the outcomes of poor conflict resolution skills based on the escalation of the conflict. As our samplings are allowed to express their own perspectives on the story, we can document how people from different cultures comprehend or process in these situations. The chosen samplings are appropriate since they are main subjects of the story, in short, they are the ones who know the story better than anyone.

The reliability of a research is secured if (Middleton, 2019):

- Method application is consistent
- The conditions of research are standardized

We ensure that the prepared interview questions given to each subject is identical to one another and there are no additional questions made under changes in context.

4 Case Study

For this thesis, we have selected a conflict that occurred at a very popular and prominent restaurant in the city of Seinäjoki, Finland. Due to the delicateness of the matter, all the parties involved in the incident have requested for complete anonymity. Which is why details that can provide any indications of the identities of the persons and business domicile involved in the matter will be omitted in this thesis.

4.1 Overview

The incident took place at a prominent restaurant located in the city of Seinäjoki, Finland. The employers, as well as the majority of the employees at the restaurant are of Finnish nationality. The employee involved in the incident is of a middle eastern nationality. Which is to delineate the differences in cultures, as suggested by Geert Hofstede in his framework for measuring cultural dimensions. The incident occurred during a Saturday evening. The restaurant usually receives a large volume of customers during weekend. The restaurant applies shift work and there are multiple key working positions during the shifts that are randomly assigned by the shift managers among the employees who are working on a given day. The positions in question are customer service workers who receives the order; kitchen leader who works alongside the kitchen workers and control the production of food items that will be described as “type X” and there is a person who works mostly independently to produce food items that will be described as “type Y”. Both of these key persons in the kitchen has their own monitors that they follow to serve the orders, plan the production and keep track of the situation at hand.

On the day of the incident, an interaction between the employee and the assistant manager of the restaurant led to an argument that resulted in the employee deserting his position at work before his shift was scheduled to be finished. According to the company policy, this action is considered as an insubordination which required a response from the managers in the form of a written warning. The written warning in question has to be read and signed by the employee. During the process of serving the

warning letter which took place on a later date, the employee was relieved of his position at the company.

In this case study we took an in depth look at the incident. We interviewed the manager of the restaurant who was present on both occasions, namely, the evening when the incident started and the evening when the employee was relieved of his position; the assistant restaurant manager and the employee in order understand analyze each of their perception of the matter. It needs to be mentioned here that the manager and the assistant manager, declined to give separate statements which is why the employers' statement is to serve as their unified opinion. Both the managers were present during the interview and the statement has been read and approved as accurate by both of them. The statement of the employee has also been read and approved as accurate by him.

4.1.1 Interview questions

The interview was based on the set of questions mentioned bellow.

1. Describe the incident in your words.
2. What were the problems you noticed/faced?
3. How did you respond to those problems?
4. How did the employer/employee respond to your actions?
5. In your opinion, what are the factors that led the employer/employee to respond in that manner?
6. What was the final outcome of the incident?
7. Do you think, cultural difference had a role to play in the matter? If yes, why? If No, Why not?
8. In your opinion, is it necessary to have an understanding of cross-cultural communications at your workplace? If yes, Why? If No, why not?
9. In the future, if similar situations arise, how would you like to respond to it?

The questionnaire was designed specifically for the purpose of this case study in order to understand the perception of each party regarding the incident itself as well as their perceptions of possible causes of the incident, conflict resolution approach during the

incident and plans regarding possible future ones. The interview was carried out on the same day and both parties provided information willingly, amicably and in a professional manner.

4.2 Employers' statement

Describe the incident in your words.

During the evening when the incident took place the employee was working in the kitchen with "Type Y" products. As it is a key position in the kitchen and due to the fact that it was the weekend, there was a rush. So, the employee was instructed to concentrate on work, in other words, to try to be faster with the preparation of food items. However, despite giving him the same instruction multiple times, his performance didn't improve. At which point I had to be specific with the shortcomings he was having. And since I, as a manager, am responsible for a smooth operation of the restaurant, I had to replace the employee and move him to a different assignment.

What were the problems you noticed/faced?

As mentioned earlier, the responsibility of the employee was to produce "Type Y" products in the kitchen, and as the person in charge of producing that type of products, usually works by him/herself while keeping track of his/her monitors, it requires a great deal of concentration on the job. On the day of the event, the employee exhibited a clear lack of concentration which resulted in slow preparation of the products sold. He was engaged in excessive chattering which was distracting for the other employees as well. These were the problems I noticed initially and when I confronted him about these issues, he showed a lack of respect towards my authority.

How did you respond to those problems?

Initially, I informed him about the issues and asked him to focus on the job. However, when that didn't change the situation, I asked another employee to take charge of that position.

How did the employee respond to your actions?

At the time, he didn't say anything. He seemed okay. After a while, I came to kitchen to help and instructed the kitchen leader that the aforementioned employee needs to have his mandatory break. As the breaks are scheduled by shift managers in a manner that puts the least amount of pressure on the employees who are working while others are on breaks and since there was a rush at the time, his break was supposed to be at a later time, not right away. However, the employee went to his break without any permission from me or the kitchen leader.

When he came back from his break, he seemed very disgruntled and agitated. Once he came back from his break, I (assistant manager) and the manager went outside of the restaurant for our break. While we were out, suddenly, the employee came out as well and asked to terminate his contract with the company. At which point I had to come back to the restaurant as I was leading the shift. While he and the manager stayed outside and had a conversation in which she tried to explain the situation to him.

After a while the manager came back inside and informed that the employee had left the premises without anyone's permission.

What was the outcome of the incident?

Try to understand, every workplace has certain rules. If you don't follow the rules, we have to take actions accordingly which are also governed by predefined rules. So, if someone does something that goes against the rules, we can give a written warning which serves as a precedent for other employees as well. We, as managers, can decide how strictly the rule would be applied. After the evening of the incident when the employee returned to work for his next shift, he was given a written warning. At that point he became aggressive and gave us the notice of termination. I gave him the paperwork required for termination of contract. He signed it and left.

In your opinion, what are the factors that led the employee to respond in that manner?

In my opinion, it's because he took things personally. I and the other managers have given the same instructions to the employees before and there has never been an issue such as this. It's to be understood here that these are predefined rules.

Do you think, cultural difference had a role to play in the matter? If yes, why? If No, Why not?

No, not for me. Because, I consider everyone to be equal. But it could have played a role in his mind.

In your opinion, is it necessary to have an understanding of cross-cultural communications at your workplace? If yes, Why? If No, why not?

Yes. But still, we cannot cater to everyone's sensitivity.

In the future, if similar situations arise, how would you like to respond to it?

I would respond to it the same way because I do not see the problem and I haven't had this kind of problems ever with my other employees. I have instructed Finnish employees similarly and there was no problem.

4.3 Employee's statement

Describe the incident in your words.

The work was going smoothly. Everything was normal. It was a Saturday night. So, you can imagine the rush we were having that day considering the type of restaurant. There were only two persons working in the kitchen at that point. I was the kitchen leader, in charge of producing "Type X" products. So, logically, with this amount of orders, no matter how fast you are, you would be somewhat late if there are only two persons there. So, instead of giving any good comments or trying to solve the problem in a good way, the assistant

manager came to me, brought another employee and said in a rather agitated manner, "This person will be in charge of the kitchen and no one else". At that point I was placed to produce "type Y" products. I took it normally because it's their job and that's how they deal with things when something goes wrong. Not too long after that, another employee was coming back from his break. Which is to say that at that point we had four persons in the kitchen. So, obviously, the work would go faster and smoother. At the same time, while we were working, another employee was about to start his shift. The assistant manager came to me again and shouted instruction that employee to replace me from the task that I was performing. At which point I asked the assistant manager if I had done something wrong? Because I was being replaced over and over from the leading positions. And the way how she did it, it seemed as if she was angry at me. I asked also because if I had done something wrong, I need to know so that I don't repeat the mistake. To my question she answered, "Yes, you are too slow. That's why I changed your place", in a very disrespectful manner. At this point, I myself started getting outraged. I felt like I was losing my nerves, I was shaking. However, I didn't say anything to her. I just went to the manager and asked her if we could speak and talked to her about this. At that point I was going for my break. So, I went outside, had a smoke, calmed down and came back to work. Then, no one asked me what happened or what's wrong. They were acting as if everything was normal. They (the manager and the assistant manager) were laughing and went out to smoke. At that point, I lost my temper completely. I followed them outside and asked for a termination of my job contract. They asked me to calm down. At that point the assistant manager with whom I had the issue, left and the manager stayed with me to discuss the situation. She tried to convince me that this is how it is. And I asked her if this was the right way to handle a situation like that or treat a coworker. Because, she (the assistant manager) made me feel as if I am useless and if you feel useless at your workplace, it's horrible. I need to go there every day, as it's my source of living and if I come to my source of income every day and feel like a useless person then it's not nice. I have been understanding in many instances before because those instances were understandable, and it happens at any workplace. At that point, I still had one hour left to my shift and I didn't feel like I could continue working in that state. So, I asked the manager if I could leave. To which she answered, "Well, if you are going, then you are going". So, I did not go into further discussion. I took my stuff and went home.

What were the problems you noticed/faced?

They put only two persons in the kitchen, on a Saturday night when it's a common knowledge that there would be and in fact was a lot of orders. In a busy restaurant as this one with a huge number of orders, asking only two persons to perform at a speed that can only be achieved with more kitchen-workers, is unfair. And that I think was at the core of the problem. Secondly, the way how they deal with a difficult situation.

How did you respond to those problems?

I didn't do anything. I didn't argue. However, I was trying to discuss with the manager that this is not right. The way I was approached wasn't proper. The way she (the assistant manager) dealt with the situation and the way she treated me was completely wrong.

How did the employer respond to your actions or inputs?

As I mentioned earlier that when I went to discuss the issue with the managers, the assistant manager just left. And the manager just told me that I needed to calm down and apparently that was the way to deal with work. I told her that I understand that. As managers, it's your prerogative. However, not the way she was treating me. The manager tried to pacify the situation. But the assistant manager didn't take any steps to do so.

What was the outcome of the incident?

As I mentioned before that I asked the manager if I could leave since my mental state wasn't functional at that point. And based on her response, I left the workplace. I had two day off after that night. As I came back to work after two days, everything seemed normal. And I decided in my mind that I would not press this matter any further. In my mind I was done with it. I had discussions with a lot of friends before and they advised me to keep a level head about this and not act too impulsively. So, I was ready to leave this behind. However, approximately fifteen minutes before my shift was scheduled to finish, both the managers came to the workplace. They didn't have shifts that night. So,

which is to say that they came during their free time. They were walking around, seemingly waiting for something. It seemed as if the assistant manager, with whom I had the conflict, was observing me. At the end of my shift, they sent the shift manager for that shift to inform me that they wanted to talk to me. The shift manager advised me to stay calm and not react. I told her that I had already decided to not press the matter. So, I wasn't going to do anything rash there. So, when I went to the office, I didn't find the manager there. Instead, the assistant manager was waiting for me there. She was sitting there with an angry expression and she had a printed form in front of her. She asked me in a very angry tone if I knew why I was summoned. To which I replied, "maybe". Then she told me that they are about to give me a warning letter because I left the work without permission and asked me to sign it before going home. I didn't know what to say to that. So, I asked her if she thinks that she didn't do anything wrong. She said that she didn't feel like she did anything wrong and she refused to even discuss the matter. Here I would like to add something that before I went to work that night, I sent her a message asking if she would like to discuss the matter before my shift. She refused then saying she would be unavailable till the end of that week, yet there she was, that very night, on her free time. So, I made a gesture of goodwill, I wanted to resolve it in a professional manner, but she didn't accept it.

So, when she said that she doesn't think that there any mistakes on her part, I lost my temper again. I signed the warning letter and asked her to make another form for the notice of termination of contract because I didn't want to work for that place any longer. What surprised me was that she had the form filled in and ready to print. She just printed it and handed it to me. I don't know what was in her mind, like if she was expecting that I would quit or she wanted me to do quit, I don't know. But anyway, I asked for the paper, I signed it and when I was leaving the workplace, I ran into the manager who was standing outside. I just left and returned to home.

I think here we had another miscommunication. If she had done it in a different way when I went to the office. For example, she could've asked me to have a seat, said a few kind words such as, whatever happened the other night was because it was so busy and stressful at the restaurant; that she didn't mean anything bad or it wasn't with any intentions of making me feel bad etc. but she had to do what was necessary. She

could've explained to me that because I behaved angrily and left work, they had to give me a warning letter. If she had treated the situation empathetically, I would've accepted it. But instead she went in a completely different direction.

I would also like to add that I am sure that they had a meeting beforehand in which they decided the approach they would take to resolve it. Or in other there had to be a meeting where they decided to hand me a warning letter which is fine, but they should've sent someone else to serve the warning letter. Instead they sent the person with whom I had the conflict, to give me the warning letter and there were no one to mediate between the two of us or control the situation. Which ultimately resulted in things getting out of hand.

In your opinion, throughout the conflict, what are the factors that led the employer to respond in that manner?

I have no idea. I guess, it's just how she talks. Maybe she doesn't know how to speak to people.

Do you think, cultural difference had a role to play in the matter? If yes, why? If No, Why not?

I am coming from a different place and I have grown up in a place where I don't tolerate any offensive behaviors. Specially, if those are directed towards me. And I will never accept any kind of disrespectful behaviors. If someone comes at me and starts shouting, it doesn't matter what's his/her position, I will not accept that. Because that's not an appropriate way to handle situations at workplace and I think I am not wrong on that account.

I am accustomed to a certain way of communicating with people. Maybe she didn't mean to offend me but the way she spoke to me, it seemed very insulting to me. So, the cultural difference might be a possibility because I didn't understand or couldn't accept her way of communication. So, it's a possibility that cultural difference may have been a factor here.

In your opinion, is it necessary to have an understanding of cross-cultural communications at your workplace? If yes, Why? If No, why not?

Of course. Because I think culture has a huge influence on businesses and before proceeding with any projects or business ideas, you need to have at least some level of understanding of what you are going to deal with, what kind of people you are going to work with. In this case, it's a very good example, since foreigners recently started applying for this particular workplace, they should've and still should put some effort in understanding who they are hiring, how they are going to communicate with them. They should've planned for these matters first since this is a new thing for them.

In the future, if similar situations arise, how would you like to respond to it?

I am not sure. It depends very much on the situation.

5 Analysis

The purpose of this section is to break down the interviews into key factors. We would look at each statement received from the parties involved and look for the differences in point of views through which each dealt with the conflict. Which would allow us to pinpoint the possible problematic factors and measure those issues against the relevant theories. After going through the interviews, we have pinpointed several factors that were not in an alignment for the parties involved.

5.1 Factor 1: Difference in perception of the situation

When asked to describe the incident in their own words, the renditions of the incident received from each party was quite similar. However, if we take a closer look, it becomes apparent that there was a clear difference in the way each party perceived the situation. Since the restaurant was facing a rush of customers, the employers were perceiving the performance of kitchen to be lagging, therefore, they tried to make necessary adjustments, in order to speed up the production in the kitchen which would ensure faster delivery or serving of products sold and in turn, make the whole restaurant run faster. However, when we look at the employee's statement, he perceives the performance as satisfactory and points out that there were not enough employees in the kitchen to produce at the rate that was being expected. The employee suggests that he took his break in the proper way. However, the employers suggest that he availed his break without permission from anyone in charge. Same applies for the instance when the employee asked the manager if he could leave early. According to the statement from the managers, the employee left without permission. Whereas, the employee is under the impression that he was given permission to leave. These unaligned perceptions of the situation may have played a considerable role in the conflict. It also leads to another issue which is difference in expectation.

5.2 Factor 2: Difference in expectations

As suggested in the employers' statement, because of the high volume of orders received, they were expecting a more focused demeanor and faster performance from the employee

which is their prerogative. And as discussed earlier, in their perception, the expectation wasn't being fulfilled which compelled them to be stern towards the employee. On the other hand, the employee was expecting positive feedback or reinforcement which according to his statement he didn't receive. The employee's statement also suggests that he was expecting an acknowledgement from employers and/or coworkers regarding the situation; an expectation which was not fulfilled either.

5.3 Factor 3: Difference in cultures

In order to address this factor, the cultural dimensions of each country need to be examined and compared between. The workplace is located in Finland and the employers, as well as majority of the employees are Finnish. A very important piece of information regarding the workplace was found from employee's response to question 8 that this workplace has recently started hiring foreigners. Which suggests that the workforce at this workplace changed from being homogenous to multicultural fairly recently. So, it can be a challenge for the managers to deal with the employees who are coming from different cultural background.

As we mentioned in the overview that the employee involved in the incident is from a middle eastern country, the comparison between these two countries on Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions is depicted in the following figure. (Hofstede Insights)

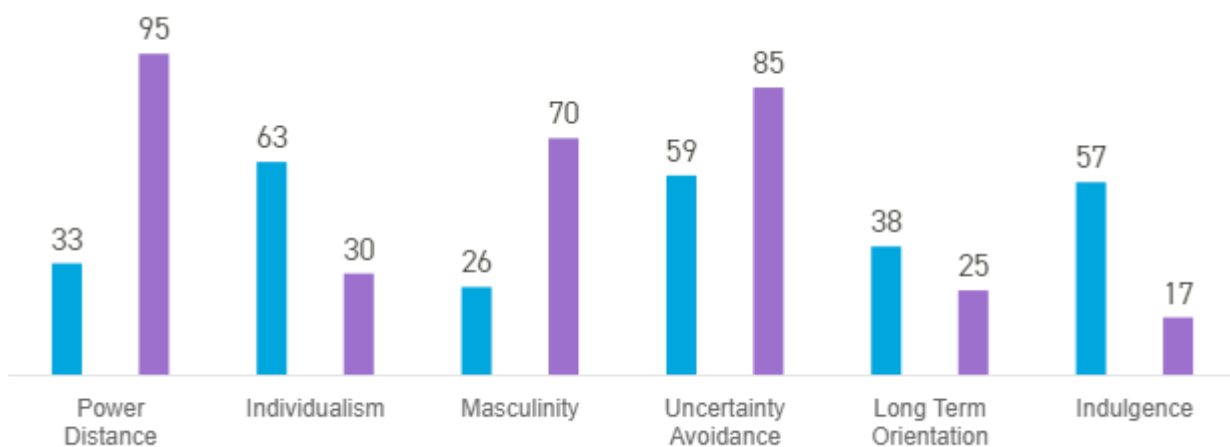


Figure 3 Comparison between cultural dimension of Finland and the employee's country of origin (Hofstede Insights)

The blue bar represents Finland and the Purple bar represents the country of the employee. We can see how sharp the contrast between the cultures is. So, referring to the theories laid out in section 2.3.1, we can describe Finnish culture as egalitarian, individualistic, feminine. Whereas, the culture of the country where the employee is from, is hierarchical, collectivistic and masculine.

In order to further delineate the differences in cultures of these two countries, we refer to theories laid out in section 2.3.2, where we have presented the theories suggested by Richard R. Gesteland. According to Gesteland, these two countries are falls in two very different groups.

Finland falls in Group F, which is deal-Focused, Moderately Formal, Monochronic, Reserved. According to Gesteland (2012, 345), Finns tend to use low context verbal communication or in other words, they use direct, straightforward language in conversations. However, the culture where the employee is from, the middle eastern nation, falls in Group C, which is Relationship Focused, Formal, Polychronic, Expressive which is very different from Finland. The communication style in the country is indirect. (Gesteland, 2012, 218) Another important difference between the culture of these countries is the difference in their expressiveness. Gesteland (2012, 345) dubbed the Finnish culture as reserved which means the members of this culture tend not to show emotions or express feelings as openly as the member's expressive cultures do. As the employee is from an expressive culture, it marks a sharp contrast in communication styles between the Finnish employers and the middle eastern employee.

According to the employers, differences in culture did not play a role however the employee entertained it as a possibility. Although the employers denied the role of cultural difference when asked directly about it; in question number 6 and question number 9, they mentioned having given similar instructions to Finnish employees without having to face such conflicts. There is a lot to unpack here.

Firstly, if we take a look at the employer's answer to the question number seven, in which we asked in a confrontational manner if they thought cultural difference was a factor here, the assistant manager replied that it didn't, following up with a statement that everyone is

equal to her. This is suggestive of the possibility that, she might consider acknowledging differences between cultures equivalent to inequality or in other words, racism. It is understandable that ...comparing cultural traits in these politically correct times can elicit rebukes but brushing over the differences can be even more costly. (Denis Dragovic, The Sunday Morning Herald, 2016). It is possible that, the fear of criticism and appearing to be racist resulted in her reluctance or unwillingness to acknowledge the cultural differences which in turn limited her awareness regarding the matter, leading to taking the same approach she would take to communicate and instruct a Finnish employee; with the employee from a vastly different culture. In a professional environment, this can cause a multitude of problems.

Based on the differences observable in this case, it is possible that the cultural differences are the underlying cause of all the other factors that cause and escalated the conflict.

5.4 Conflict classification

According to the interviews we have conducted, the conflict can be broken down to three parts. Those parts are as follows:

Conflict 1: Conflict that lead to replacement of positions		
Context: The restaurant during Saturday night		
	The employer's perspectives	The employee's perspectives
Details	<p>The assistant manager found the performance of the employee inefficient. He was being slow and having a lot of chattering during work</p> <p>The assistant manager informed the employee on his performance but was received with lack of respect. She replaced him when the situation did not improve.</p>	<p>The employee found it unfair to catch up with the work intensity with only two persons working in the Kitchen</p> <p>The assistant manager announced replacement with a very agitated manner. The employee proceeded the work normally.</p>

Table 2 Conflict 1

Conflict 2: Conflict that lead to the employee leaving work prematurely		
Context: The employee approached the managers to demand contract termination		
	The employer's perspectives	The employee's perspectives
Details	<p>The managers noticed the employee had a break without permission and came back in a disgruntled manner. Later on, the managers went on a break. The employee followed the managers during their break and asked to terminate his contract. The assistant manager was leading that shift, so she had to return from her break as soon as possible. The manager explained the situation and tried to resolve the issue. The employee eventually left before his shift ended</p>	<p>The employee approached the assistant manager for explanation of replacement, found her comment offensive. He was enraged. The lack of empathy from others at that moment made him feel outrageous.</p> <p>When the managers had their break. The employee followed the managers and asked for termination. The assistant manager left the employee with the manager. The employee condemned the assistant manager for mistreatment towards him. The employee did not find the situation satisfactory and left the premise one-hour early</p>

Table 3 Conflict 2

Conflict 3: Conflict that lead to the employee terminating the contract

Context: The employee was given the formal written warning in his following shift

	The employer's perspectives	The employee's perspectives
Details		<p>The night after conflict took place, the employee attempted to initiate a conversation with the assistant manager which she declined, stating that she had no free time</p> <p>The following shift the employee decided to leave behind the matter and worked normally. The assistant manager showed up to workplace despite claiming to be busy.</p>
	<p>The assistant manager gave the employee the written warning in his following shift. The employee was aggressive and demanded termination of the contract. The employer gave it to him. He signed and left</p>	<p>The assistant manager summoned the employee to office, angrily asked him if he knew why he was summoned and told him to sign in a written warning for leaving without permission. The employee proposed to talk on the matter which the employer declined. This enraged the employee, prompting him to demand a contract</p>

		<p>termination. The employer gave him a filled-in form without hesitation, making him think she was expecting his departure</p>
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Table 4 Conflict 3

Using our classifications of conflict types in section 2.4.1 of our theoretical framework, conflict 1 can be easily categorized as task conflict. The employee is perceived to be inefficient and distracted in his job while the employee job viewed the scenario to be stressful and over-demanding. The employee was replaced soon after. There exhibit disputes in the perceptions of task and job allocation here.

In both conflict 2 and 3, there are disputes in communication and problem-solving as each party failed to comprehend each other's perspectives. Both interpreted their behavior as either aggressive or disrespectful. However, while the managers didn't acknowledge the role of cultural differences in the conflict, the employee condemned her management of communication, quoted "she doesn't know how to speak to people", before announcing there might be a possibility of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Moreover, in section 4.3, we have analyzed several indicators to conclude cultural differences played a significant role in this case. Therefore, we will classify conflict 2 and 3 as value conflict

5.5. Conflict resolution styles and their outcomes

In order to understand how the aforementioned conflict escalated and how each of the minor conflict resulted in extreme effects to both parties. Dr. Barbara Benoliel explained that while there were no better or worse ways to solve a conflict, it is important to understand how we react to conflict and gain awareness of management styles in order to approach conflict efficiently (Walden University, 2017). Therefore, inappropriate choices of CRS could lead to further conflict escalation and ultimately, failures. In this case study, it is important to understand how both parties choose to solve their conflict based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and why it led to another conflict.

In conflict 1, according to the interviews, when the employer observed the employee's efficiency at work to be dissatisfactory, she decided to inform the employee on the matter and later on replace him. Both parties claimed that when the employee was replaced, he, quoted from the employee himself "didn't do anything" and "did not argue". The employee obeyed to the decision without further discussions. This is a predictable characteristic of an accommodating conflict resolution style due to the low extent of assertiveness and high extent of cooperativeness. The employee apparently prioritized the harmony in workplace more than defending himself. This led to a win/lose outcome discussed in section 2.5.3. The employee applied this CRS every time he was replaced. However, one problem with the accommodating CRS is that it may breed hostility and resentment, discussed in section 2.5.2. This outcome is visible in this case, as the employee found the employer's attitude disrespectful and his mental state unable to continue work, which led us to the next conflict

In conflict 2, the employee claimed to have asked the employer about what he did wrong, only to receive a blunt answer, quoted "Yes, you are too slow. That's why I changed your place". According to the employee's perspectives, the employer has applied a competing CRS; the clear-cut decision to replace the employee to satisfy her concern of ensuring the flow of efficiency without any consulting demonstrate a high level of assertiveness and low cooperativeness. However, according to the employer's perspectives, she noticed a lot of excessive chattering between the employee and other worker, which the employee did not mention in the interview. Therefore, it is possible that he was oblivious of this matter. Furthermore, the fact that the employee had to initiate a conversation about his shortcomings instead of the employer herself led us to a notion that the employer also have a tendency to avoid this conflict. Later on, when the employee approached to have contract terminated, the employer claimed to rush back to work, leave him with the manager instead of staying there to consult him, despite being the person with whom the employee had issue which demonstrated low cooperativeness and low assertiveness. These are characteristics of an avoiding CRS, and due to the problem being unresolved, this ended up being a lose/lose conflict; the employer was unable to keep the employee on-site while the employee left the premise prematurely.

Lastly, in conflict 3, the employee claimed to have attempted to initiate a conversation after the incident, which the employer refused. It can be seen that the employee has applied

collaborating CRS as he proposed to cooperate while staying assertive, however the attempt failed when the employer applied an avoiding CRS as she refused to talk. In his following shift, when he was summoned for a written warning, he made a second attempt to propose conversation, again applying a collaborating CRS. However, the employer once again refused to have a conversation with the employee, while claiming she didn't do anything wrong, showing high assertiveness but low cooperativeness. The employer again applied the competing CRS in this conflict, which left the employee frustrated and quit his job. This is a lose/lose conflict; the employer lost a worker; the employee lost his job.

With these evidences, it is safe to say that poor conflict resolution skills have resulted in negative outcomes. This, combined with our previous analysis on cross-cultural aspect of the conflict, have led us to a conclusion that cultural differences have played a significant role in conflict escalation. Cross-cultural understanding therefore is necessary to efficiently interact with and approach to any conflict with foreign co-workers.

6 Results

6.1 Findings of the case studies

As this conflict has already reached its final outcome, we cannot suggest any solutions that can alter the outcome. However, based on the theoretical background and analysis of the case study presented earlier in the thesis, we have been able to determine following:

- Finland has a deal-focused and monochronic culture. So, at workplace people tend to focus on one task at a time. Which is to say that chattering while working can be considered as lack of concentration to managers habituated to monochronic work culture. Thus, the assistant manager perceiving the employee to be inefficient and lacking concentration on the night of the incident can be explained. However, since the employee is from a relationship-focused and polychronic culture where people tend to do multiple tasks at a time and value building good relationship between coworkers, conversing while working is not condemned as it is in Finnish culture. This created the unaligned perceptions and expectations in the parties involved. In this case, if the employee was aware of this crucial difference in work culture and adopted a monochronic approach to work, the conflict could have been avoided.
- When the employee asked the assistant manager for an explanation for being replaced, the assistant manager replied in a direct and concise manner which is a trait of low context communication style. However, the employee is from a high context culture where such responses are considered rude and disrespectful. So, the employee took this as a personal attack which instigated the conflict. If the assistant manager had taken the cultural background of the employee into account when responding to his query, it possibly would've prevented the conflict from originating and escalating.
- Due to the nature of the employee's original culture being relationship-focused, he expected an acknowledgement of mistreatment from his coworkers and managers. This expectation was not fulfilled because being monochronic and deal-focused, his coworkers and managers were more putting their attention on the tasks at hand which

aggravated the anger in the employee. If the employee had a better understanding of the Finnish culture, this could have been avoided.

- The employee is from an expressive culture which led him to express his displeasure vividly. However, the culture of Finland being of reserved nature where exhibition of emotions and feelings are controlled and subdued, it only escalated the situation. Should the employee had taken an approach that is appropriate for the culture while voicing his displeasure, the situation could have been contained. On the other hand, had the assistant manager had a better understanding of the culture of the employee, she could have taken appropriate steps to pacify the employee before trying to resolve the conflict.
- The employee informed the manager that he is incapable of working because of his mental state. The manager vaguely suggested that he can go. Since the employee is from an extremely hierarchical culture, he assumed that since the manager has somewhat given consent to him leaving, he doesn't have to check with the assistant manager whether or not it is acceptable if he were to leave. However, as interpreted from the comparison of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the power distance between different job designations in Finland is very small. That and the fact that the assistant manager was the one who was leading the shift, it was in her prerogative to negate the consent of the manager and retain the employee for the duration of his scheduled shift. Should the employee had double checked with the assistant manager before leaving, a dialogue could have been facilitated which could have led to an acceptable solution without escalating.
- The employee attempted to have a dialogue with the assistant manager regarding the incident and was denied which is suggestive of the assistant manager was avoiding. A more collaborative approach from her part would have resulted in de-escalation and in turn, an amicable resolution of the conflict.
- While handing out the written warning, the assistant manager resorted to low context communication and declined to have a dialogue with the employee. The employee interpreted it as rude and disrespectful. The employee expressed his expectations of

conflict resolution process which wasn't fulfilled, leading to his outburst and termination of his contract. So, due to lack of understanding of the differences, two very different cultures collided and the key differential factors such as high vs low context communication; deal focused vs relationship-focused approach to work; power distance and expressive vs reserved accumulated into the conflict and led to the lose/lose outcome of the conflict.

- As previously mentioned, when being initiated another conversation, the employer has applied a competing CRS. As a lowly-cooperative CRS, her refusal to talk has frustrated the employee. In this case, the employer has two options: applying either a collaborating CRS which strived for a win/win outcome to satisfy both parties' concerns, as referenced in section 2.5.3, or an accommodating CRS, as the relationship of the employer and the employee has been clearly damaged, raising the extent of cooperativeness would ease tension between them. The employer should take into her consideration if her concern to be right is more important the employee's concern to explain and express himself
- Overall, it is not difficult to see that in all conflicts, the employer has applied the CRSs that have low degree of cooperativeness, which means the employer doesn't have the tendency to cooperate. A negative effect of lowly-cooperative methods is that it might cause tension and resentment in working relationships, as explained in section 2.5.2. If she has been more diverse in choices of CRS, the conflict could have brought in different outcomes

7 Conclusion

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the impact of cultural differences in the conflict that was discussed. Despite the fact that both the parties involved dismissed the idea of cultural differences playing any roles in the matter, the analysis of the conflict with reference to relevant theories indicates that due to some key cultural differences, an otherwise normal interaction between two individuals turned into a conflict, in which both parties failed to reach an accord. Thus, leading to a counterproductive resolution.

Based on our analysis and findings, we would recommend the following approaches for the workplace where the conflict originated as well as any workplaces that are adopting and functioning in a multicultural workplace:

- The employers and employees should acknowledge the cultural differences that might be present between them. An informed acknowledgement of these differences is not the same as stereotyping or racial profiling.
- During hiring process, the employers should actively research about the cultural background of the prospective employees in order to have an understanding of their national cultures. This would allow the employers to know who they are hiring.
- For workplaces that are transitioning from homogeneous workforce to a multicultural workforce, such as the workplace discussed in the case study, should actively train and educate their managers and existing workers about the possible cultural differences that they would encounter with the international employees. The international employees should also be provided with an instruction addressing practical matters that they would need to bear in mind such as, the national culture of the country in which the workplace is located in, the work culture and ethics that are specific to the workplace etc, before they join the workforce.
- The managers should be provided with trainings regarding different conflict resolution methods and outcomes. So that in case of a conflict they can take appropriate measures to contain the conflict from escalating and resolve it in a professional and amicable manner.

- Always ready with the collaborating CRS: Collaborating CRS is an ideal CRS as it strives for a Win/Win outcome explained in section 2.5.3. Therefore, collaborating CRS should prioritize in any cases. If collaborating CRS fails to resolve the conflict, select another CRS depending on the context

Following these recommendations, we have developed a model that summarize the processes and competencies needed for a functional, healthy multicultural work environment

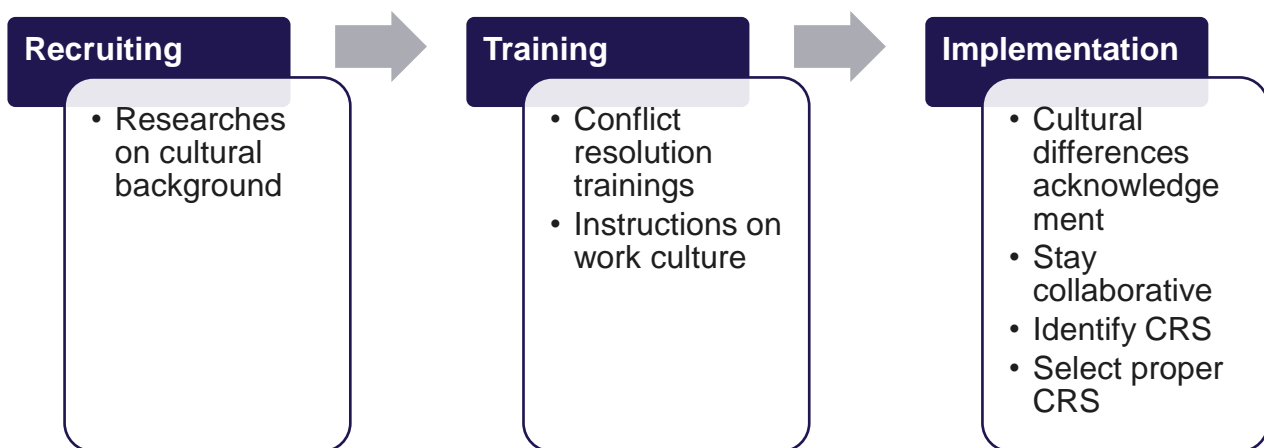


Figure 4 The process of creating a healthy multicultural work environment

This research can serve as a basis for future leaders/ workers working in multicultural companies to stay aware of cultural differences and how to handle conflicts arising from them. After all, cultural awareness and conflict resolution go hand-in-hand as a set of skills for not only managers but also team members. Healthy relationships that value differences among individuals enable teams to function smoothly, building trust among team members and provide greater sense of job satisfaction to them.

7.1 Reliability, validity and recommendations

As referenced in 3.4, the reliability is defined as the consistency of the research. By using our theoretical frameworks to analyze our subjects consistently, taking into account how each subject reacts on a cultural basis and solve conflict using Thomas-Kilmann model on every situation without disregarding or biasing any subject, these results are proved to be

reliable. Moreover, thanks to the active collaboration and detailed answers to the interview questions given by both subjects, greater extent of reliability was provided

However, whether the findings have achieved absolute reliability is still questionable, given that the context of the case study involves two individuals with professional relationships, without regarding other factors such as individual personalities, personal relationships, stress, etc. The following contexts will challenge the reliability of this research:

- Personal relationships influencing conflicts
- The conflict involves more than two individuals or groups
- Subjects as individuals don't fit in their respective cultural dimensions due to personalities

As referenced in 3.4, the validity is defined as the accuracy of the research. The results of the analysis align with our theoretical framework, proving that the results are accurate and valid. However, in section 7.1, there are several factors that could challenge the reliability of the research. This means the validity of the research could be altered once the reliability is not assured.

Despite these obstacles, there are still spaces and possibilities where these frameworks can still be utilized. Take into consideration these factors:

- In section 2.3.1.1, Hofstede framework has been criticized for its lack of individuality and over-generalization context, therefore, it is not always reliable for one individual to have the same culture. However, Hofstede and Gesteland's studies can still be beneficial groundworks in recruiting for managers. During recruiting process, the recruited members should be profiled on a culturally basis using these theories. Then approach them with practices suitable to their respective culture in order to see how fit or unfit they are with these frameworks. These are essential steps in order to get acquainted with your employees. However, do not mistake them as stereotypes.

- In section 2.5.4, it is argued that the element of stress can drastically change one's behavior, and decision-making. Therefore, Thomas-Kilmann Instrument can't be consistent to predict how a person with approach conflict on a specific context that involves stress. However, it can be used directly when the conflict occurs by defining how assertive and cooperative the opposed party is. Identify their CRS. Then select an appropriate CRS to react

7.2 Further research

To begin with, this research aims to address conflicts escalated due to cultural differences and miscommunications. Cultural differences are not the only reason that created conflicts, and conflicts are not the only result from cultural differences. Future researches are encourage to dive deeper into the impacts of cultural differences as well as resolving different kinds of conflicts

As suggested in 7.1, there are several other factors that influence workplace conflicts other than cultural differences. This includes personality, personal relationships, emotions and stress. Any researches to study and connect these factors together are warmly welcomed to fulfill.

There have been a vast of existing researches on personalities and psychologies. Among them, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) can be a promising start to this subject matter. MBTI is a personality-assessing tools that categorize individuals by different personality dimensions. It provides deep understanding of self-awareness and personal differences (The Myers-Briggs). We believe by fluently grasping this concept and channeling it into conflict-handling skills, it will be a great addition to the study on conflict resolution.

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