



Solving the Challenges and Avoiding the Issues of Leading Multicultural Teams in Global Companies

Case EF MALTA

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This thesis explores the challenges of leading multicultural teams in global companies and how to avoid them, specifically the case of EF Malta, the commissioning company of this thesis.

The theoretical framework explored the topics of multiculturalism and multicultural teams as well as the culture and the importance of culture in terms of a team. Furthermore, this thesis dived deeper into cultural models like Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Trompenaars' cultural model, high vs low-context communication, the GLOBE Project and leadership strategies which gave the groundwork for the following research.

The conducted qualitative research with the employees of the commissioning company in leadership positions established common themes among the participants related to the topics like communication, cultural differences, conflicts and problem-solving as well as leadership of multicultural teams. The findings provide original insights into the multicultural environment of EF Malta and bring a fresh perspective on leadership.

The conducted questionnaire discovered that while challenges in multicultural teams cannot be avoided, with a clear communication and an open mind, those obstacles can be reduced to a minimum. The research highlights the importance of constant training for the multicultural teams in order to gain cultural awareness and understanding of other people. This thesis gives an overview of the potential challenges for multicultural teams in global companies and solutions and how to deal with them while opening the door for future research extended to more offices of the commissioning company as well as other industries.

Keywords multicultural team, leadership, communication, challenges

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1 Introduction

With the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Globalization constantly progressing, human lives rapidly change. The digitalization and newest technologies impact our lives more than ever. Those changes bring more challenges into the world, which requires strong leadership that is adaptive, open-minded and calm (Prasongko & Adianto, 2019).

In response to fast paced globalization, organizations more often compose culturally diverse teams where members with different cultural backgrounds work together (Cheng et al., 2012). Many studies focused on the effects of cultural diversity on teams performance, nevertheless the topic of multicultural teams is still not fully discovered (Means & Davey, 2022).

The emergence of multicultural teams put the organizations against the challenge of appointing suitable global leaders that will lead the multicultural environment towards collective goals and finally success (Lisak & Erez, 2014).

1.1 Background

In today's world, organizations face the challenges of integrating global operations while staying relevant in the local market. They find culture as a key to successful international business, and multicultural teams seem to balance the local adaptation and global processes together. The expectations for those teams are high and they are expected to achieve success, nevertheless that seems to be more difficult than expected. A study by Govindaran and Gupta showed that out of 70 researched global companies, only 18% were successful, 30% did not succeed and 52% found it difficult to achieve all of the goals (Zander & Butler, 2010).

Modern management finds the effectiveness of the multicultural teams to be a critical matter that needs to be further researched. Inefficient multicultural teams causes damage to the organization instead of leading it towards settled goals and success. There are many challenges caused by the cultural differences between the individuals in the team which disturbs their work with conflicts, misunderstandings leading to weak performance. The members of the multicultural teams might face challenges like working with many different ideas and perspectives, different communication styles that might cause disagreements,

working with different time zones and location which might make scheduling and setting the deadlines overwhelming, lack of sense of belonging in the team (Matveev & Milter, 2004).

Intercultural competence is what makes multicultural teams function effectively. It requires people to adapt and accept other cultures as well as understanding the cultural differences. Intercultural competence is a major factor in maintaining effective global operations as well as keeping local relations (Matveev, 2016).

1.2 Research questions

This thesis will focus on answering the main research question: “What are the challenges of leading multicultural teams in global companies and how to best avoid those challenges?”. Exploring this question will bring a better understanding of potential obstacles emerging in leadership positions for multicultural teams in global companies.

Alongside the main point, this study will examine several crucial questions: what are the reasons behind the emerging challenges? How do those challenges affect teamwork and team efficiency? How do leaders of said teams cope with those problems? Was it possible to avoid those challenges from appearing? If yes, then how? All of these questions paint a clear picture of what leaders can expect from working with multicultural teams and how to stand against those obstacles. Finally, answering all of these will be a crucial part of finding solutions to the problem.

1.3 Objectives

In order to find the answers to the research questions and understanding the topic, this thesis is split into carefully chosen chapters. Starting with the introduction, this part consists of an overview of the current situation and research questions, followed by the case companies profile.

In the second part of this study, the theoretical framework focuses on literature review which collects current studies considering the leadership and cross-cultural management. This chapter sets the tone for the research and brings important theory topics to the table. It explores the idea of multiculturalism and globalization and its effect on current leadership styles.

The third chapter explains the methodology of the research and focuses on finding the answer to the research question. In order to achieve that goal, this part showcases all of the conducted interviews and research focused on the commissioning company.

Lastly, the findings are presented and analysed, followed by the interpretation they give to the final results of the research. Everything is summed up and concluded connecting previously mentioned theory with the outcomes of the research.

1.4 Company profile

This thesis is commissioned by a global company- EF International Language Campuses. Founded in 1965 by Bertil Hult, the company started as a holiday trip to England, where Swedish students were supposed to learn English while enjoying their vacations. A simple trip to Brighton became an innovative idea for an English language travel concept. The quickly growing company started expanding to new markets already in the 70's, and by the 90's they became the largest online language school in the world. (*Who We Are | EF United States*, n.d.)

Currently EF is present in 120 countries, with 600 schools and offices and over 50 000 team members. Their operation focuses on four programs- language, travel, cultural exchange and academics, giving opportunities to people in almost every age and living up to their name- EF- Education First (EF, company's presentation, n.d.).

The company's headquarters are located in Zurich, Switzerland, nevertheless their international offices are scattered around the world. With the amount of employees and offices worldwide, EF creates a diverse community where different cultures and languages meet together to work (*Who We Are | EF United States*, n.d.).

The structure of the company splits between two main operations- year round school in St. Julian's and summer schools in Sliema and St. Paul's Bay, with the executive Director overlooking both. The year round school offers English language courses for adults (16+) which can last from 2 weeks up to 1 year. Summer schools provide English language courses for minors (10-16 years old) in fully supervised group travel programs that last 2-4 weeks. Summer team includes roughly 130 team members. Figure 1 showcases the structure of EF MALTA (EF, company's data, n.d.).

Figure 1. EF Malta organizational structure



● Year round staff for the summer schools

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature review

This chapter will go in depth into literature found on the topic of this thesis. By reviewing chosen sources, this part will explore the topics of multiculturalism, cross-cultural management, leadership styles as well as analyse different types of cultural models and their benefits in context of leading multicultural teams. All of this will be a ground for the methodology used for the research part and will tie together the main points of this study in conclusion.

Sogancilar (2018) conducted a research that focused on discovering challenges faced by the leaders managing multicultural teams and their solutions. The findings of this study identified three categories of challenges and three categories of solutions to those challenges. The discovered challenges related to ineffective communication and misunderstandings, different working styles and expectations and lastly, intolerance and lack of knowledge related to diversity. According to Reinhold and Amigo (2017), it is also communication that is found challenging, alongside individuality and feelings.

The challenges require actions from the managing parties, and those solutions can be put in three categories: embracing diversity and encouraging group members to acknowledge it, becoming approachable and eager to learn more, communicating in a simple and straightforward way. Multicultural teams tend to come across more challenges than monocultural teams which is why managers should possess those competencies (Sogancilar, 2018).

2.2 Multiculturalism

In order to better understand the topic, the meaning of the multiculturalism is necessary. This concept carries more than one meaning and evolved through the years. Some countries (US) used this term to explain the progressive politics which focused on human rights and equality with topics like gay rights, Afrocentricity, femaleness and ethnicity being given public recognition. On the European side multiculturalism isn't connected strictly to the politics but is identified with the occurrence of immigration. (*Modood, 2012*)

In Rosado's words:

“Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.”
(Rosado, 1996)

Based on this definition it can be understood that the idea of the multiculturalism is to have diverse and inclusive environments that celebrate and accept their cultural differences, while enriching it with their involvement and participation (Rosado, 1996).

2.3 Multicultural teams

Now that there is better understanding of multiculturalism this part will tackle the definition of multicultural teams. Silberzahn and Chen (2012) described the multicultural teams as a group of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Those teams are built in order to handle the challenges of today’s fast-growing international markets as they are equipped with individual set of skills that are required to achieve that. Additionally global companies recognize the diverse groups as an advantage in the global business environment.

But why multicultural teams are getting so much attention these days? With today’s businesses expanding globally and today’s demographics of workforce the changes in the teams are inescapable. The teams in global companies are required to work with people from different cultures or countries in order to keep the organization competitive (Distefano & Maznevski, 2000).

Multicultural teams bring variety of positive effects in the context of teamwork, nevertheless those teams need to face many challenges. Firstly, considering the members of those teams have different cultural backgrounds, their unique perspectives and useful ideas boost team creativity (Leung & Wang, 2015). Additionally, culturally diverse team operates with a range of different problem-solving skills or decision-making styles (Adler, 2002) which adds another advantage. But those differences in cultural backgrounds can create some of the challenges. Language barrier and differences in communication styles can cause the communication between teammates being ineffective which may lead to misunderstandings. There will be different work styles and expectations which may be another obstacle. Different perceptions of gender roles or stereotyping and prejudice can

be also added to the list of potential problems inside the multicultural teams (Szpilko, Szydło & Samul, 2022).

Even though multicultural teams face some challenges that can affect the overall success of the organization, they became a crucial part of the modern business.

2.4 Culture and its impact on the team

In context of this thesis, culture is a concept that will follow through the whole process of this paper. So far it was used to describe and help understand the basic theory that builds the groundwork for this research. But what is culture?

Culture has been defined in many ways over the years and doesn't hold one definition. Hofstede (2011) described culture as *“collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”*. According to Hofstede (2011), culture is everything that differentiates us from others. He points out that culture is used in different contexts, depending on the group we are talking about. This term is used most commonly with ethnic groups, nations or organizations, but there are less explored culture fields like occupation, gender, generations or social classes.

The GLOBE project defines culture as *“shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations”*. They pointed out that those factors can be analysed in context of societal or organizational culture (House et al., 2004).

For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will be on the organizational culture and its meaning. In easy words, we can understand organizational culture as how the things are done around there, it's the common understanding, values and beliefs shared by everyone inside the organization (Sun, 2008). Every organization will have their own, unique culture which sets them apart from the others and affects some of the areas, for example performance, productivity, job satisfaction, commitment or goals achievement (Knap-Stefaniuk & Domańska-Szaruga, 2023).

Organizational culture plays an important role in the multicultural environments as its core is in the views, beliefs and behaviours of the organization's employees. The leadership plays here an important role in making sure that the culture in the multicultural environment focuses

on shared values rather than the differences and negativity. Organisational culture is a key step to achieve coherence and integrity in the multicultural teams which later helps them facing challenges and builds the relationships (Knap-Stefaniuk & Domańska-Szaruga, 2023).

2.5 Cultural models

In this part of the thesis the main objective is to focus on different cultural models that will explain further the cultural differences and help identify them. This framework will present theoretical knowledge on various models and connect it to the topic of the multicultural teams. Those models will enable more effective analysis of the research results.

2.5.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Born in the Netherlands, Geert Hofstede for years studied the topic of culture and after overcoming many challenges finally in 1980 his concept of dimensions of culture was published. What originally started as 4 dimensions, now appears as 6 dimensions of culture which we can find in *Cultures & Organizations, Software of the mind* by Geert himself, his son and Michael Minkov (Geert Hofstede Biography in Brief Since 1928 Until the Present Day, 2021).

Hofstede's model compares cultures on the national level by putting them on one end of the 6 dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, long-term vs short-term orientation and indulgence vs restraint. Each country positioned on the dimensions get an index score (Hofstede, 2011).

Power distance

This dimension defines how power inequality and hierarchy are perceived. The members of the large power distance societies are living in highly hierarchal countries with autocratic governments, unequal income distribution where the respect comes with age and children are obedient to their parents, and in organizational context, the lower in ranking employee expects clear instructions from their superiors. On the other hand, small power distance societies distribute the income more evenly, choose democratic governments, earn their respect and employee-superior relationship is more of a collaboration (Hofstede, 2011).

Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance express the society's tolerance to the unusual and unknown. Cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance tend to follow strict rules, they find uncertainty as a threat which causes more stress and anxiety, the overall well-being and health is lower. The weak uncertainty avoidance societies are more comfortable with chaos, they are not followers of rules, they are curious of unknown and in general less stressed, at ease and healthier. Members of this culture are more likely to leave their job if unsatisfied when avoidant cultures tend to stay in the workplaces even when they dislike it (Hofstede, 2011).

Individualism vs collectivism

On the opposite sides of this dimension we have Individualism and Collectivism which indicates if society is strongly integrated into groups. In individualistic societies everyone takes care of themselves and their closest ones, privacy is right, people are expected to have their own opinions and speak their minds. Collectivistic cultures focus on "we" mentality- people are integrated into groups, usually extended family, where they are taken care of for a price of loyalty. In this cultures harmony is important and there is certain pressure for belonging (Hofstede, 2011).

Masculinity vs femininity

This dimension visualizes how the values are distributed between the genders in specific cultures. When men's values are described are competitive and assertive, women's values are modest and caring side. Feminine cultures mindset is that both men and women should be modest and caring, there is work-life balance, both parents are dealing with facts and feelings and both boys and girls are allowed to cry. In those cultures mothers decide of the family size, women are elected for political positions and there is visible sympathy for the weak. In masculine cultures the differences are evident- men should be assertive and women can too. Work takes priority over the family, fathers deal with facts and mothers with feelings. It's also fathers decision about the number of children. The strength is admired, boys shouldn't cry but fight when girls are allowed to cry but not fight. There is less amount of women in political positions in those societies (Hofstede, 2011).

Long-term vs short-term orientation

On one side of this dimension we have long-term orientation cultures that are looking forward to the future, they believe that traditions are flexible and depend on the circumstances and they are trying to learn from other countries. The mentality of this culture lays in adaptability. On the other end we have short-term orientation cultures that respect their traditions and celebrate the past and present. There usually is a need for guidelines that everyone follows. Those cultures are proud of their country. Short-term orientation societies tend to lean towards social spending and consumption when long-term orientation cultures invest in the future (Hofstede, 2011).

Indulgence vs restraint

Added in 2010, the last dimension focuses on aspects that explore the way of living. Indulgence represents cultures that let themselves dive into human desires, the leisure is important as well as freedom of speech. There are more people involved in sports activities, the focus is mostly on positive emotions and the society's members are more likely to state their happiness. As opposed, restraint is visible in cultures that follow certain social norms, with leisure and freedom of speech being of lower importance. Involvement in sports in those cultures is lower and positive emotions are less likely to be remembered. Members of this cultures tend to be less happy (Hofstede, 2011).

All of the six dimensions are scored from 0-100 which puts the culture on certain part of dimension. There are existing tools that allow to explore and compare cultures and their position on Hofstede's dimensions. One of the websites (<https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool>) features the Country Comparison tool which gives an insight on the scores, compares the countries as well as gives overview of each dimension as presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Country Comparison Tool



Even though Hofstede's dimensions focus on cultures from national point of view, this framework can play crucial role in the forming of the organizational culture. Since the culture of the organization is affected by all the individuals shaping it and their cultural identities there is a higher risk of conflicts when different cultures interact. The organizational culture can be similar or completely different than ones national culture, which in the end plays important part in the success of failure of the organization (Dartey-Baah, 2013).

Hofstede's dimensions provide the knowledge about existing multicultural differences in the workplace and are the key factor to maximizing the potential of organization by bringing awareness and understanding to those variations in values, beliefs and behaviours of the individuals (Adeshola et al., 2022).

To sum up, this concept presents 6 dimensions of culture from a national level, each representing the characteristics on opposite ends of the dimension. This overview showcases the differences between cultures and helps with understanding the existence of them which is crucial to form integrated organizational culture in multinational environments (Adeshola et al., 2022). The awareness of cultural differences from national point of view is essential in context of organizational culture, specifically with existing multicultural teams,

where every individual makes an impact on said culture of the organization. The understanding of individual's values, beliefs and behaviours can help with building solid organizational culture which will minimize the conflicts and problems as well as lead the organization towards success (Dartey-Baah, 2013).

2.5.2 Trompenaars' cultural model

In 1993, Fons Trompenaars presented the 7 dimensions of culture which he found crucial in context of cultural diversity in business. Five dimensions related to the relationship between people (universalism vs particularism, individualism vs collectivism, neutral vs emotional, specific vs diffuse, achievement vs ascription) and other two are orientation in time and attitudes toward environment (Hofstede, 1996).

Universalism vs particularism

This dimension relates to the fight between the rules and relationships. Universalistic cultures generally lean towards social norms dictated by the laws, rules, values and obligations and that always comes before relationships. On the other hand, in the particularist cultures the relationships come first and behaviours are motivated by commitment towards the closest ones (Bălan & Vreja, 2013).

Individualism vs collectivism

Similarly to Hofstede's dimensions, this describes if the culture are integrated in groups or focusing on individuals. Individualistic cultures prioritize the freedom and individual decision-making, everyone is expected to take care of themselves. They are meant to learn from their mistakes and individual performance is rewarded. Collectivistic cultures believe that the group is more important than individual as it is giving the sense of protection and safety. The sense of belonging is more important than freedom. In organization the decisions are made collectively as a group and the group performance is rewarded (Bălan & Vreja, 2013).

Neutral vs emotional

This represents to which extend the cultures express the emotions. Neutral cultures believe that their emotions should be always under control and others should never know what they feel. Their actions are supposed to be reasonable and feelings shouldn't influence the

professional relations. As opposed, emotional cultures navigate their life with freedom to express their feelings and their decisions are somehow affected by them. They use emotions in communication and their body language is prominent (Bălan & Vreja, 2013).

Specific vs diffuse

Specific oriented cultures tend to separate their private lives from the professional. The relations between people need to be clearly defined and they can be successfully remained in professional work without crossing the personal boundaries. On the other hand, diffusely oriented cultures are crossing the barriers of professional and personal as they believe that good and close relationships with partners are the key to organization's success (Bălan & Vreja, 2013).

Achievement vs ascription

Achievement-oriented cultures perceive people's worth based on their achievements and performance rather than social or professional status. There is recognition for accomplishments that are valued and rewarded. In those societies your worth needs to be proven with your actions. In ascription cultures you are born with the status and it doesn't depend on your achievements but more on who you are. In those societies titles play important role and are commonly used as a form of respect (Bălan & Vreja, 2013).

Orientation in time

In other words this dimension is called sequential time vs synchronous time orientation and it relates to the ways of managing and understanding time by societies. Sequential time cultures have a clear understanding of past, present and future where each of them has assigned different priority. They value order and punctuality and respect the schedule and planning. In synchronous time cultures past, present and future don't have assigned priority as they believe time can be flexible and plans and commitments can be flexible too (Bălan & Vreja, 2013).

Attitudes towards environment

This dimension also called internal direction vs outer direction explains what relation people have towards the environment. In internal directed cultures the belief is that nature can be controlled and humans have right to do it. In organizational context, it also relates to the

way people collaborate within organization and often means that they treat nature receives the same treatment as people them. In outer directed cultures it is believed that there should be harmony kept between nature and mankind. They are adaptable to different circumstances in order to achieve success. In workplace environment, they keep their focus on others and avoid conflicts (Bălan & Vreja, 2013).

2.5.3 High and low-context communication

Another framework that can be connected to the topic of multicultural teams is Hall's high and low-context communication. As effective communication plays crucial role in the success of organization and any misunderstandings are negatively effecting the productivity and overall performance, Edward T. Hall came up with the concept which focused solely on the culture from the communication point of view as he believed that communication cannot be separated from the culture (Kittler et al., 2011).

The concept refers to the way people create meaning by combining the context and received information. Hall believed that the level of context directly influences communication and sets the ground for the behaviours (Kittler et al., 2011).

Hall's model explains how high-context cultures don't rely strictly on content of the message, but the context of received information and create the meaning basing on those non-verbal elements. The communication in those cultures often is indirect and there is a need for background information. Members of those societies usually require some amount of knowledge of specific culture to integrate in the community. They are not expressing their emotions which often needs to be read through the non-verbal cues. They are relationship-oriented cultures (Zakaria, 2016).

Low-context cultures focus solely on the content of the information, explicit words and context plays secondary role. The communication is direct and people tend to go straight to the point. Every interaction is full of explicit and clear messages. In those societies, culture is not crucial in shaping individual identity and they can function well with a little knowledge of a culture. They are true to themselves and openly express their thoughts and feelings. Those are task-oriented cultures (Zakaria, 2016).

Communication is essential in organizational culture as it enables team members to interact. Effective communication requires information presented in accessible way while catching the attention of the recipient. It allows things to flow smoothly within the

organization (Bucăța & Rizescu, 2017). Hall's concept provides the guidelines to understanding the communication differences between cultures and can be great tool in organizational context where communication plays such a crucial role (Zakaria, 2016).

2.5.4 GLOBE (the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness)

In mid-1990's, there was a study conducted for the Project Globe. Its purpose was to grasp the topic of cross-cultural interactions and explore it. The results explored the effects of culture on leadership, organizational effectiveness and more. This study was aimed to follow into Hofstede's footsteps and develop further the topic of culture, as well as other matters related to leadership (Shi & Wang, 2011).

The final result was development of nine dimensions: Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Performance Orientation and Humane Orientation (Shi & Wang, 2011). Table 1. presents short overview of each dimension.

Table 1. The GLOBE nine dimensions (House et al., 2004)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Uncertainty avoidance | Similarly to Hofstede's dimensions, this one relates to the way people view the unknown and new. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures there is set of rules, social norms and behaviours that are aimed to decrease the risk of unplanned situations which could potentially negatively affect the success of society or organization. |
| Power distance | This dimension explains to which extend society/organization agree to the unequal distribution of power. |
| Institutional collectivism | Collectivism I expresses if people are encouraged to by institutions to integrate and live in harmony in society. |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| In-group collectivism | Collectivism II relates to loyalty and pride of towards the organization or society. |
| Gender Egalitarianism | It summarizes to which extent organization/society closes the gaps between genders roles and promotes gender equality. |
| Assertiveness | How confrontational, assertive and aggressive people are in social relations of organization/society. |
| Future orientation | This one explains to which degree members of the society take part in planning, investment in the future and other future-oriented behaviours. |
| Performance orientation | Performance orientation describes to what point society/organization rewards and motivate the members' performance, improvement and success. |
| Humane orientation | This expresses to which extent the kindness, caring, friendliness and more are encouraged by the individuals in the organization/society. |

Additionally to those dimensions, the GLOBE project decided to explore the topic of the effective leadership and what characteristics enhance it and find a connection between them and cultural behaviours. In the end they identified 6 global leadership behaviours which are briefly presented below (House et al., 2004).

Table 2. The GLOBE six global leadership behaviours (House et al., 2004).

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership | This type of leadership is based on strong values that create the engine that motivates and inspire which results on good results. The style includes six subscales that are: visionary, inspirational, self-sacrifice, integrity, decisive, performance-oriented. |
| Team-Oriented Leadership | In this leadership style there is a collective purpose created in team and it's focused on effective team building. The subscales for this leadership: collaborative team orientation, team integrator, diplomatic, malevolent (reverse score) and administratively competent. |
| Participative Leadership | This dimension reflect on how leadership involves the members in decision-making. There are two subscales: nonparticipative and autocratic both scored in reverse. |
| Humane-Oriented Leadership | This leadership characterize with support and generosity, consideration and compassion. The two subscales are: modesty and humane-orientation. |
| Autonomous Leadership | Autonomous Leadership is measured by one subscale that represents attributes like individualistic, independence, autonomous and unique. |
| Self-protective Leadership | This dimension characterizes by protecting the well-being of the members and the group by enriching the status and saving the reputation. There are five subscales called: self-centered, status conscious, conflict inducer, face saver and procedural. |

The GLOBE provides interactive tools that can be found on their website (<https://globeproject.com/results/countries/POL%3Fmenu=list.html#list>) that presents the findings of the study in visual way. They give visual overview from both cultural and leadership point of view as presented in the Figure 3 and 4.

Figure 3. The GLOBE's Cultural Dimensions

Culture Visualization

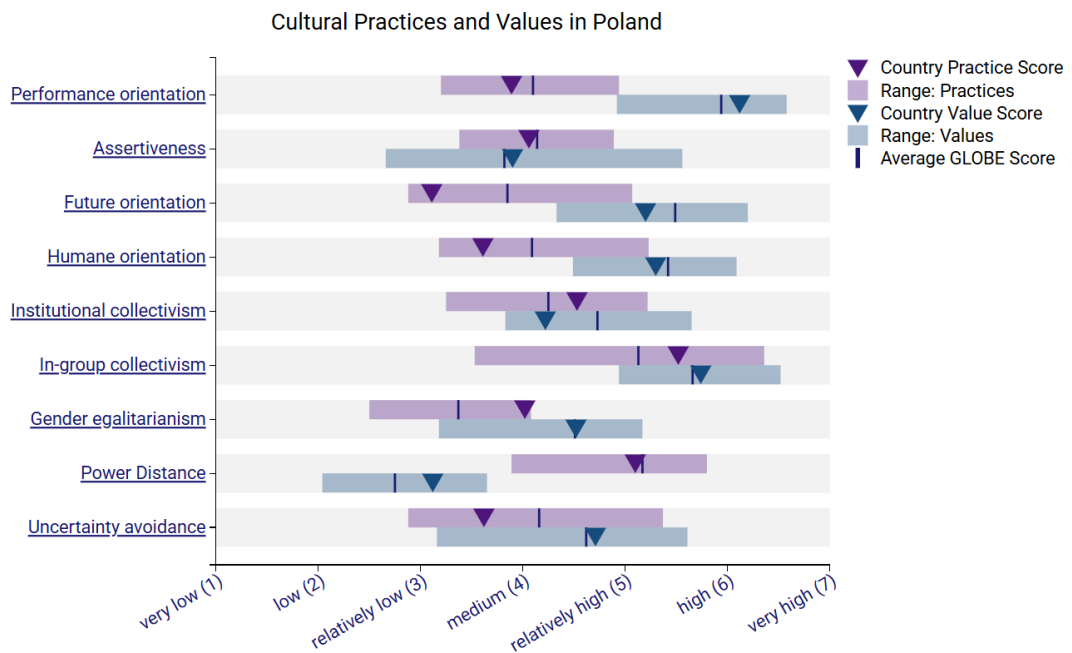
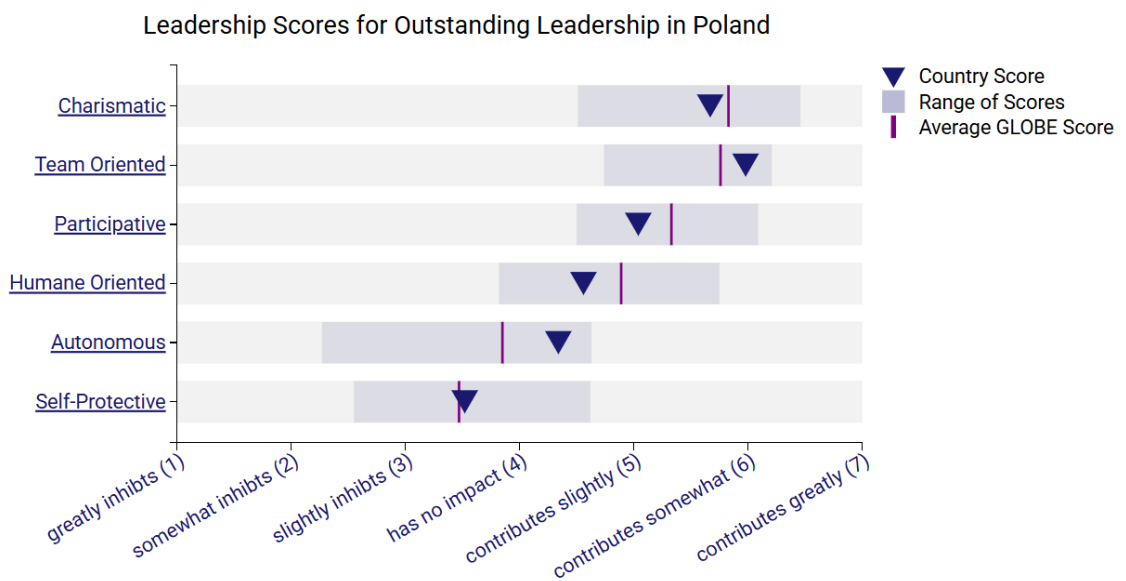


Figure 4. The GLOBE's Leadership dimensions

Leadership Visualization



The GLOBE framework presents the cultural differences from the national and organizational point of view which gives more universal tone in context of leadership. They used the collected research and created models of leadership which are showcasing the characteristics that impact the effectiveness of leadership. Those models paint a clear picture of the importance of culture in organization and leadership and how it affects it (House et al., 2004).

2.6 Leadership strategies

This part of the thesis will explore various leadership strategies that can be implemented in multicultural teams. The overview of those strategies gives an understanding on the already explored topics of cross-cultural leadership and will be useful while analysing the later findings of the research.

2.6.1 Cross-cultural leadership

Knowledge about the culture and cross-cultural competences are viewed as advantage in the 21st century. In 2015, Sohn identified five characteristics of cross-cultural leader that will be briefly explained below (Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018).

Cultural sensitivity

In order to create productive environment leader needs to respect and understand the cultural differences of the members of the team, whether they touch the national, religious or geographical level. Leader accepts those differences and respects the culture of the employee (Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018).

Knowledgeable about other cultures

It is important for leader to understand the cultural background of the members of them in order to maximize their potential. Understanding them will allow the leader to effectively run the team and enhance the performance (Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018).

Open minded

Open minded leader is flexible towards people and their cultures which allows them to learn from each other and understand their behaviours and actions better. This characteristic is crucial in order to develop and maintain international relationships and it also boosts the creativity and problem-solving in the organization (Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018).

This framework describes the characteristics of the leader in cross-cultural environment which are solid guideline towards effective leadership in multicultural teams. By following those three characteristics and implementing it into the real life, leader can maximize the performance of the team and lead them towards success (Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018).

2.6.2 Effective communication

Byram (2020) described and established model for Intercultural Communicative Competence. He identified dimensions of this competence: attitudes, skills, knowledge.

Attitudes

In order to successfully communicate, individuals need to showcase specific attitudes like openness and curiosity, lack of judgment and respects towards others values and beliefs. There should be a place for reconsideration of own values and beliefs in order to understand each other's point of view (Byram, 2020).

Knowledge

This dimension is split into two categories: firstly cultural knowledge which relates to the knowledge of your own culture and the culture of the one you are engaging with, and second- interaction process knowledge that focuses on understanding the processes of communication, social norms how to properly interact. The cultural knowledge is usually always present the second requires learning. Effective communication needs both types of knowledge to be integrated (Byram, 2020).

Skills

This dimension relates to how we apply the acquired knowledge through interpretation and discovering (Byram, 2020).

Acquiring those dimensions and implementing them will help reaching the intercultural communicative competence which leads to more effective communication. As communication plays crucial role, especially in the multicultural environment, it is a great model to dive into in the context of leadership (Byram, 2020).

2.6.3 Conflict management

As previously mentioned, in multicultural teams conflicts can arise and very often it is caused by the cultural differences among the team members. There could be also differences in the ways of managing conflicts by the individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, conflict management plays an important role on the team's performance (Tabassi et al., 2019).

To grasp the understanding of conflict management we need to explore the meaning of conflict. Conflict emerges when the differences in values, beliefs or behaviours cause disagreement among the individuals or a group. Jehn's studies show that there are two types of conflicts: task and relationship conflicts. Task conflicts are work related and they emerge when there is disagreement related to interpretation, distribution of resources, procedures or policies. Those conflicts can actually improve the performance of the team as different solutions and perspectives help with critical thinking and better decision-making. Relationship conflicts relate to the more individual aspects like different communication styles, political views, values and as opposed to task conflicts, they cause more harm. It shifts the focus away from work and members of the team lose their time energy on those unrelated to work issues (Du Plessis, 2012).

In the context of multicultural teams we will be focusing on the transcultural conflicts. Those conflicts emerge when members of different cultures communicate and can be constructive or destructive. This means that conflict, if managed well, can have positive effects on relationships. On the other hand, if conflict is handled poorly it causes destruction among the team (Du Plessis, 2012).

According to Du Plessis (2012), in order to effectively manage those conflicts in multicultural environment it is important to understand three aspects:

1. Culture exist on multiple levels (personal, national, organizational, group) and each individual possesses their own complex cultural identity which form their values, behaviours, preferences etc.
2. There can be multiple causes of conflict and it is crucial to acknowledge them all in order to manage conflicts
3. Organizational context (Du Plessis, 2012)

Pondy's view on conflict management involved identification of the source of conflict, finding and implementing suitable techniques to resolve the disagreements and enriching the organizations with unique solutions for conflict management (Du Plessis, 2012).

There are four steps that leaders should use a guideline while managing the conflicts in cross-cultural context:

1. Teamwork is crucial and clear rules, roles and objectives should be stated in the team contract. It is important to clarify and avoid any misunderstanding related to the processes to ensure collective agreement and understanding.
2. Maximize the potential by assigning the job to suitable team member. Make sure the skills and knowledge match the assigned task and give necessary support if needed.
3. Build environment based on respect and trust with open communication. Develop cultural intelligence among the team and recognize the team progress.
4. Maintain constant conversation and feedback in order to keep improving. Success of the team relies on the development and shared responsibility among the team (Du Plessis, 2012).

Conflict management in the context of multicultural teams proves to be important as those teams face cultural challenges every day. It is crucial for leaders of those teams to be able to manage those conflicts in effective way in order to achieve the best performance and reach the team's goals (Du Plessis, 2012). Following the theories mentioned above can help in building a strong leadership.

3 Methodology

In search of answers to the previously stated research questions, this part of the thesis will explore the carefully chosen research methods and content of the research. The following part will connect the theoretical part of the study to the practical aspects.

3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research studies people's experiences and how they live their lives in specific context with methods that focus on respecting and understanding those perspectives. This type of research uses interviews, surveys or observations as methods to find the answers (Lincoln, 2021). Qualitative research presents the point of view of the participants and discovers better understanding of the patterns, processes and themes (Flick et al., 2005). According to Flick et al. (2005) the qualitative research aims to find the deeper meaning behind the participants experiences.

As the aim of the research is to find common themes and patterns in leadership of multicultural teams in global companies which will help answer the research questions, the qualitative research method seems to be the most suitable for this thesis. With the qualitative questionnaire the gathered data will be analysed in search of patterns and themes, which will allow better understanding of the participants experiences and finding similarities between them. The aim of this thesis is to study the experiences of participants (leaders of multicultural teams) and examine their perspectives and opinions, which is what qualitative research is used for (Lincoln, 2021).

3.1.1 Data collection and analysis

In order to collect and organize data in the most sufficient way, the qualitative questionnaire contained of relevant topics based on previously conducted literature review and theoretical framework which were split in parts to create structured and easy to navigate survey. Each part consisted of multiple questions related to the topic which helped with analysis of the qualitative data in structured and organized way. The questionnaire focused on exploring the experiences and opinions of employees of EF Malta that lead the multicultural teams in the company and finding common challenges and solutions.

Each participant received the same set of questions in order to achieve identical implementation. Every participant was informed beforehand about the confidentiality and anonymity of the survey. Data was collected in digital form for easy access and most efficient analysis of the results.

3.2 Questionnaire

In this part of the thesis the questionnaire is further explained. Each participant is an employee of commission company and has experience with leading multicultural teams which is the main criteria for the conducted survey. Table below showcases the participants overview.

Table 3. Overview of questionnaire participants

| Participant | Nationality | Position | How long working for EF Malta? | Years of experience with multicultural teams. |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Participant 1 | French | Operations Manager | 13 months | 2 years |
| Participant 2 | Argentinian | Homestay Manager | 4 years | 9 years |
| Participant 3 | Maltese | Host Family Manager | 6 years | 2 years |
| Participant 4 | Italian | Activities Manager | 3 years | 8 years |
| Participant 5 | Brazilian | Students Services Coordinator | 6 years and 4 months | 8 years |
| Participant 6 | Maltese | Activities Manager | 6 years | 4 years |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|--|--|-------------|
| Participant 7 | Venezuelan | Full-time teacher and Academic Manager for summer school | 4 years | Summer 2024 |
| Participant 8 | Brazilian | School Director | 6 years | 15 years |
| Participant 9 | Swiss | Operations Manager | 6 months (Malta) 14 years in general in EF | 14 years |
| Participant 10 | Maltese | Head of Property Management and Facilities | 6+ years | 10+ years |
| Participant 11 | Maltese | Academic Manager | 10 years | 10 years |

3.2.1 Participant selection

To achieve the best results for this research it was important to choose participants that are working specifically in EF Malta and have the experience of leading multicultural teams. In order to explore different experiences and maximize the data collection the questionnaire was distributed to 14 potential participants from which 11 of them participated in the survey.

All participants are employees of EF Malta but hold different positions that give them opportunity to work and lead multicultural teams. The participant group consists of variety of different nationalities with different experiences in leadership of multicultural teams as well as different amount of time working for the company. All of this factors help with gaining a wide range of experiences and opinions on the same topic and find common themes among the group.

3.2.2 Questionnaire analysis

Through collected data the analysis and identification of common themes considering the challenges and solutions for leadership of multicultural teams in global companies was possible. To ensure reliability of the research findings the collected data was carefully reviewed and analysed. The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of multicultural teams' leaders and find common pain points and solutions, and the effects on the global companies.

4 Results

This part of the thesis explores the findings of the qualitative research conducted through structured questionnaire conducted with 11 leaders of multicultural teams in EF Malta. The findings showcase the experiences and opinions of the participants with different backgrounds and professional expertise.

The questionnaire consists of 7 parts, each part focusing on specific area of the multicultural teams and its challenges. The questionnaire starts with demographic information in order to gain the context for the further research. The next parts are focusing on general information, communication, cultural differences, leadership in multicultural teams conflicts and problem-solving as well as experiences and recommendations. Every part consists of multiple questions considering the topic with multiple choice answers and open end questions. This structure allows an easy participant journey through the survey and helps with organized data collection.

4.1 Findings overview

The questionnaire begun with demographic information that consisted of nationality of the participant, their job position, how long were they working in EF Malta and how long was their experience with working with the multicultural teams. The participant group is multinational with nationalities like French, Maltese, Brazilian, Argentinian, Italian, Venezuelan and Swiss. Participants are employees of EF Malta for different amount time- the time range starting at 6 months reaching up to 10 years. Each participant has an experience with leading multicultural team to a different extent, starting from 3 months up to 15 years. This information sets the context for the research and give an overview of the participants.

Second part of the questionnaire focuses on gathering the general information about the occurrence of the challenges while leading multicultural teams, why did they occur and how the participants handled them. All participants have experienced some challenges with leading multicultural teams and they pointed out that the cause of them was mostly due to cultural differences, different communication styles or language barrier. In order to overcome the challenges, participants mention that listening and proper communication are the key to solve those obstacles, alongside with the respect, understanding and putting yourself in each other's shoes. Leaders noticed that challenges mentioned above mostly resulted in stronger bond in a team and better understanding of team members, only few respondents finding negative results like frustration of team members, decreasing engagement or improperly finished tasks. Participants mostly agree that the challenges in multicultural teams are unavoidable but can be minimized. Most of the participants received some training or educated themselves in the topic of multicultural teams and how to lead them, with only 3 participants responding with no.

The next part explored communication and its challenges in multicultural teams. Participants were asked to rate the communication in their multicultural teams and the average response from all participants was "Very good". When asked about the communication barriers they experienced in their teams, the answers pointed to language barriers, misunderstandings and different communication styles. For the question about how often they experience miscommunication because of cultural differences, 6 participants responded that every month, 3 participants responded less than twice a year and 2 participants responded every week. The steps the participants took to overcome those challenges focus on clear and open communication, listening and finding a common ground between team members.

Part four of the questionnaire focuses on challenges strictly connected to cultural differences. Almost all participants experienced challenges while working with people from different cultures. Challenges caused by different communication styles are a common theme along participants. "Some are more direct which sometimes can come across as aggressive, whereas others are more gentle and keep other people's feelings in mind" (Participant 6, 2025). Participants noticed that challenges are very often caused by different interpretation and perception which is due to different communication styles. "A cliché example : Nordic people will tend to be more rigorous than Southern Europeans, having both of them together could clash if we do not communicate well or set the same expectations / KPIs for everyone." (Participant 1, 2025). Another challenges mentioned by respondents are different work approach and priorities. They point out that having two

different cultures with different working styles can cause problems if not communicated clearly. Nevertheless participants find the cultural differences in positive way: "I believe it's a beautiful form of enrichment, we could all learn so much from each other." (Participant 4, 2025). Even though cultural differences might be the cause of some misunderstandings, participants find that with a good communication there is more upsides than downsides of cultural differences in a team. "It (cultural differences) might bring misunderstandings between individual, however teamwork should stand through it." (Participant 2, 2025). The participants group almost unanimously agree that EF Malta provides enough support and training for working in multicultural team, with only two respondents not agreeing with the statement.

In the part five, participants answered questions related to the leadership in multicultural teams. They identified qualities that are important for leaders in multicultural teams. The most important qualities are clear communication, open mind and cultural awareness followed by empathy and adaptability. A common leadership approach mentioned by participants is clear communication and being open minded and willing to listen. "Making sure everyone is heard and understood, and everyone is given a chance to state their opinions and ideas." (Participant 6, 2025). Embracing and accepting cultural diversity by creating an inclusive environment as a leader is another important theme mentioned by respondents. "A wide open mind, kindness and and empathetic approach to understand that at the end of the day we are all different." (Participant 4, 2025). Most participants agree that leaders at EF Malta are well prepared for leading multicultural teams with only two answers stating they are neutral on this topic.

In part six participants reflected on conflicts and problem-solving in the multicultural teams. When asked about how often conflicts arise in their teams, the group split in half between answering "every month" and "less than twice a year". Only one respondent experienced conflicts every week. The reason behind the conflicts is mostly due to different work approaches but also miscommunication, different opinions, and in some cases cultural differences. Participants once again identify clear communication and open conversation as a solution to arising conflicts. "More honest communication. Willingness to listen and adapt." (Participant 7, 2025). Understanding each perspective and point of view is important in order to resolve the conflicts between team members. "Listening both sides and talking to everyone and explain it clearly and openly" (Participant 8, 2025). When asked if there is a need for additional support in resolving conflicts in multicultural teams, participants mostly agreed that team trainings on topics surrounding conflicts can benefit

the team. "Provide training on cultural intelligence to help the team understand different communication styles, values, and work ethics." (Participant 4, 2025).

Last part of the questionnaire discovered that all of the participants feel equipped and supported in case of occurrence of potential challenges. Participants feel that EF Malta manages very well with multicultural teams, mentioning inclusivity of the company, promoting of open communication as well as trainings. "We embrace other cultures, we are curious and we as a company are very mindful about different cultures in general." (Participant 9, 2025). As suggestions for improvement for the company respondents pointed out that constant trainings and keeping open communication are important. "They already do a lot but more training focused specifically on disagreeing or problem solving could be good." (Participant 7, 2025). The average score the participants rated EF in handling multicultural teams dynamics was 8,36/10 which means that respondents think that the company is doing a good job at maintaining a good environment for multicultural teams.

As additional comments one of the respondents left their final thoughts about the multicultural teams. "I think being part of a multicultural environment causes you to have to view things from different perspectives and learn different approaches which at the end of the day makes you a better leader. There will always be challenges as it isn't just culture that makes everyone different, but the more you are exposed to different people, the more you will learn and adapt." (Participant 6, 2025). Another respondent mentioned the trainings provided by the company: "I wanted to add that a lot of trainings are not provided by EF Malta specifically but from the central Team in Zurich / Boston. Most of them are online but not mandatory." (Participant 9, 2025). That arises the questions if the company provides the trainings, should they be mandatory for all leaders and employees?

To sum up, the questionnaire explored the challenges and solutions of individuals working in EF Malta in leading positions. Through their experiences and opinions, the gathered data provides information which is the base of this research. The common themes were discovered giving an overview of shared experiences of leaders in global companies.

5 Analysis

5.1.1 Thematic analysis

This research findings were analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative research that focuses on identifying and extracting reoccurring patterns and themes from the gathered data. It is achieved by reading and rereading the material. Thematic analysis relies on finding a meaning in data (Sovacool, Iskandarova, & Hall, 2023). Thematic analysis characterizes by being flexible which distinguishes it from other methods. It can be used for analysing wide range of data like face-to-face interviews, focus groups, qualitative surveys and more (Terry et al., 2017). Considering the chosen research from of this thesis is qualitative questionnaire, thematic analysis seems to be the best and most efficient method to analyse gathered data as the structured survey contains multiple open-end questions and this method will allow to extract and identify the common themes and patterns.

5.1.2 Identified themes

This part explores the common themes discovered through the questionnaire with the explanation and data to support the findings. This results will give the commissioning company an opportunity to understand the potential obstacles and what solutions and improvements can be made.

1. Communication is the key

In every part of the questionnaire the common solution for any arising challenges was an open communication and discussion. Participants where asked about the challenges from different levels- cultural differences, communication, conflicts and problem solving, and leadership. In each category, the respondents gave solutions that included conversation and communication in order to resolve and overcome any obstacles. For overcoming communication challenges 55% of respondents mentioned open communication, discussion and listening as a solution, for leadership challenges it was 64% of respondents mentioning that solution, and in conflicts category 100% of respondents pointed out those solutions.

2. Cultural differences have positive effects on the team

The respondents find that cultural differences affect the team in positive way and are enriching it by sharing different experiences and opinions. 82% of respondents have experienced the challenges while working with people from different cultures and 44% of them agrees that if handled properly, cultural differences help the team to learn from each other and it has more positive than negative effects.

3. The challenges in multicultural teams cannot be avoided

73% of participants believe that the challenges will always occur to some extent while working with multicultural teams. The differences between team members might create some obstacles along the way and leaders need to be prepared for that. The challenges can be minimized but not fully avoided as it is natural to happen when working with different characters. Creating an inclusive and open environment can help with minimizing the occurrence of those challenges.

4. Trainings are great tool for multicultural environments

Almost every participant, as 91% of them agree that trainings for leadership in multicultural teams can be helpful. Additionally, trainings were a common answer as an additional help in helping resolving conflicts as well as a possible improvement for EF Malta to constantly provide trainings. This highlights the importance of the team trainings for multicultural teams and their leaders and presents potential opportunities to minimize the challenges and maximize the teamwork.

5. EF Malta is successfully managing the multicultural environment

82% of participants stated that EF Malta provides enough support and training for working in multicultural teams, 55% agree and 18% strongly agree that leaders in EF Malta are prepared for managing multicultural teams. All of the participants feel equipped and supported for potential challenges while leading multicultural teams. Additionally, participants mentioned they are already satisfied with how the company handles the multicultural environment and creates inclusive space. The overall average score that participants rated EF Malta in how well they handle multicultural dynamics was 8,36/10 which highlights how the company successfully operates and manages the multicultural environment.

This findings showcase the pain points and solutions for multicultural teams based on experiences of leaders of EF Malta. This overview can help the company understand the challenges and its core and implement appropriate solutions in order to maximize the companies potential.

6 Discussion

This thesis aimed to answer the following question “What are the challenges of leading multicultural teams in global companies and how to best avoid those challenges?” in order to paint a clear picture and provide the commissioning company with relevant information about the multicultural teams. Based on literature review and conducted research, this thesis discovered that multicultural teams come across many challenges like miscommunication, misunderstandings, language barrier or different work approach. The research revealed that the challenges are inevitable but can be minimized by open and clear communication and active listening. The nature of the multicultural teams, where individuals of different backgrounds and cultures meet to achieve mutual goals, puts the team work in a place where conflicts and misunderstandings will happen but if managed well, they can built stronger bond between team members.

The importance of communication was highlighted by the participants on many occasions, as well as the need for constant trainings. Those topics seem to be the crucial steps to creating healthy and efficient multicultural environment that leads to the success of the team.

The questionnaire identified main factors of multicultural teams in global companies based on the Maltese office of an international company EF. Theoretical framework highlighted the most important knowledge found in the literature which supports the final findings of the this research. Both theory and research gave the company foundation for the future decisions.

EF Malta is successful in managing their multicultural environment and research found that their employees in leading positions are satisfied with their work. Nevertheless, creating good multicultural environment is a constant process that needs to be continued and constant trainings of the staff were found to be the most important factor of maintaining the success.

6.1 Limitations of the research

This research focuses strictly on the Maltese office of EF which limits the findings as it doesn't explore other offices. Expanding the research to other offices could bring a better understanding on leadership in multicultural teams and provide better knowledge on the topic.

6.2 Future research

Future research should be conducted built upon the findings of this thesis in order to explore more approaches considering the leadership of multicultural teams.

In the future, more surveys should be conducted with the leaders of multicultural teams in other international offices of EF Malta as it could be beneficial to compare the experiences and opinions of the employees of the same company based in different countries. Gathering this information could help with understanding the differences and similarities between offices and could initiate mutual understanding and learning from each other.

As a step further, the future study could benefit from expanding the research to other industries to examine the approaches of other global companies.

7 Conclusion

This thesis focused on answering the following research question: What are the challenges of leading multicultural teams in global companies and how to avoid them? With the help of important theories considering multiculturalism, multicultural teams, cultural models (Hofstede's dimensions of culture, Trompenaars' cultural model, high vs low context communication, The GLOBE Project), leadership strategies as well as with structured questionnaire conducted with the leaders of multicultural teams in EF Malta, the research established main pain points and solutions of multicultural teams and the leadership in global companies.

The findings highlighted that the challenges occurring in multicultural teams are unavoidable and can only be minimized. The nature of the multicultural environment always brings differences like language barrier, different work approach or communication styles

which are the cause of conflicts and misunderstandings. This being said, the occurrence of challenges is natural but needs to be observed by leaders that should be prepared.

Furthermore in order to reduce the challenges to minimum, the communication among the team and the leader needs to be open and clear. Participants of the research pointed out the importance of the conversation and listening which seems to be the foundation for successful communication. Respondents also mentioned that creating an inclusive environment helps with building a place comfortable for discussion.

Through the analysis of the participants insights it became clear that if managed properly, cultural differences among the team present more upsides than downsides. While having different experiences and opinions and keeping an open mind, individuals learn from each other and acquire new knowledge as well as cultural awareness.

The research also established the importance of team trainings for multicultural teams. Participants mentioned this solution on many occasions highlighting the relevance of proper cultural awareness and conflict resolution as topics that should be explored and educated more in multicultural teams.

Considering the findings of this research, the answer to the research question “What are the challenges of leading multicultural teams in global companies and how to avoid them?” would be that leaders of multicultural teams can come across challenges like miscommunication, misunderstandings, language barrier or different work approaches. Leaders of multicultural teams cannot completely avoid those challenges but with a good approach and open and clear communication, they can minimise those challenges and even turn them into positive, team strengthening tool.

Those findings helped to answer the research questions and create a foundation for future improvements in order to strengthen the multicultural environment of the commissioning company. The results of the research can be the starting point for the company in exploring the nature of multicultural leadership and the previously mentioned theories can be a helpful tool during this process.

Future research could expand on this results by exploring other international offices of EF or even other industries in order to compare the approaches and gain more insights and knowledge on the topic. Additionally, continuing the research to explore the topic of

leadership in multicultural teams can benefit the company with more detailed knowledge and expertise.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire questions

PART I. Demographic Information

What is your nationality?

How long have you been working for EF Malta?

What is your position in EF Malta?

Do you have an experience with managing multicultural teams?

How long is your experience with working in multicultural teams?

PART II. General Information

Did you come across any challenges while leading multicultural teams?

Can you tell what were the challenges?

Do you know why those challenges occur? If yes, please write your answer.

How did you handle those challenges?

What was the result of those occurring challenges?

Do you think the challenges could be avoided? If yes, how?

Have you ever received any training or personally educated yourself on the topic of multicultural teams and how to manage them?

PART III. Communication

How would you rate the communication in your multicultural team? (1-poor, 2-fair, 3-good, 4-very good, 5-excellent)

What are the communication barriers you experienced in the team? (multiple choice answer)

How often do you experience miscommunication due to cultural differences? (1-never, 2-less than twice a year, 3-every month, 4-every week, 5- everyday.

How do you overcome the communication challenges?

PART IV. Cultural differences

Have you ever experienced challenges in working with people from different cultures?

If yes, what were the main problems? In this question focus on challenges relating specifically to cultural differences.

How do cultural differences affect teamwork and productivity in your experience?

Do you think EF Malta provides enough support and training for working in multicultural teams?

PART V. Leadership in Multicultural Teams

What qualities do you think are important for leaders in multicultural teams? (you can choose more than one answer)

Do you think leaders in EF Malta are prepared for managing multicultural teams? (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree)

Have you experienced leadership challenges due to cultural differences? If yes, what were they? In this question focus on the cultural challenges from leadership point of view.

What leadership approach, in your opinion works best for multicultural environment?

PART VI. Conflicts and problem-solving

How often do conflicts arise in your multicultural team?

What are the most common reasons for conflict in multicultural teams? (multiple choice answer)

How do you usually resolve the conflicts?

Do you think that there is a need for additional support in resolving conflicts in multicultural teams? If yes, what support?

PART VII. Experience and recommendations

As a leader of multicultural team, do you feel equipped and supported in case of occurrence of potential challenges?

What do you think EF Malta does well in managing multicultural teams?

Do you think that trainings for leadership in multicultural teams would be helpful?

What improvements would you suggest for better teamwork and leadership in a multicultural environment?

On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think EF Malta handles multicultural team dynamics?

Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix 2. Data Management Plan

For this thesis, the research data was collected through survey answered by the leaders in management positions in EF Malta. The survey was conducted online, through created beforehand Microsoft Forms, and distributed to the target group through the contact person at the company. Additionally, data was collected through personal communication by email with the contact person. All data was collected and stored on the author's personal computer secured by the password to ensure the confidentiality of the information. The data will be stored on the personal computer of the thesis' author protected by the password. The access to data will be granted to the author's or supervisors use. The data will be securely stored for one year in case of need to verifying. After this period of time, data will be deleted.

The target group included the employees of EF Malta in managerial positions that were leading the multicultural teams. The data will be presented and analyzed in text form. The collected personal data includes gender, nationality and job position in order to better analyze the research results.