

Managing Multicultural Teams in The 21st Century

Abstract

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Title of the thesis Managing Multicultural Teams in The 21st Century		
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Abstract The aim of this thesis is to define multiculturalism and multicultural teams, and to identify how to manage multicultural teams in the 21st century. During the last century, globalization has completely changed the way organizations act and think, which has led to more cultural diversity within companies. Therefore, it is important for managers to take culture into consideration when leading their diverse teams. Many cultural researchers such as Hofstede, Trompenaars and Lewis have proven that multiculturalism has both challenges and opportunities for both organizations and managers. In addition, media brings its own challenges and opportunities considering it is the 21st century. For example, many social movements related to diversity have gained more support and attention during the last few years, and organizations want to show that they too are culturally diverse or appropriate. The purpose of the research is to understand what kind of problems as well as positive aspects there are when managing multicultural working environments. The goal is to find out whether managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in the working environment or not, and to provide some practical tips on how to improve. The research methods used were an online questionnaire and an expert interview. The target group of the survey was people who have worked in multicultural environments, and the sample size for this research was 56. The expert interview was conducted with a Finnish program chair and line manager, who has over 30 years of experience in multicultural settings, including experience in managerial positions. The results of the questionnaire and interview were compared and analysed, and some similarities and differences were found. Furthermore, the goal of the research was achieved when the main challenges and obstacles for managers could be identified according to the survey and interview, and some practical tips for managers were given considering the expert interviewee's answers.		
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1 Introduction

In the 21st century cultural diversity has become the new norm for most companies and their teams. As the world globalizes, the businesses and economies change, and society challenges the leaders, diversity has become something that can appear as a competitive advantage if the challenges that it might bring are tackled by managing the teams right. For this reason, intercultural competence is essential not only for the managers but also for the employees. To define, intercultural competence refers to the ability to maintain the effectiveness of communication despite the cultural differences. Managing culturally diverse teams effectively requires certain characteristics, skills and knowledge that can be learned and to achieve the most efficient results from the teamwork, certain models and theories are helpful to be considered as a guide. (Lane & Maznevski 2014, 1-5.)

For these reasons, the topic of managing multicultural teams in today's business environment is essential for managers and employees and surely affects anyone working in a bigger company or otherwise multicultural environment. The reason we found this topic worth researching is not only the fact that it is the new norm and diversity in workforce is growing all the time but also our own experiences in multicultural work environments. We believe that as international business students this is a topic that will be a substantial part of our work experience and important aspect to have a deeper knowledge about.

The chosen research question is *how do managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments*. The aim of the research is to understand what kind of problems and positive aspects today's leaders face when managing multicultural working environments. To add, the purpose is to not only analyse the experiences of people who have worked in multicultural environments, but also to find out how managers view the topic. The managers will be represented by one manager in an expert interview. The reason behind choosing an expert interview is to gain some valuable insights on the research topic as well as practical tips on how managers can succeed better. Including opinions from both the managers as well as the employees is crucial when it comes to the reliability of the research.

1.1 Purpose and objective

The objective for this thesis is to point out the importance of acknowledging and understanding the effect of what diversity brings to the company and its management. Especially during the times of political instabilities and increased attention of injustices and human rights movements, it is important to know and be aware of these issues. This will involve doing a research that consists of examining research questions on respondents who are

or have been employed in a multicultural work environment with regards to their experiences and attitudes towards these culturally diverse environments. We will analyse different models that are created to describe cultural differences and reflect these theories to our own research about the topic.

When it comes to delimitation of this research, diversity itself is a broad concept that includes differences among individuals such as ethnicity, race, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and other factors depending on how it is defined. Due to the broad and differing concept of diversity we decided to only focus on cultural diversity and the ways it affects the team and its management.

2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will focus on the cultural theories considered to be the most suitable for the topic of this thesis, such as Hofstede's and Trompenaars' cultural dimensions. Furthermore, the key concepts regarding multiculturalism, management and culture in general will be explained to ensure the comprehensibility of the whole theoretical part as well as the research part. The aim of the theoretical framework is to support the empirical research and to familiarize the reader with the key concepts revolving around the thesis topic.

2.1 Definition of culture

When it comes to culture, trying to find one simple definition that everyone is satisfied with can be difficult. Throughout centuries, culture has been defined in multiple different ways, and even today the definition is being fought over. Thus, the word itself has gained multiple new meanings throughout centuries starting from Middle Ages, when the word's meaning was related to agriculture. It was not until the period of industrial revolution that books, music, paintings and such were considered a part of culture. Finally, in the late nineteenth century culture was defined as distinctive customs, achievements and the way of life of a society or a group. (Highmore 2015. 7-42.)

According to Edward Burnett Tylor (1871, 21-48.), culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. This definition supports multiple other ones that define culture as a way of life. However, when searching for the word culture in a dictionary, multiple different definitions can be found. Nevertheless, the definition given by Tylor explains the concept of culture rather well, especially when it comes to managing multicultural teams.

Culture can also be defined as a form of cultivation for the mind and citizen. In this definition, parts and practices of culture are often chosen by elite, such as tastemakers or gallery owners. To continue, some people find culture as the study of perfection. For example, many people might find that Mozart is more part of a culture than today's musicians, even though they are both part of a culture. (Highmore 2015, 7-42.)

2.1.1 Geert Hofstede dimensions of culture

Professor Geert Hofstede was a Dutch social psychologist who conducted a comprehensive study of the influence of culture to the values in the workplace. This model has been

widely discussed in international management literature and used worldwide in research and practise. Due to the fact that culture as a word itself has many different definitions which depends on how one perceives it, it is important to mention how it is defined by Professor Geert Hofstede. According to him culture is defined as “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others”. The Hofstede’s model consists of six different dimensions which each measures a different aspect on how national culture distinguishes countries from one another. (Hofstede Insights 2020.)

The aspects that occur in some form in all enterprises’ management processes are planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling, yet they might differ depending on the environment. The reason why Hofstede’s model is appealing to leaders, is because cultural values that are seen to be typical for a certain society might influence the choices made regarding the management process to make it as efficient as possible. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

Power distance (PDI)

The first dimension to mention is the power distance index. This dimension describes the intensity of inequality in a society experienced by the less powerful members. This means that when the power distance index in a society is high, people accept a hierarchical order where everyone has a place without further justification. Countries that have a high score on PDI are for instance, Malaysia, Mexico, China, Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, societies with low power distance index people believe in equality and that the power needs to be decentralized. Some of the countries to mention that acquire the lowest scores in PDI, meaning the hierarchies are less visible, are the Nordic countries, Israel, Austria, New Zealand and UK. (Hofstede Insights 2020.)

From the management point of view in high PDI cultures the decision making is done at the top. It is not expected that employees working at the lower level give input neither on planning nor making decisions, yet they might not even be informed on company plans or strategies. The people in positions of power are highly respected and they assign work to subordinates, who are expected to carry out tasks as instructed without further questioning. Where PDI is low, input to the planning process is expected from everyone regardless of the organizational level they work in. In these work environments it is more likely that the company’s long-term plans are shared among the employees. In addition, it is expected that individuals completing a particular task are able to make routine decisions necessary and refer to superiors only when unusual circumstances arise. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

Individualism versus collectivism (IDV)

The second dimension in Hofstede's model is individualism versus collectivism. This dimension describes how cultures can be divided by the factor of how the relationship between individuals in a group can be understood in two different ways. In individualistic cultures people act more on their own, making their own choices and then interacting with their team. The highest score on individualism on Hofstede's model is for United States, where this can be seen very clearly. Whereas in collectivistic cultures such as in China and South Korea the team is seen to be the more important element and individuals are part of it as members bringing their ideas in. (Hofstede Insights 2020.)

In highly individualistic societies, individual input is expected from employees who acquire a specific expertise or knowledge on a certain topic. In these types of cultures, it is possible that some disagreements occur on certain decisions but will then be affected by what the majority agree upon, unless the decision comes from a person in a position of power. Individuals are commonly given a responsibility for accomplishing a certain goal and it is expected that they will make necessary decisions to achieve this goal. In societies where collectivism is high, input is expected from all organisational members. The decisions are made collectively in a way that even the overall direction of the company is discussed throughout the variety levels. Decisions are made by the group as well as the assignments and tasks are carried as a team. In this environment the idea of bottom-up decision making is commonly used which includes the group involvement and consensus among members. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

Masculinity versus femininity (MAS)

Next dimension in this model is masculinity versus femininity. Societies with high score in masculinity are seen to be driven by competition and success is appreciated. These societies are about strength and dominance where values can be seen to increase from aspects like money, competition and power. Countries that rank highest on masculinity in Hofstede's model are Japan, Hungary and Austria. The opposite to masculine societies is seen to be feminine. When a culture is seen to be feminine, like the Nordic countries, people appreciate aspects like quality of life, taking care of more unfortunate, modesty and co-operation. In feminine cultures people appreciate free time and flexibility whereas masculine cultures work is more important as well as material things. (Hofstede Insights 2020.)

From the managerial point of view in societies that are masculine the strategic plans commonly emphasize measurable, specific advances such as profitability or increases in market share, where the results can be clearly observed and analysed. The decisions regarding strategies are made at the top level. In masculine countries gender roles are divided and certain tasks are seen to be more suitable for one specific gender. The responsibilities are given to people who are expected to achieve most efficient results. Whereas in feminine cultures the company's strategies often involve aspects such as environment, the quality of working life and the concern of less fortunate. In these cultures, gender does not play a role in the assigning of work but rather the abilities and preferences of a person. The values which are seen to be important in masculine societies are as important as the above-mentioned feminine values. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI)

One aspect of a culture affecting the values that are held in a work environment is how people in a certain culture react to uncertainty and ambiguity. This dimension is called uncertainty avoidance index. It measures the degree on how in a certain culture the society adapts with the factor that the future cannot be known. Cultures that have a low score on uncertainty avoidance such as China for instance, are more comfortable with ambiguity, they are more adaptable and entrepreneurial. On the contrary, countries with high score on uncertainty avoidance, like western countries, have higher performance on avoiding uncertainty. Some examples mentioned in Hofstede's model for this are that these cultures have an emotional need for rules, they tend to keep themselves busy and security is seemed to be an important element. (Hofstede Insights 2020.)

In societies where UAI is high strategic planning is long-term and decisions are reached slowly. It is common that expert's advice is highly used in planning and it is a very detailed and complex process which then provides security about the future and the decisions made. In this environment planning and decision making can be done by a group which shares the responsibility or on the contrary have only one person in top level who will take the responsibility so experiencing high level of uncertainty can be avoided. Cultures with a low UAI organizations are more likely to change their direction quickly since the planning is rather short-term and flexible. In addition, risk taking is encouraged, individual decision making is more acceptable and strategic decisions may be affected by personal preferences. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

Long term orientation versus short term normative orientation (LTO)

In this dimension called long term orientation versus short term orientation, Hofstede describes cultures scoring a high score in long term orientation to focus more on the future.

This means that people are willing to make short-term sacrifices for a greater good for the future. In business context this is called a pragmatic approach. On the contrary, societies that score low on this dimension, also called normative, are more focused achieving quick results and immediate gratification. (Hofstede Insights 2020.)

When a society is long term orientated, the management commonly takes a long-term view on the organization's activities and it will be more important than short-term results. It can be seen from the team goals and objectives how strategic plans carry a long time in the future. On the contrary, in short-term oriented societies companies view future inevitably uncertain, hence the managers are more concerned with immediate results and opportunities. For this reason, the management's focus will be in annual and quarterly performance. A project management approach is often preferred or seen as a positive way to operate. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

Indulgence versus restraint (IVR)

The last dimension on Hofstede's value survey model is called indulgence versus restraint. In this dimension societies are divided based on how society allows individuals experience life in terms of enjoyment and controlling their emotions and impulses. In cultures that are seen to be indulgent, the society has rather low control on these aspects and have a free gratification. Whereas in cultures that are more restraint, the society is very strict of social norms and the gratification is more suppressed. (Hofstede Insights 2020.)

When it comes to societies with high indulgence score the work environment is rather relaxed than acquiring strict policies whether it is about dress codes, working hours or general behaviour of the management or employees. It is common for employees and management to socialize at the workplace as well as outside of it which in low indulgence cultures may be seen inappropriate. It is also more likely for people taking on tasks that are more appealing or amusing. The difference in low indulgent societies and their workplaces is that it is clearly known what is acceptable and what is not. Where indulgence is low everyone is expected to be very formal and there may be even sanctions for deviations. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

The figure below illustrates all six different dimensions together that Hofstede has identified and were what described in these chapters above regarding cultural dimensions.

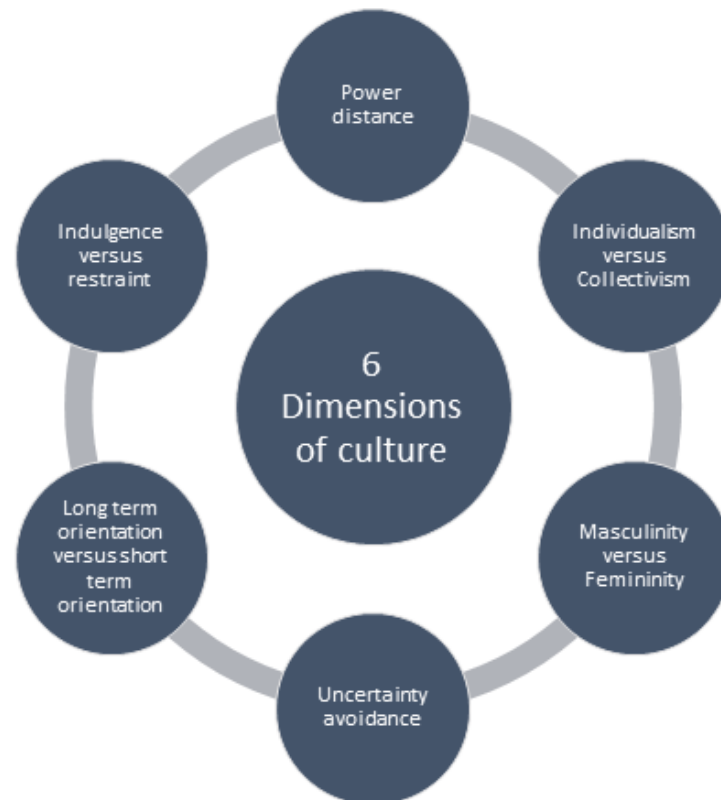


Figure 1. 6 dimensions of culture (Hofstede Insights 2020)

Limitations of the value survey model

Despite of the fact that Hofstede's model has been expanded later on by additional research done, it is important to take into a consideration that the original research was based on a U.S. multinational company. These companies attract certain types of individuals which then were reflected on the results. By these means the results should not necessarily be portrayed as an accurate description of national culture as whole but rather as similarities and differences among employees of an organization that might not occur in the same type of environment but in a different country. To add, it is also essential to recognise that different work environments affect these results depending on the field it is examined and are people working in close coordination or not. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

Country clusters

It can be useful for international managers to analyse different country clusters created by Ronen and Shenkar (1985) who have carried out one of the most extensive studies on this topic. This resulted in different country clusters where the countries included in a certain cluster share similar values. For this reason, it can be helpful for the managers to understand which cultural adaptation is required. These clusters that are also included in a figure below, include Anglo, Germanic, Latin European, Nordic, Latin American, Near

Eastern, Far Eastern, Arab and some independently mentioned countries that were not included in any of the clusters. This means that managers who are interacting with colleagues from different countries yet still inside the same cluster requires less adaptation than from one another cluster. To mention an example, Canadians and Australians who belong to Anglo cultures are less likely to encounter as much cultural adaptation than a Mexican belonging to Latin American cluster going to Saudi Arabia. (Punnett 2019, 197-222.)

The picture below shows the 8 different country clusters and different countries that belong to each one. In addition, there are mentioned the independent countries that are not defined to belonging to any specific cluster but are rather independent culturally.

Cluster 1—Anglo	Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States
Cluster 2—Germanic	Austria, Germany, Switzerland
Cluster 3—Latin European	Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain
Cluster 4—Nordic	Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden
Cluster 5—Latin American	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela
Cluster 6—Near Eastern	Greece, Iran, Turkey
Cluster 7—Far Eastern	Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Vietnam, Taiwan
Cluster 8—Arab	Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates
Independent (not closely related to the other countries)	Japan, India, Israel

Figure 2. Country clusters (Punnett 2019)

2.1.2 Fons Trompenaars' dimensions of culture

In 1997, management consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner created a model, which consists of seven cultural dimensions. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner found out that people from different cultures do not differ from one another in random, but rather in specific ways. The seven dimensions are still used globally to this day in order to help managers recognize cultural differences and lead teams according to them. The first five dimensions consist of how people relate to other people, while the last two dimensions consider how people acknowledge time and relate to nature. (Trompenaars 1998.)

Universalism versus particularism

This dimension defines how people judge each other's behaviour. Cultures with high universalism find rules, values and standards very important. To add, these cultures tend to believe in equality, which means that everyone considered to be under the rule should be treated the same. For example, Finland has a rather universalist culture, which is why employees working in same positions receive almost identical salaries even if they have different origins. To continue, if anyone crosses the street when the light is red even if there are cars nowhere near, they will get looks of judgement. Making exceptions in universalistic cultures is often avoided since it might weaken the rules and eventually lead to a collapse of the system. (Trompenaars 1998, 28-49.)

On the contrary, in cultures with high particularism people believe that circumstances determine situations rather than rules. Close relationships are particularly important, and people aim to protect their loved ones despite of what the rules say. In addition, status is quite important in particularist cultures and therefore salary can often be higher or lower depending on one's reputation and background. Some countries that have high particularism include Russia, Latin-America and China. (Trompenaars 1998. 29-49.)

In practice, people usually use both ways of judgement. For example, if someone was bullied in the office, universalists would say that it is against the company rules, but they would also consider it unethical since the employee being bullied would feel sad, which leans more towards particularism. However, according to Fons Trompenaars, when companies go global, most often the company starts leaning towards a more universalist way of thinking and making decisions. This means that managing multicultural teams becomes more challenging, since both cultures must acknowledge one another. For instance, contracts are an important part of universalist cultures since it provides legal safety to both sides of the contract. However, people from particularist cultures who find close relationships highly important may find strict contracts offensive, since they can feel not trusted. (Trompenaars 1998, 29-49.)

Individualism versus communitarianism

The second dimension consists of the conflict between individual needs and the best interests of the group. In contrast to universalism and particularism, these two dimensions are completing rather than opposing each other. In individualist cultures, people are seen as individuals and they believe in personal freedom and achievement. In cultures with high communitarianism, the group is considered more important than individuals. Accord-

ing to Trompenaars, western countries usually have a more individualist mindset, whereas non-western countries tend to lean more towards a communitarianist way of thinking. Some countries with individualist cultures include the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Scandinavian countries, whereas Japan, Latin-America and India have communitarianist cultures. (Trompenaars 1998, 50-67.)

Cultural preferences of either individualism or communitarianism influences managing multicultural teams. Most importantly, it affects decision making, negotiations and motivation. For instance, pay-for-performance is a strategy that promotes rewarding individual performance and distinguishing individuals from the group, which could create some tension between members of the group, at least in communitarianist cultures. However, if an individualist person works very hard and does not get recognition for it, they might get offended and lose motivation. Another good example is decision-making in these cultures. In communitarianist cultures, decision-making usually takes a long time, as most of the group members must be satisfied with the decision, which often takes some convincing. On the contrary, decision-making in individualist cultures is fast, since most of the time one person will make the decision. However, quick decisions are not always the best solution and it can cause multiple problems such as implementation. These are the reasons why especially this dimension can create problems for multicultural teams. (Trompenaars 1998, 50-67.)

Neutral versus affective

In neutral cultures, people do not generally express their feelings but rather keep them under control and suppressed. In reverse, people of cultures that are more on the affective side express their feelings freely by laughing, smiling and gesturing. Nonetheless, the neutral culture should not be considered emotionally repressed or cold, but rather emotionally reserved in certain situations. Similar to the individualist and communitarianist cultures, reason and emotion are commonly combined. To continue, some cultures express emotions, but separate it from rational and objective decisions, whereas some cultures express emotions and do not separate it from rational decision-making. Finally, some cultures do neither express emotions nor separate it. (Trompenaars 1998, 69-79.)

When it comes to intercultural communication, problems in communication may arise due to the differences in neutral and affective cultures. For example, the western culture has a more dominant verbal culture rather than a non-verbal one. In western culture, people usually take turns to speak and do not interrupt each other because it is considered rude. However, in Latin culture it shows interest to interrupt one another. Another factor is the tone of voice. Typically, in neutral cultures the tone is very flat, whereas in affective culture

the tone can have a lot of ups and downs. For instance, in Latin culture ups and downs in the tone of one's voice show that one cares about the topic, although in western culture people may not take that tone of voice seriously. (Trompenaars 1998, 69-79.)

Non-verbal communication is also important in both cultures, and according to Trompenaars it covers 75 percent of all communication. Both affective and neutral cultures have their own habits considering non-verbal culture, such as the length of eye-contact, touching other people and personal space. For example, Finland is considered a rather affective culture, and Finnish people in general do not like touching and must have their personal space. However, for example in countries with affective culture such as Italy and France, a common greeting is kissing on the cheek and there can be a lot of touching. (Trompenaars 1998.)

Specific versus diffuse

The next dimension concerns how much private space individuals share. By public space, Trompenaars means the parts of oneself that they share with other people, whereas private space is only for yourself and your close friends or family to see. In specific culture, people have a large public space, and they have no problem sharing it with other people, even strangers. Moreover, their private space is relatively small, and they share it with their family and friends. In diffuse cultures, the public space is relatively small, and they tend to protect their private space. Nevertheless, these two spaces are usually integrated. To add, it is rather difficult to enter the private space of an individual from diffuse culture. However, once a friend is admitted, they more or less gain access to all the private spaces. For example, most of the Northern Europe have a specific culture, while most Asian countries have diffuse cultures. (Trompenaars 1998, 81-100.)

When specific and diffuse cultures collide, individuals from diffuse cultures can experience the feeling of losing face. This is when something that the diffuse individuals see as being private is made public. People from specific cultures can find this hard to understand as nearly everything is public for them. Another aspect considering the cultures colliding is criticising colleagues. People from specific cultures find it easy to give feedback and criticism to their employees and the criticism can even be brutal sometimes. This is because specific individuals like to separate personal life from work and not make too deep relationships with colleagues. In contrast, giving criticism to individuals in diffuse cultures offends them. People in diffuse cultures have close relationships and they do not usually separate work and personal life. Of course, they do not want to hear criticism from their close friends. (Trompenaars 1998, 81-100.)

Achievement versus Ascription

By a simple definition, achieved status is gained by doing, whereas ascribed status is gained by being. In achievement-oriented cultures, an individual's status consists of their achievement and performance. On the contrary, in ascription-oriented cultures a status can consist of other factors such as age, gender, origin or social connections. Moreover, achievement and ascription can often be interwoven. For example, the European Union was considered important and powerful even before achieving anything, and now after achieving many things it has claimed that assumption to be true. Some typical achievement-oriented cultures include Scandinavia and the United States, while Japan, France and Italy have ascription-oriented cultures. (Trompenaars 1998, 102-118.)

When managing multicultural teams, the difference of these cultures may become an issue. For example, if some of the team members are from ascription-oriented cultures and the team leader is someone young, they may not take the leader seriously or even find it offensive, as they believe that age brings wisdom and experience. Vice versa, people from achievement-oriented cultures might get irritated if someone is hired for a team leader position just because of their age, gender or origin. To add, the role of titles is rather significant in ascription-oriented cultures, as they clarify an individual's status within a company. (Trompenaars 1998, 102-118.)

Sequential versus Synchronous time

The conception of time is affected by culture, considering that time is more of an idea than an object. How individuals see time is connected to how they plan and strategize in their business and everyday lives. People who consider time sequential think of time as a dotted line with regular intervals, and everything is organized depending on the number of intervals. Changes in the sequence could cause uncertainty, for example being late, changing the schedule or changing plans. Furthermore, individuals who consider time synchronous find the present, past and future to be interwoven. Doing multiple tasks at the same time is very common in this culture. Some sequential-time cultures include Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom, whereas some synchronous-time cultures include Japan and Latin-America. (Trompenaars 1998, 120-138.)

The differences between these two cultures can cause some tension in multicultural teams. For instance, managers often find synchronic team members difficult to handle as they have a tendency to ignore deadlines, miss appointments, be late and such. On the other hand, synchronic people may find sequential people inflexible and unable to multi-task. To add, sequential people are often found to concentrate too much on the near future rather than the long future, which does not always work in a business environment.

They also get easily upset about unforeseen events and are more uncertain in general than synchronic people. (Trompenaars 1998, 120-138.)

Internal versus outer direction

The last dimension describes how people relate to nature. Outer direction means that individuals consider nature and environment to control them, and that they should work alongside the environment to achieve goals. Vice versa, individuals who believe in internal direction believe that they can and should control nature in order to achieve their goals. These dimensions reflect to how people work in teams as well as in organizations. Some countries with internal-direction cultures are Japan, China and Russia, and some outer-direction cultures are the United States, Australia and Israel. (Trompenaars 1998, 141-155.)

Inner-directed managers typically try to convince their employees to the manager's own way of thinking. However, outer-directed people can find this behaviour aggressive, rude or selfish. In outer-directed culture, managers avoid conflicts and stress about how much they have learnt from other people's criticism. For example, giving criticism to outer-directed managers can possibly change the whole direction of their organization. Outer-directed cultures usually put others before themselves and have a flexible attitude. To add, everything works in harmony in order to keep the peace. This collides with the inner-directed culture, in which dominating attitude and conflicts are normal, and people focus more on themselves and their own groups. (Trompenaars 1998, 141-155.)

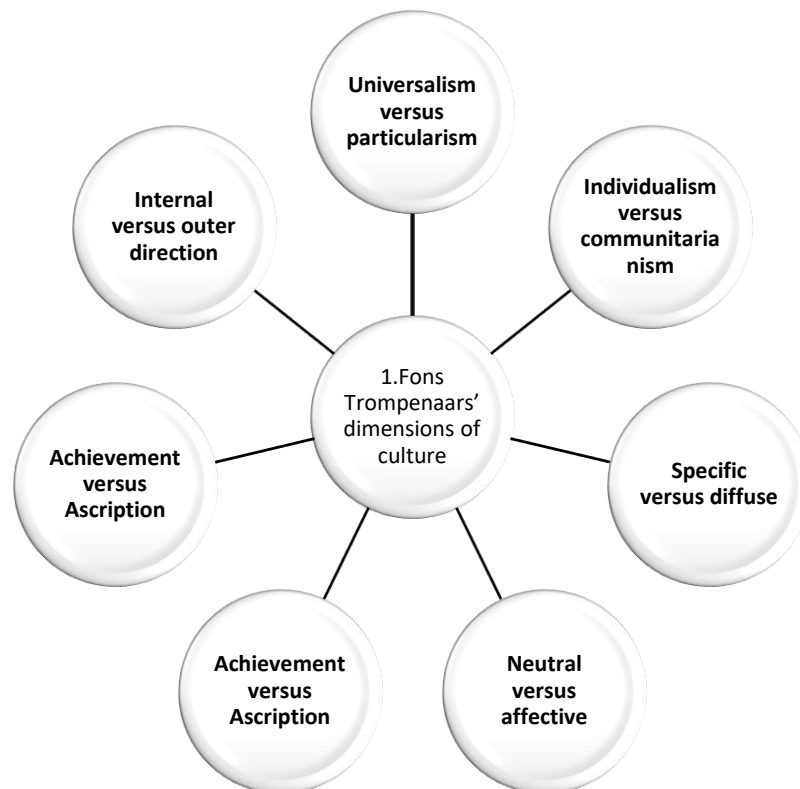


Figure 3. Fons Trompenaars' dimensions of culture (Trompenaars 1998.)

2.1.3 The Lewis Model

The Lewis model is a cultural model developed by a linguistic Richard Lewis, based on his visits to 135 different countries. While Trompenaars' and Hofstede's models categorize people based on their nationality, Lewis created three categories based on human behaviour. According to Lewis, some previous models could confuse the readers, which is why his goal was to create a simple and easily understandable model. The model is focused on how people consider time, for example it is acceptable to be late in some cultures, while in others it is considered rude. To continue, he claims that the behaviour of people of different cultures has clear trends, and that such behaviour can be forecasted. The three groups of behaviour are called Linear-Active, Multi-Active and Reactive. (Lewis 1996, 46-64.)

Individuals in the Linear-Active category are typically task-oriented and very organized. They prefer doing one task at a time and plan everything well, while following rules. To add, Linear-Active individuals dislike losing face and are very job orientated. As for the individuals in Multi-Active group, they are very family-orientated and emotional, and they tend to follow their feelings rather than the rules. In contrast to the Linear-Active group, Multi-Active individuals are very comfortable with doing multiple tasks at a time. To add,

these individuals are often impatient and interruptive speakers. Lastly, the Reactive individuals rather listen than start a discussion, which allows them to react to the topic and create their own opinion about it. Like people in the Linear-Active group, Reactive people also do not like losing their face or being embarrassed. They are also very people-oriented and polite. (Lewis 1996, 46-64.)

According to Lewis, the different views in these categories can cause some issues in multicultural teams. For example, if a team meeting is set to begin at eight in the morning, people from Linear-Active cultures will probably be there five minutes earlier, while the Multi-Active individuals will arrive at least half an hour late. To add, they share very different views of personnel policies, commitments and work orientation. Thus, Multi-Active people would frown upon the hiring and firing procedures of Linear-Active people, as individuals in Multi-Active cultures are very people-orientated and often their both personal and work relationships collide. However, team members from Reactive cultures are the most adaptive of all, since they can react to changing situations rather well and they are very flexible and patient. However, due to globalization more and more organizations are becoming multicultural, which is why learning and adapting to new cultures are necessary characteristics of a manager. (Lewis 1996, 46-64.)

The picture below showcases where different countries are placed considering these three categories. For example, Canadians have characteristics from both Reactive and Linear-Active categories, while Germans are completely Linear-Active.

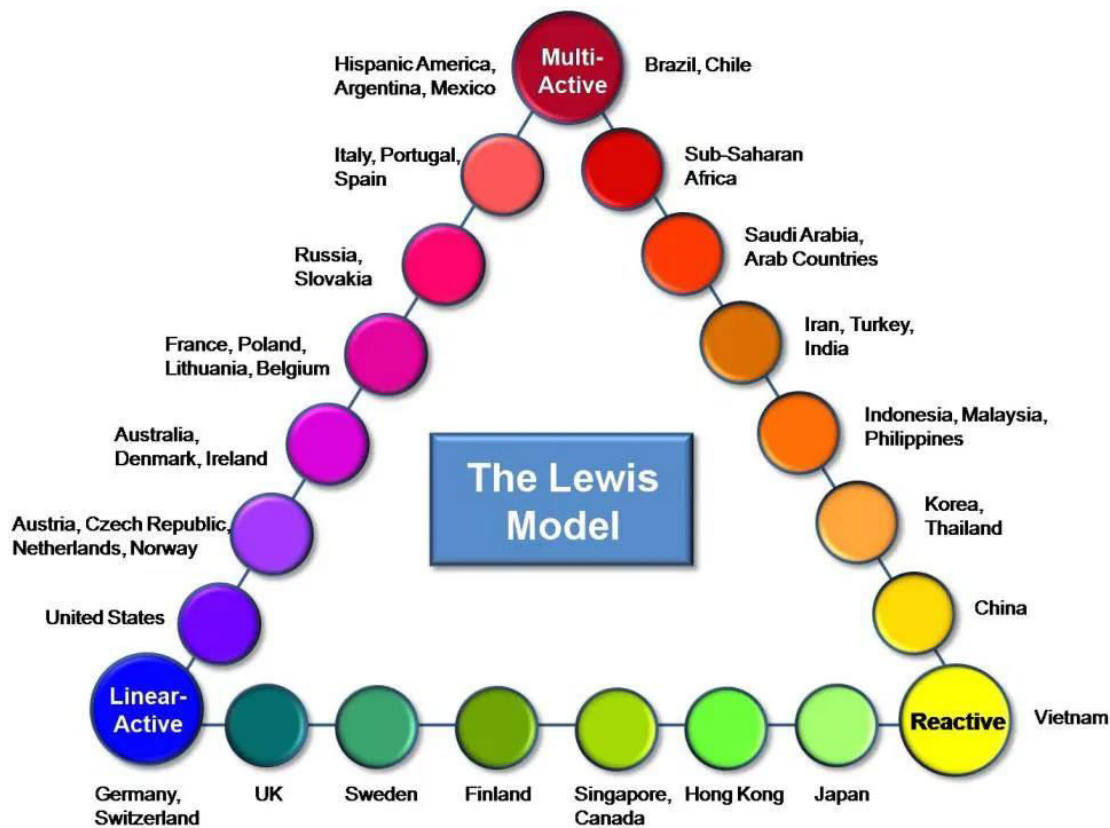


Figure 4. The Lewis Model: How to Understand Every Culture in the World. (Gerlach 2015)

2.2 Definition of multiculturalism and multicultural teams

Multiculturalism can be seen to be an incoherent concept, which has created many different theories around it and may be difficult to define what it exactly is and what it stands for. Multiculturalists do not generally agree upon any specific set of core normative principles, but yet it is argued that it is one of the greatest strengths of the literature on multiculturalism. On some definitions of multiculturalism include mainly the cross-border migrants, whereas in others the term is used more liberally and include the claims of indigenous people and national minorities. There are also disagreements on whether race, religion, gender and sexual orientation should be seen as multicultural issues or are they more of a political phenomenon. To conclude, it can be fair to interpret that multiculturalism is hard to narrow to one specific definition but there are many different theories around it. (Murphy 2012, 12-29.)

For a very long time, cultural diversity has existed among different societies. For example, in the Ottoman empire, the majority of people were Muslims, but there were also many other religious groups in that geographical area. Or in Ancient Greece, there were different regions where people had different traditions, dialects and identities. In the 21st century,

ry, most countries are culturally diverse and have people from a variety of races, linguistic backgrounds, religions and other factors that differentiates cultures. Multiculturalism is a concept that is created by contemporary political theorists and as mentioned, there are many different definitions to it, as there is for culture. In one way to define this concept *multiculturalism involves the coexistence of two or more cultures in the same geographical space* (Cordeiro-Rodrigues & Simendic 2016, 1-12.)

A country can be diverse in a variety of ways, some of which are religious diversity, linguistic diversity, diversity resulted from a distinct territory location, or racial diversity for instance. To mention, when group diversity is race, it is important to understand that race is a socially constructed concept in terms of it being the result of individuals giving social significance to a physical characteristic, which they consider as standing out. Some of these qualities may be for example the colour of one's skin, eyes, or hair, or a different structure on physical features. Yet if there is the existence of different physical characteristics in a group, that does not necessarily mean that there is a multicultural environment. With this mentioned, it can be said that racial cultural diversity is not only existence of different physical characteristics, but they must involve a sense of common identity. (Cordeiro-Rodrigues & Simendic 2016, 1-12.)

Teams can be defined in various ways and there is a lot of academic literature offering information considering the topic. In an extensive review by Bailey and Cohen (1997), they define teams after examining a large set of definitions which is *a team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity, embedded in one or more larger social systems and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries*. Teams and groups are seen to be two different concepts and some of the differentiating factors are for instance the leadership roles. In teams the leadership roles are often shared whereas in groups there is a clearly focused leader. Another factor that forms a team rather than a group is that in addition of individual accountability a team also shares mutual accountability. Teams usually have a specific purpose of what it delivers, and they have collective work products. Then considering teams that are multicultural and diverse, Halverson and Tirmizi (2008) define them as a collection of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems, and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries and beyond.

2.3 Cultural synergy

Cultural synergy is an approach to cross-cultural management, and it can be defined as *a process in which organization policies and practices are formed on the basis of, but not limited to, the cultural patterns of individual organization members and clients* (Adler 1980). This approach considers both the similarities and differences in cultures as a resource to an organization, and that they should be enhanced. To continue, the model assumes that there is not one right way to manage multicultural teams, but rather many possible solutions and right answers. According to Adler, culture should be viewed as an essential part of organizations that helps them grow rather than an issue that should be minimized or removed. (Adler 1980.)

Adler's approach to cultural synergy is rather problem-solving, consisting of three steps. The first step is describing the situation, in which managers define the issue that needs solving, including all the opinions of team members, since cultures view problems differently. When they have described and recognized the situation, they continue to culturally interpret the situation. This means that the managers analyse the situation, explaining why each culture think that way and why it makes sense to them. Thirdly, the manager creates a solution to the problem together with the team that increases the effectiveness of the team and organization. After the process is over, managers typically receive feedback from their team members about whether a compromise considering all cultures was reached or not. (Adler 1997.)

Ethnocentrism is a viewpoint that one's culture is superior to others. Ethnocentrism is a threat to cultural synergy, as it prevents team members from seeing the benefits of multiculturalism and naturally creates tension between people from different cultures. Although Adler claims cultural synergy to be beneficial and necessary to an organization, it can still create challenges to managers, especially if one team member considers the other members inferior to themselves. (Adler 1997.)

2.4 Benefits and challenges of multicultural teams

When multicultural teams are well functioning and the individuals obtain cultural intelligence in terms of communication, the cultural diversity has a positive influence on the team performance. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds are able to enhance the team process with culture-specific knowledge, skills and values. For this reason, the team will be able to provide better quality and more innovative solutions for different tasks. (Nishishiba 2017, 43-51.)

Literature often implies that group diversity is the key to creativity and enhanced team performance, but the challenges for the management and the team are usually more addressed. When it comes to the benefits of multicultural and diverse teams, as mentioned, creativity is one of the most discussed factors. It is also argued that in culturally heterogeneous teams people experience working more satisfying than in culturally homogeneous teams. People working in culturally heterogeneous teams who have a high will to learn and develop themselves, find the cross-cultural environment offering them more opportunities to question themselves and their beliefs which increases their individual growth. It can be said that many of the positive effects that diverse teams bring to international management are less tangible or rational, yet as important, than the challenges. In addition, understanding that people around the world despite of the variety of institutional and cultural differences, share the same basic humanity, brings many of the managers personal satisfaction. (Lane & Maznevski 2014, 97-120.)

According to a study conducted by Trefry and Vaillant (2002), organizations are able to develop a competitive advantage if the different perspectives of culturally diverse employees are truly valued and capitalized. In this environment, the individuals can learn from each other as well as from the organization's own past experience, hence optimize their strategies. The members of multicultural teams reported an increased self-confidence and a better capability to deal with unexpected events. In this study, the team members had also stated that they re-examined their perspectives in multicultural teams when being confronted and this flexibility as a response to unexpected event, creates competitive advantage for diverse teams. (Rahim et al. 2002.)

Therefore, it can be said that multicultural teams do have the capability of outperforming culturally homogeneous teams in terms of creativity, innovation and possibly problem solving but these opportunities only arise if the team works on its full potential. By these means it is said that multicultural teams can function well, when it is understood that teams need to go through a certain team learning process since they are not as effective from the beginning of the team creation. Communication styles have a high impact on problem solving effectiveness and the more culturally diverse the group is, the more time members need to spend on establishing the norms and regulations of how they work as a team. (Glaser 2010, 186-206.)

One challenge that arises for multicultural teams to overcome is that cultural values can have an enormous impact on team structure, motivation, decision making, effectiveness and interpersonal interactions. When the team consists of individuals who share similar value orientations, the task processes usually run smoothly as expectations are mutually

understood. Whereas in culturally heterogeneous teams, the value orientations are often different between individuals. In this situation it is possible that the team proceeds with the orientations of the most dominant group which may lead to the minority being forced to assimilate. In effective teams this is acknowledged and to meet every individuals' needs, pluralistic norms are necessary to develop. (Halverson & Tirmizi 2008, 21-42.)

In order to be able to work successfully as a team and as a member of it, intercultural competence is seen to be a must have for all the team members when it consists of individuals from different cultures. Team members should be able to reflect to their own self as well as being objective and accurate observers. The individuals should be able to communicate effectively and then interact successfully with others from a different culture. When it comes to diversity management it is crucial that all the team members are able to deal with different issues of diversity and regarding emotional management, they need to be able to come to terms with their own emotions. In addition, team members should act in a socially responsible manner and take into a consideration of how the world still differentiates between the ones materially privileged and those in need, as well as between the ones who have a say and who do not. (Glaser 2010, 186-206.)

2.4.1 Challenges for management

Management can be defined in many ways and one example is by Harold Koontz (1955) *management is the art of getting things done through others and with formally organised groups*. Most commonly it is described to include processes such as planning, organizing, directing and controlling. When it comes to team management specifically it is different than managing individuals and requires all these four processes done deliberately to get the individuals collaborating efficiently and as effective as possible. There are many obstacles that management may face while leading a team towards success which can be tackled with right strategies. (Adekola & Sergi 2007, 7-15.)

The role of manager varies a lot in different cultures. When it comes to multicultural teams, the manager's understanding of different cultures plays an important part. The manager should treat all team members equally and take everyone's cultural differences and customs into consideration, which creates new challenges for management. To begin with, culture impacts the planning and implementation of the team's goals and objectives. As mentioned before, according to Fons Trompenaars, cultures see time differently, which can lead to the other side being flexible and even ignoring deadlines, while the other side is being very punctual. Furthermore, the manager should decide whether these goals are individual or group goals, which is another challenge considering the cultural differences between individualism and communitarianism. (Adekola & Sergi 2007, 7-15.)

The competitive environment of organizations considering both internal and external competitiveness can be considered challenging. For instance, the speed and technology level of the organization influence the competitive environment. These two factors are rather high especially in some of the Asian workplace cultures, which creates a lot of stress for the team members. High stress levels at work can lead to health issues, not to mention that employees with a lot of stress can sometimes even start smoking. To continue, managers face challenges when it comes to the internal competitiveness. As mentioned before, both Hofstede and Trompenaars claim that individualist cultures feel the need to be personally rewarded for their accomplishments, whereas collectivist or communitarianism cultures want to be considered as a group. It can be challenging for a manager to make sure both parties are satisfied, whether the manager decides to reward individuals or reward the group. (Adekola & Sergi 2007, 163-270.)

One of the biggest challenges for managers is communication. The differences in communication, traditions, and even thought process in planning can create issues for the manager as well as the team. To begin with, language is part of communication and therefore creates a challenge for managing a multicultural team. This includes actual translation problems, small cultural differences within the same language, or subtle misunderstandings in a foreign language. Furthermore, accents and dialects can cause some challenges to communication as well. Non-verbal communication is a large part of all communication. In fact, as mentioned earlier, it covers around 75 percent of all communication. Using non-verbal communication in multicultural teams can be challenging to the manager, as some gestures are considered offensive in some cultures, ways of greeting people vary, and even small details matter. Nevertheless, managers can overcome this challenge by doing research about the team members' cultures. (Adekola & Sergi 2007, 163-270.)

Another aspect that can create challenges is controlling. Controlling is directly interwoven to the management style and guidelines of the company, and it means assessing progress and correcting it if needed. For example, if the management style prefers a large power distance, it is easier to control subordinates and if they do not meet the manager's standards, they will most likely get fired. However, if the management style prefers a small power distance, controlling may be rather difficult. When the manager is more of a friend rather than a leader, people from cultures with large power distance may not take the manager seriously. In contrast to controlling, motivating team members from different cultures can become challenging. As mentioned earlier, employees from diverse cultures can be motivated in different ways, such as individual rewarding, team rewarding, clear deadlines, flexible deadlines, setting goals and many other aspects that should be considered. For example, promoting a team member in collectivist cultures, such as most Asian cul-

tures, can cause a decrease in motivation. On the contrary, promoting a team member in individualist cultures such as most Nordic countries, it can increase the motivation of other team members. Motivating team members is very important to managers, as it directly affects the performance of the company. (Adekola & Sergi 2007, 163-270.)

2.5 Diversity management

Due to globalization and the increased amount of immigration, organizations have faced a new set of challenges related to diversity. Therefore, diversity management has become a widely discussed topic in all types of organizations, whether they are private, public, non-profit or anything in between. Diversity can be defined either as *the condition of having or being composed of differing elements or the inclusion of different types of people in a group or organization* (Merriam-Webster 2020). For example, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious beliefs and many more other characteristics are considered diversity. Furthermore, diversity management itself is defined as recognizing the value each employee brings to the organization equally and working towards organizational diversity, in order to achieve new solutions, creative ideas and added value. (Chen 2011, 3-14.)

Even though diversity management started to gain attention as early as in the 1980s in the United States and thus, has been a concept for around forty years, some organizations still do not recognize the competitive advantage that diversity management can provide. For example, during a recruiting process, organizations that recognize diverse applicants can have a higher chance of finding a qualified candidate, not to mention the process is often faster as well. To continue, having diverse workforce can enhance the organization brand, especially during times when equality issues are under a lot of discussion in media, which will be discussed more later. In short, diversity management reduces the chance of receiving accusations of discrimination and negative publicity. Moreover, diversity management can positively affect to other aspects of organizational performance, such as innovation, financial performance and lower turnover rates. (Madera et al. 2016.)

In today's business world, the importance of the relationship between diversity management and organizational attraction has increased. Employees and customers make conscious choices to support organizations that share similar values as them. To continue, caring about the growth and equality of all the employees is important to many people especially in the 21st century. In fact, knowing that they have an equal chance to promotion, growth and other opportunities to succeed, employees are likely to have more motivation. Thus, in best case diversity management can benefit both the employees and the organization. Having a diverse team provides an opportunity to learn about new lan-

guages and anything related to culture, such as food, customs and many more aspects. (Madera et al. 2016.)

Even though diversity management seems like a solution that benefits everyone, it has received a fair amount of criticism as well. To begin with, some people see it as a soft option to deal with problems like racism, discrimination and such. For example, the concern is that organizations will focus on intercultural awareness training rather than bigger issues, such as anti-discrimination training or anti-harassment initiatives. Although intercultural awareness is important too, it should not steal the focus from more serious issues. Furthermore, some argue that diversity management exaggerates the importance of cultural differences. By this they mean that some individuals do not want to be defined or categorized based on their ethnic or national origin. To add, it may risk people maintaining the view that cultures do not change over time, and that cultures are just stereotyped. (Wrench 2005.)

Critics argue that diversity management is only a business strategy rather than a movement trying to create equal opportunities for everyone. Furthermore, the problem is that some managers only find the issue of racism and discrimination important if it affects their business. They will only fight discrimination and injustice in their organization if they benefit from it, which is not why diversity management was brought into the human resource departments of companies in the first place. Although the critics argue that the benefits of diversity in a workplace are overstated, most of them still agree that diversity can enhance creativity, innovations and knowledge within companies. (Wrench 2005.) Finally, whether it is through diversity management or another way, equal rights and opportunities in a workplace are essential values of organizations in the 21st century.

2.6 Cross-cultural conflict management

Conflict can be defined as a process in which one party perceives their own interests or goals to be influenced in a harmful way by another party's actions. Moreover, the process of conflict consists of two or more people where one party must find the other party's actions opposed to its own actions. When it comes to working in teams, there are two main types of conflict. Substantive conflicts, as known as task conflicts can arise from different views in matters such as goals and tasks. On the other hand, relationship conflicts arise from emotional matters such as jealousy, annoyance, insecurity or different personalities. Conflicts are a part of organizations' everyday lives, but what matters is how they are solved. Research shows that the way a team solves conflicts influences the team's overall performance. While conflicts tend to happen in all types of teams, conflicts can occur easier in multicultural teams due to the cultural differences explained before, according to

Trompenaars' and Hofstede's theories. Although conflicts are often viewed as a negative matter, they can also be constructive and help the team understand each other better. (Tabassi et al. 2019.)

Different cultures may use different styles to handle conflicts. The way managers deal with conflicts can be influenced by numerous reasons, such as power distance, complexity of the task, culture and leadership styles, as well as pressure to come to an agreement. According to Thomas Kilmann, there are five different conflict management styles divided in two dimensions, assertiveness and cooperativeness. (Tabassi et al. 2019.) Furthermore, the five different managing styles are as follows:

- **Competitive approach.** Managers who use the competitive approach tend to view conflict as a win-lose situation. In other words, they think that if they compromise, they lose, which is especially accurate in cultures with high power distance. However, the use of competitive approach typically leads to undesirable results and ineffective communication.
- **Cooperative approach.** The main values of the cooperative approach are mutual goal achievement and open communication. When it comes to cooperative approach, team members value each other's abilities and try to resolve the conflict by cooperating with each other. Managers that solve conflicts with this approach have even been rated as more successful leaders. Whereas collectivist cultures often use the avoiding approach, the other half of collectivist cultures use the cooperative approach as it benefits the team and can lead to a higher team performance.
- **Avoiding approach.** The avoiding approach has a goal to smooth over conflicts quickly and end the discussion as quickly as possible, typically by changing the topic of conversation or ignoring it. Managers in collectivist cultures tend to lean towards the avoiding approach when it comes to conflicts, in order to maintain good relationships. However, avoiding conflicts can result in issues regarding the functioning of a team.
- **Accommodating approach.** Managers who have an accommodating approach tend to give in to others in order to please them, which often results to lower quality decision making. Furthermore, people with this approach typically take care of other's concerns while disregarding their own. Accommodating approach can usually be seen in cultures with high power distance, as the urge to please the person in charge is often rather high. Nevertheless, this approach can have a negative effect when it comes to the functioning of a team. ‘

- **Compromising approach.** The compromising management style is one where two parties try to find a mutual agreement, which often leads to both wins and losses to both parties. This conflict approach is typically used as a short-term decision, since it finds the middle ground which both parties can agree with. Managers in Western cultures tend to use this approach, as research has shown that it can have influence on the innovativeness of teams. (Tabassi et al. 2019.)

As mentioned before, these five conflict management approaches can be divided into two dimensions, assertiveness and cooperativeness. While in the approaches that are higher on assertiveness people focus more on their own needs and desired outcomes, in the approaches that are on the cooperativeness side people focus more on others and mutual relationships. The picture below demonstrates how the approaches are divided. (Tabassi et al. 2019.)



Figure 5. Conflict management styles. (Gerlach 2015)

2.7 Multicultural skills

In the twenty-first century it has become a necessary requirement for leaders to be internationally minded rather than a positive addition. In particular, having the assumption that the leaders want to create value for their organization this quality is a must-have. Considering the aspect of globalization and changes in fields of technology, business models, political systems, finance, air travel, and media, most managers interact with colleagues from different cultures and work across the national borders. Being a successful manager in today's business environment has a necessity for international navigation and it is much more complex than just learning and adapting to another place and its culture. A global leader benefits from certain characteristics, competences, skills and knowledge that can

make them as effective as possible, hence successful. This chapter describes how to acquire a global mindset, certain skills, and principles navigating well in global complexities. (Lane & Maznevski 2014, 97-120.)

To begin with, to be a successful manager with multicultural skills, one needs to attain a deep knowledge about the business they work in and how to create value in that business field. A successful manager has qualities that are associated with their effectiveness which are mentioned to be integrity, humility, curiosity, and resilience. These personality traits exemplify honesty, transparency, accepting differences and different ways of operating as well as the desire for learning new. In this context resilience stands for the capability to continue even in the face of challenges and difficulties with only little indication of success. It is also important to have the global mindset and understand the world differently than one has learned to comprehend it. According to Lane and Maznevski (2014, 97-120.), the three most important skills for a global leader to have are mindful communication, building trust, and multicultural teaming. Mindful communication requires concentrating on one's communication styles and ensuring the meaning is transmitted as intended. Building trust concerns about the relationships created and ensuring both parties believe in the good intentions of the other. Whereas multicultural teaming is about efficient collaboration with people from different cultures. Some other skills seen to be influential are community building skill, leading change, spanning boundaries and making ethical decisions. In ethical decision making, the long-term benefits of individuals and society are considered.

Today's companies have a lot more diverse teams than before due to the fact that workforce diversity has increased and there are more alliances across organizations as well as organizational structures having units across the national borders. Diverse teams can succeed better and have many benefits to them compared to homogeneous groups, but it depends how the interactions in the team are managed. The differences need to be recognized and use as an asset, but it requires managing the diversity constructively. The managers need to acquire the skills to understand the differences of the team members and their cultures, then communicate across them and manage the differences. When this is done right it creates high performance. When the management values the differences of the team it can be used as an asset which then creates value. (Lane & Maznevski 2014, 97-120.)

2.8 Impact of media

Media and technology are part of today's everyday life and the amount of time spent either watching television, reading news, or using social media is so high that it is important

to realise its effect. An issue where mass media and advertising play a role is that they create and perpetuate social stereotypes of specific groups on a large scale. Stereotypes are exaggerated, overgeneralized and inflexible ideas towards a certain group of people that excludes individual variations. The problem with stereotyping is that an individual's expectations and judgements can be based on them and when a stereotype of a specific group is negative, it causes negative judgement towards that group. Whether or not individuals fall into a specific stereotype, it causes judgement towards them on those bases which they most likely are able to sense. A feeling called stereotype threat describes the issue that many individuals who belong to a target group that has common stereotypes associated with them, worry about being judged. The way this affects teamwork is that when a stereotype is negative it might increase the employee's anxiety, and stress which then possibly undermines their performance. However, if the stereotype is positive it might have the opposite effect and actually increase their performance, but this still increases the pressure that is put on an individual. It is important to understand the effect of media on this topic whether it is books, television, social media, newspapers or the internet and how they reinforce the stereotypical pictures on a certain group. Applying stereotypes remains as individual's own choice, yet they might create biases which certainly causes a negative effect in a multicultural work environment. (Nishishiba 2017, 104-126.)

3 Research methods

This chapter consists of the selected approach for the research as well as the reasons for choosing it, and the research methods used. After all factors were considered and the research question was formed, the approach was rather easy to decide. Furthermore, the research methods were decided after a long discussion, since there are multiple different research methods that could provide valuable data and information.

3.1 Selected approach and why it was chosen

Since our research question is *how do managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments*, we have decided to use a mixed approach, which means both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods is necessary for the topic in order to gain different kinds of information, since the research question is rather broad.

Quantitative research methods are focused on the statistical and numerical analysis of the collected data, which is important considering the research questionnaire that was chosen as a method. To continue, qualitative research methods are used when open questions, discussion, personal opinions or observation are used within the research. The research was mostly based on personal opinions, which forced the authors to use qualitative methods as well, more precisely an interview. Using a mixed approach makes the research more synergic in a way, and it allows the authors to emphasize the participants point of views. (Franklin 2012, 168-208)

3.2 Research methods used

The first chosen method of research was a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a method that typically follows a theme and contains some standard questions, and the questions may be explored further. A semi-structured interview is a mixture of structured and unstructured interview methods, and it can be used in qualitative approach (Zhu 2016.) The empirical data was collected from an expert in the field who has managed multicultural teams, and thus has a lot of experience of the research topic. The sample size for the interview was one interviewee and the interview consisted of open questions. The reason for choosing an expert interview as a research method is that the research topic is rather exploratory, and because it was necessary to get an opinion from an experienced manager of multicultural teams as well as people who have worked in multicultural teams.

The second chosen research method was an online survey, more precisely a questionnaire. The aim of a questionnaire is to examine a specific group of objects from the population, which in this case is people who have worked in multicultural teams. The questionnaire consisted of multiple different types of questions such as rating scales, multiple choice questions, Likert scales and a couple open questions. The questions are conducted in a neutral way which ensures that they do not create any kind of bias to the responders (Zhu 2016.) The questionnaire was created in Google Forms, and it can also be used when analysing the results. The data was analysed based on the knowledge the authors have acquired from studying the materials for the theoretical framework, as well as the research methodology.

4 Empirical research

The empirical research part consists of the introduction to research, where the main point of the research as well as the sample sizes are explained. In addition, it consists of analysing and comparing the results of the questionnaire and the interviews. The empirical research will be concluded by analysing the validity and reliability of the research, as well as some suggestions for further research.

4.1 Introduction to research

The research question is *how do managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments*. The research question is directly connected to the actual thesis topic, and it gives the topic a practical approach. The aim of the research is to get an idea of the problems as well as positive aspects regarding the management of multicultural working environments. The goal is to be able to give managers some practical tips on how to improve the working environment in their multicultural teams through the results and questions of the survey. To add, the results of the survey are compared to the ones from the interviews, in order to recognize the opinions from both managers and team members. This information is the key point when it comes to the success of the research, as sometimes the two parties are unable to see each other's point of views.

The questionnaire was shared in social media enabling people from different cultures and countries to take part in it, which was crucial in order to make the research reliable. These platforms included our own Instagram and Facebook profiles. In addition, some people shared our questionnaire on their Facebook profiles in order to help us gain a larger sample size. The interview was organized via online meeting platform Zoom. The sample size for the questionnaire was 56 respondents, while the sample size of the expert interview was one manager.

4.2 Research question

To get a deeper understanding of the chosen research question it is fair to mention this topic is an important aspect of efficient multicultural work environments. Since its purpose is to clarify what is the level of intercultural competence of the managers and are their chosen methods to manage their teams effective, the questions ask from the respondents needed to be designed clearly. To acquire valid information that will contribute to the research and answer the research question, the questionnaire consists of employee's point of view designed questions which will provide answers of how the team members experience their working environment and the competence of their manager. The questionnaire

consists of different questions that will provide a view of their feeling of belonging, possible discrimination, conflict management, and the general understanding and acknowledging of the cultural differences by the manager. Furthermore, to get a clear understanding of this topic and especially this question, two perceptions were needed to get the full understanding. Thus, the theme interview was designed for the expert manager, to get an understanding of how she sees this topic and how competent she feels managing the multicultural teams.

4.3 Analysing the questionnaire results

To analyse the research results, it is first to mention that the survey was created anonymously with an online tool that provided all the requirements that were needed for this questionnaire. It was targeted for anyone who has been employed in a multicultural working environment and was distributed via social media and personal connections. The total amount of respondents collected for this survey was 56, which sounds rather limited as we supposed it to be, yet it is convenient when combined with the interviews.

There can be identified three main aspects of the questionnaire: personal background, how do the employees feel in a multicultural environment and what is their experience, and how do the employees see their manager's performance and how did they succeed in managing these multicultural teams.

Starting from the personal background the first question was to determine the age of the respondents and the options and results can be seen from the figure below. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents were between 20 to 25 years old.

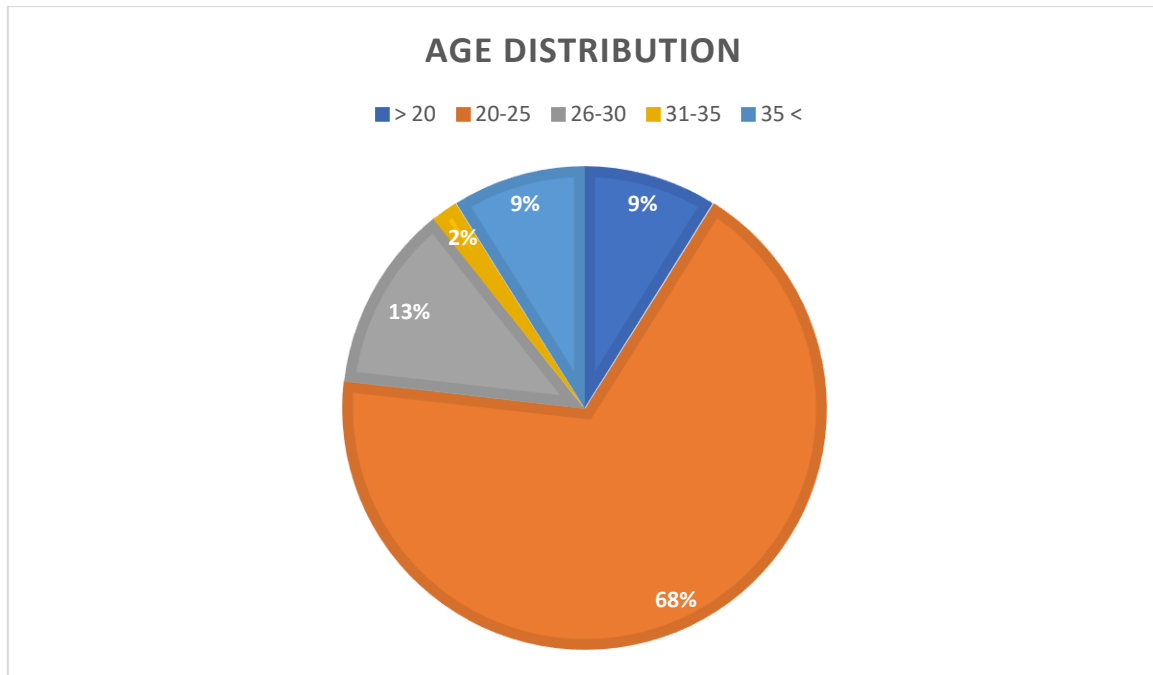


Figure 6. Age distribution.

The next question was to define the gender of the respondents and as it can be seen below, 75% of all the people who answered identified as women and only 25% as men. To mention, the questionnaire did include the options of other gender identifications but as can be seen there were no diversity in the results.

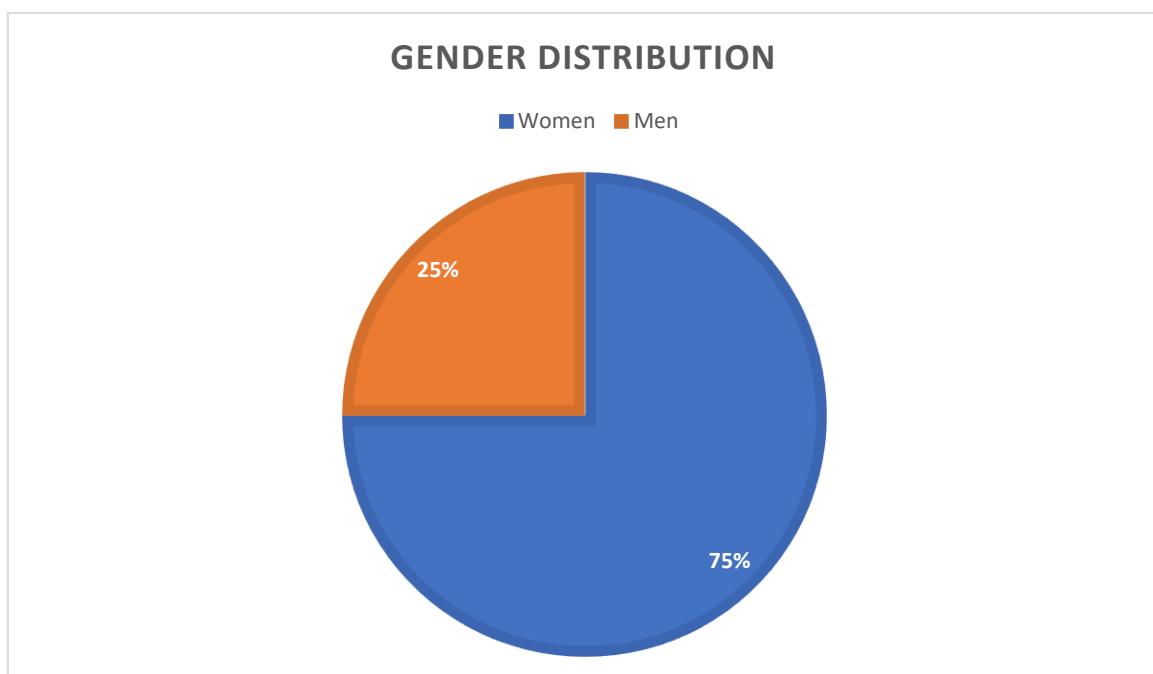


Figure 7. Gender distribution.

When it comes to the different nationalities from the collected answers, there is a notable amount of variety. Since the survey was conducted in Finland it was anticipated that many of the respondents are Finnish, but the second biggest group of answers were from Russians, and the third majority were Vietnamese. In addition, there were responses from Albanian, American, Colombian, German, Iranian, Macedonian, Serbian, Swedish and Turkish nationalities. The distribution of different nationalities can be seen from the figure below.

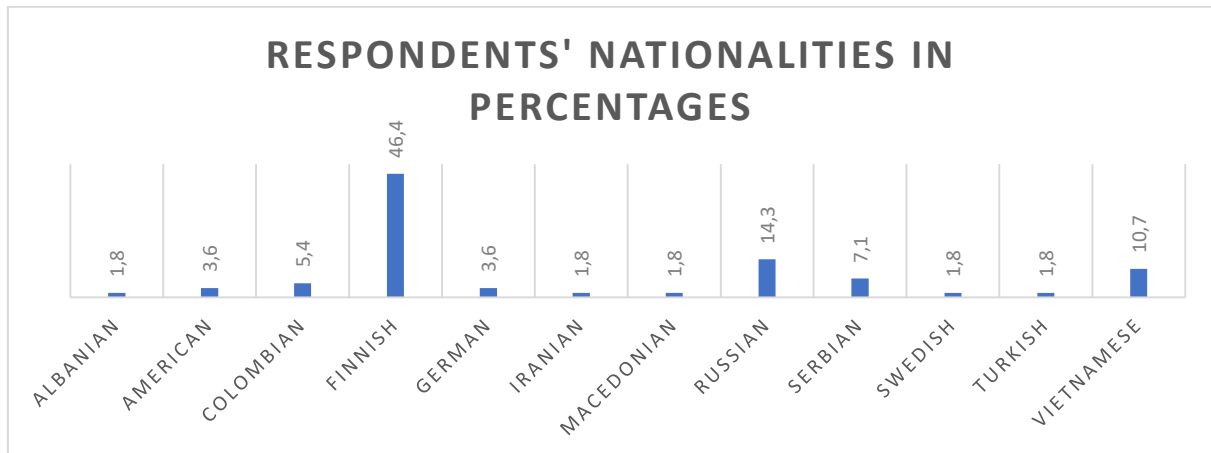


Figure 8. Respondents' nationalities in percentages.

The next question that was included in the questionnaire was about the national diversity of the teams the respondents had worked in. However, team does not necessarily need to have different nationalities for it to be culturally diverse, but it gives some valuable aspect. It can be seen from the figure below that majority of the multicultural teams consisted of either 1-3 or 4-6 different nationalities. 16 percent of respondents worked in team as diverse as 7-10 different nationalities and approximately nine percent of respondents worked in a very diverse team consisting of more than ten different nationalities.

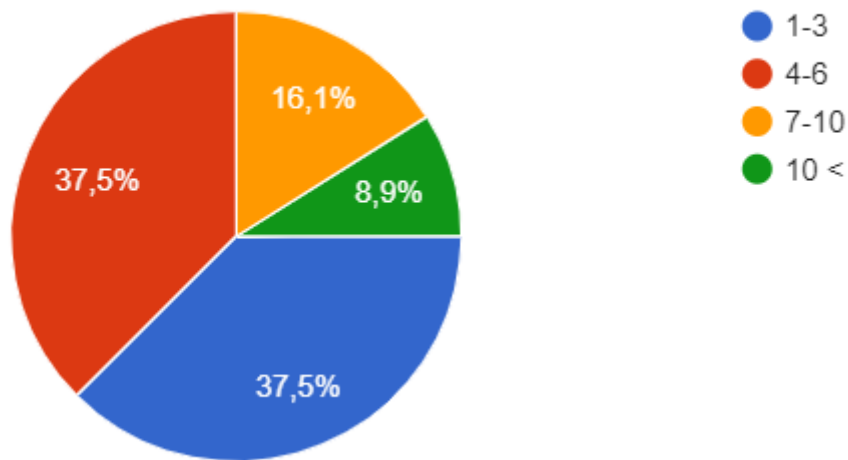


Figure 9. Different nationalities in the work team.

When it comes to the impact on work performance, over 80% of all respondents found multiculturalism to have a positive impact. To continue, six respondents answered neutral and four individuals of 56 respondents somewhat disagreed. However, none of the 56 respondents completely disagreed on the statement. Thus, it can be stated that most of the time multiculturalism has a positive impact on employees' work performance, and therefore it is profitable for both the organization and the manager to acknowledge multiculturalism in the working environment. According to the results of this question, acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments has a positive effect on the team members' work performance and therefore could create better results or other benefits. Figure 10 shows how the answers were divided.

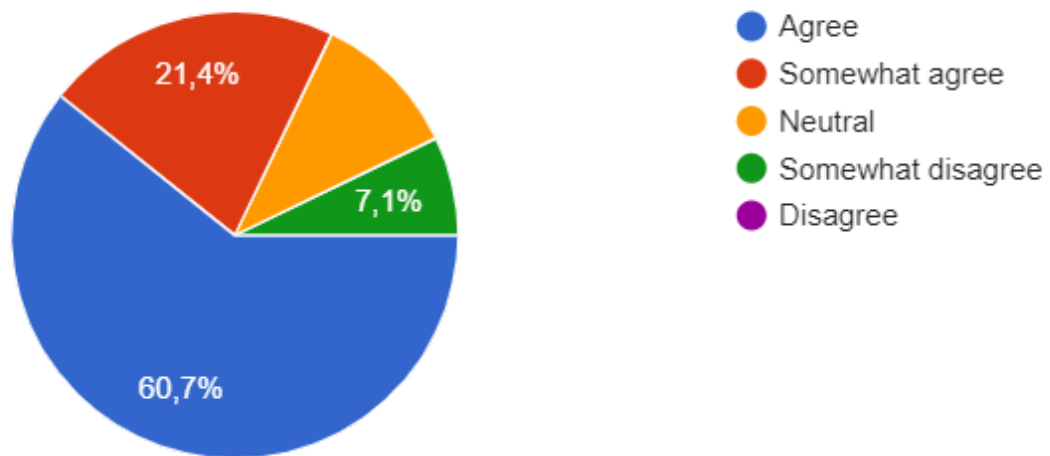


Figure 10. The positive impact of multiculturalism on work performance.

Next, we wanted to find out if employees get free days from work on their cultural holidays, and whether they wish to get free days if they already do not. As can be seen in Figure 11, the answers of this question were divided rather equally within the three options. However, it can be seen that 62,5% do not get free days at all, and over 21% of them wish they would get free days. Some holidays can be very important to employees due to cultural reasons, which is why we decided to include this question in the survey. To add, it was surprising how many individuals get free days on cultural occasions, and how many people do not care whether they get holidays or not. It should still be kept in mind that 12 of the 56 respondents stated that they wish they got free holidays, which is a rather high number of respondents considering the sample size was quite small. Giving employees free days on their cultural holidays is a good example of acknowledging one's culture, even though it is not always possible.

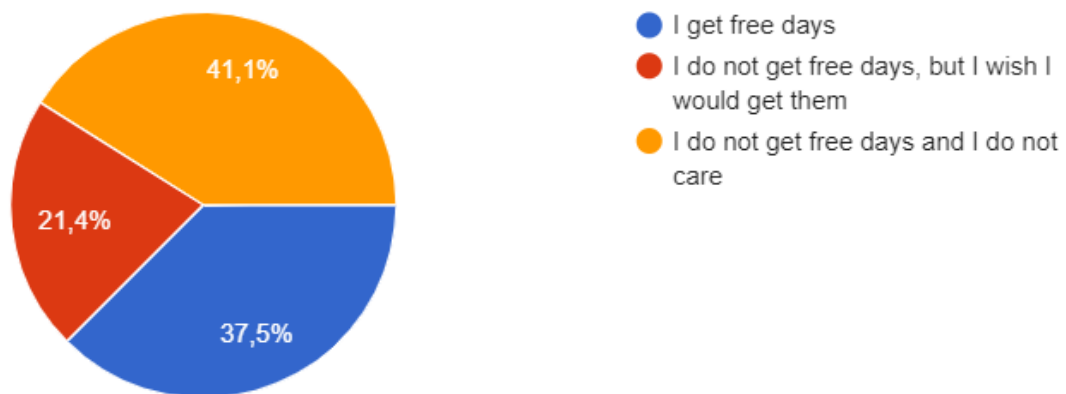


Figure 11. Employees' free days on their cultural holidays.

The next question was asked to find out if respondents have experienced conflicts in the work environment due to cultural diversity. Surprisingly, 59% answered no while 41% answered yes, which means that within the sample size less people experienced cultural conflicts in their workplaces. It was anticipated that more individuals have experienced conflicts, because as mentioned in the theoretical framework conflicts are rather common in multicultural environments. To continue, this question was asked in order to build a foundation for the next question.

The objective was to find out how the team manager acknowledged multiculturalism when they were solving the conflict. As in the previous question, the same number of individuals stated they have not experienced conflicts in the working environment, which was about 58% of the respondents. However, from the respondents who had conflicts in the working environment, only 9 respondents and 16,4% confirmed that the manager considered their cultural differences when solving the conflict. This means that in 7 cases or 12,7% the manager failed in acknowledging the multiculturalism and ignored the cultural differences, and in 7 cases or 12,7% the manager did not help the respondent to solve the conflict. Even though most of the respondents stated that they had not experienced conflicts or that the manager considered their cultural differences, there are still 14 people whose managers did a poor job when it comes to conflict management. Thus, there is still room for improvement when it comes to managing conflicts in a multicultural environment. The results of the survey question can be seen below.

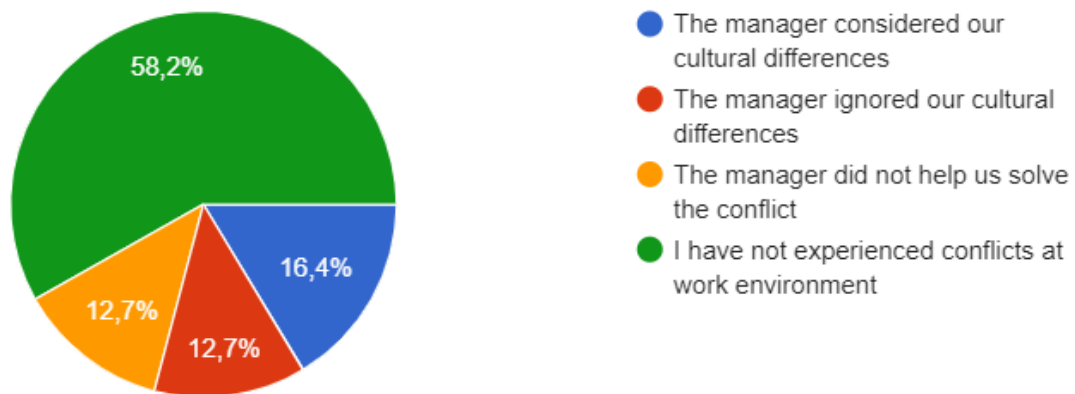


Figure 12. Conflict management in a multicultural environment.

For the next question we had designed an open question to give the respondents a possibility to give some examples of the cultures possible colliding and creating a conflict. The aim was to find out if there are some specific conflicts that are commonly repeating themselves or provide a view on what types of conflicts multicultural teams might face. We got some expected answers that are very common issues to rise in multicultural business environments such as, the different hierarchies that are also mentioned in Hofstede's cultural dimensions about power distance and how this can be seen in differences in the ways of people working whether they are from a high or low power distance cultures. This can definitely create conflicts if it is not noted before, that cultures' affect is the reason why one might think another one is rude or too informal when they are acting the way is suitable for another culture. Another reason that was mentioned few times in the answers was miscommunication. This can be due to many reasons like language barrier for example or cultural differences since in some cultures people expect very clear job descriptions and in others, they have more responsibility or decision-making power personally. Also, the way of giving feedback might differ a lot in different cultures which can make the employee or a team member getting it personally and to feel anxious or unmotivated. When these differences are not noted in the ways of working with people from different cultures, miscommunication might occur which can turn into a conflict if the other culture is not understood.

Another reason of conflict mentioned was wearing the wrong type of attire in the work environment. In different cultures the dress codes may vary drastically which can create conflicts. It was also pointed out by one of the respondents that conflicts between specific ethnic groups were more common. These groups are in an ethnic conflict in the world, therefore it can be understood that this affects the attitude towards the other group even in a different environment.

In addition, there was a concern mentioned that had to do with salary and the possibility of nationality affecting this, since the position of work was permanent and other people in that department had a higher salary. This of course, is hard to analyse but even the feeling as such may create tension in the team. Most of the examples of conflicts that were mentioned in our questionnaire were accordingly on what has been mentioned previously in the challenges for multicultural teams and the different theories of cultures which was expected. Out of all the respondents, racism was mentioned only once to be an issue in a multicultural team and otherwise the respondents saw the conflicts due to miscommunications mostly, which roots from the lack of intercultural competence.

The respondents were asked if they felt like the manager understood the cultural differences and changed their approach accordingly. As much as 36,4% chose neutral as their answer, which could mean that they did not completely understand the question, they did not pay attention to their manager's approach or something else. However, only close to 22% of the respondents completely agreed that their manager changed the approach. Answering somewhat agree can be interpreted as an option that means there is still something the manager could do better when it comes to choosing their approach to ensure cultural differences are considered and understood. It should be mentioned that only 7,3% of the respondents somewhat disagreed and as less as 3,6% disagreed, which was a positive outcome. To add, the diagram below demonstrates how the answers were divided.

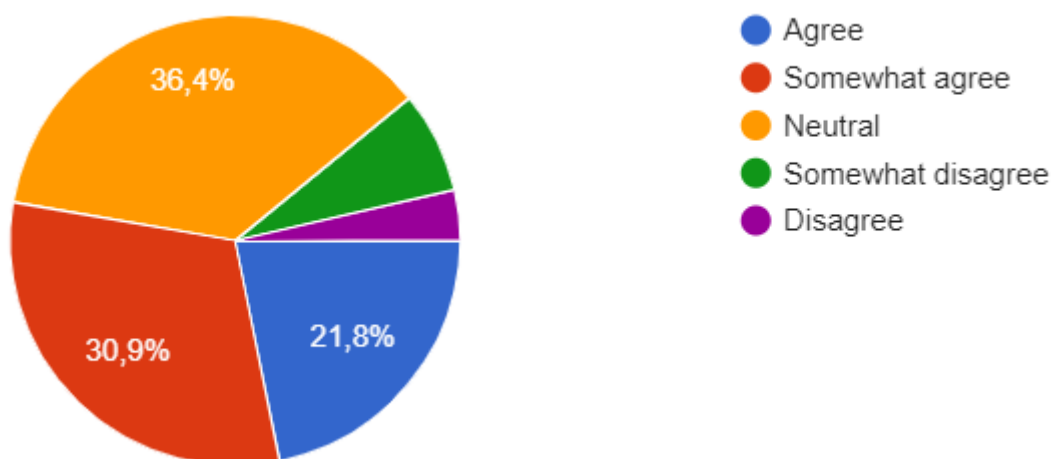


Figure 13. The manager understood cultural differences and changed their approach.

While managers have to change their leading approach due to cultural diversity, employees may have to adapt to different ways of working and receiving orders. Out of all the respondents, only 10,7% somewhat disagreed when asked if they had to adapt to different

ways of working or receiving orders, and 5,4% completely disagreed. Even though some individuals chose the neutral option, the majority of the respondents, 71,4% to be precise, agreed or somewhat agreed that they had to adapt to new or different ways of functioning due to cultural differences. These numbers can be found in the diagram below. Ideally, all team members would compromise in order to reach a mutual agreement of rules and ways of working that suits everyone's cultural backgrounds, but that is not always possible.

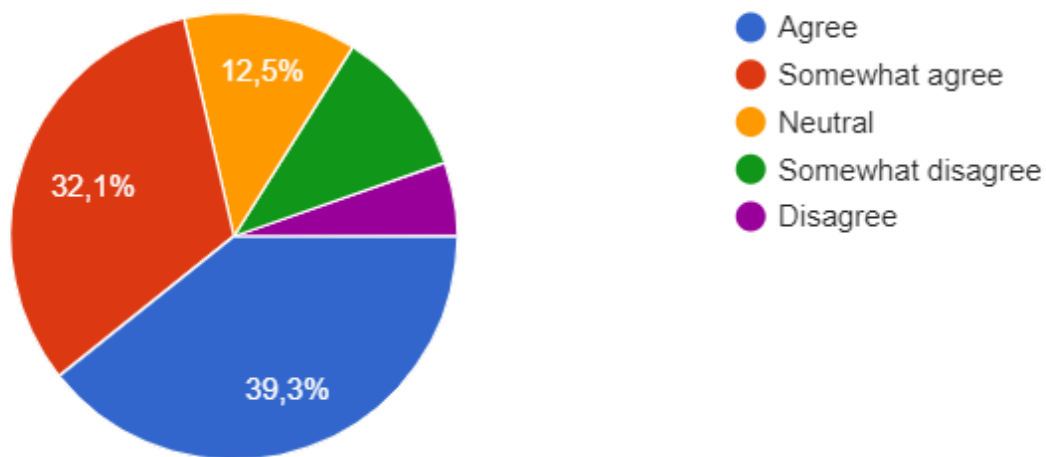


Figure 14. Adapting to different ways of working and receiving orders.

The manager's job is to motivate team members no matter if the team is homogenous or multicultural, which is why it was important to find out how the respondents' managers motivate their team members. As it turns out, 35,7% of the respondents agreed and 30,4% somewhat agreed with the statement that their manager succeeded in motivating all team members equally. The results of this statement are compared on the figure below. In order to motivate all team members equally, managers must acknowledge the cultural diversity in the team and not treat them differently based on their backgrounds. However, surprisingly many respondents felt that their manager succeeded in acknowledging the cultural differences in this specific area. Nevertheless, still 7,1% somewhat disagreed and another 7,1% disagreed, which implies that some managers are not as culturally competent and need to improve in acknowledging cultural differences. The results of this statement are compared on the figure below.

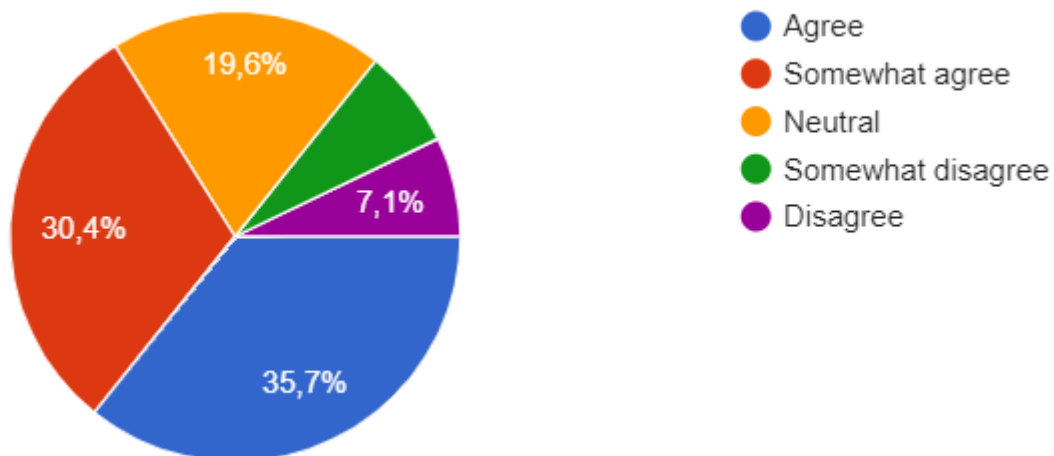


Figure 15. How managers succeed in motivating team members equally.

The next statement that was included in the survey was if the respondents found their managers to get along better with some nationalities in the team than others. The results were rather surprising, as 60,8% agreed or at least somewhat agreed to this statement. It is natural that sometimes managers can get along better with people who share the same culture, customs, ways of communication and such things. However, the fact that so many respondents clearly noticed this and agreed or somewhat agreed could mean that the managers are not treating everyone equally. As shown in the picture below, 26,8% did not think that their manager got along better with some nationalities than others, and 1,8% somewhat disagreed with this statement. To add, 10,7% and 6 respondents answered neutral, which could mean that they have not noticed such behaviour, have not paid attention or did not understand the question.

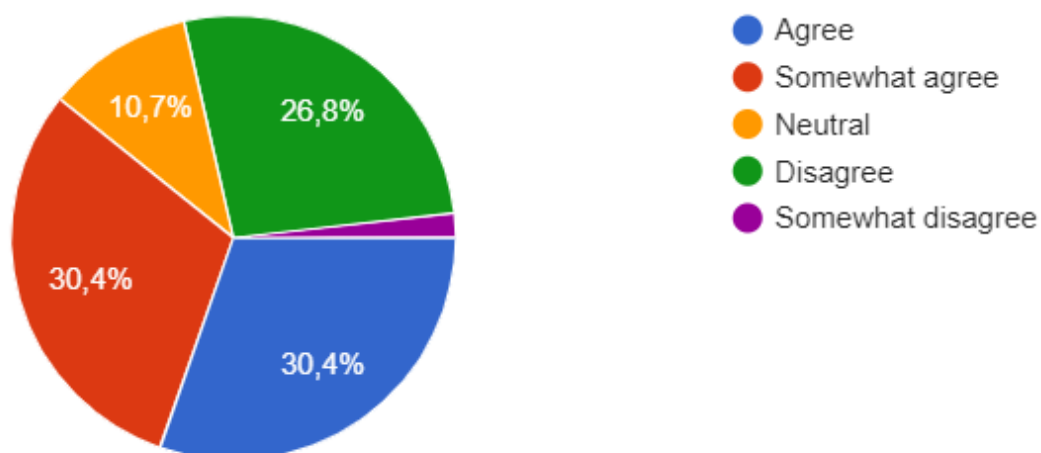


Figure 16. How managers get along with team members.

One important aspect was to find out if the respondents felt like they belonged to the team. These results are very important considering the research question, as it is the manager's duty to ensure all team members feel equal and that they belong to the team. The results for this statement were rather positive, as much as almost 68% of all the respondents felt like they belonged to the team, and 14,3% somewhat agreed. Even though it seems like most of the respondents' managers have done well in making everyone feel like they belong to the team, there were still some who disagreed. A total of 6 individuals and 10,7% disagreed or at least somewhat disagreed with the statement. To add, more people disagreed than somewhat disagreed. 7,1% answered neutral, which could imply that they did not completely feel like they belong but also do not feel like they do not belong. The image below demonstrates the diversity of the responses.

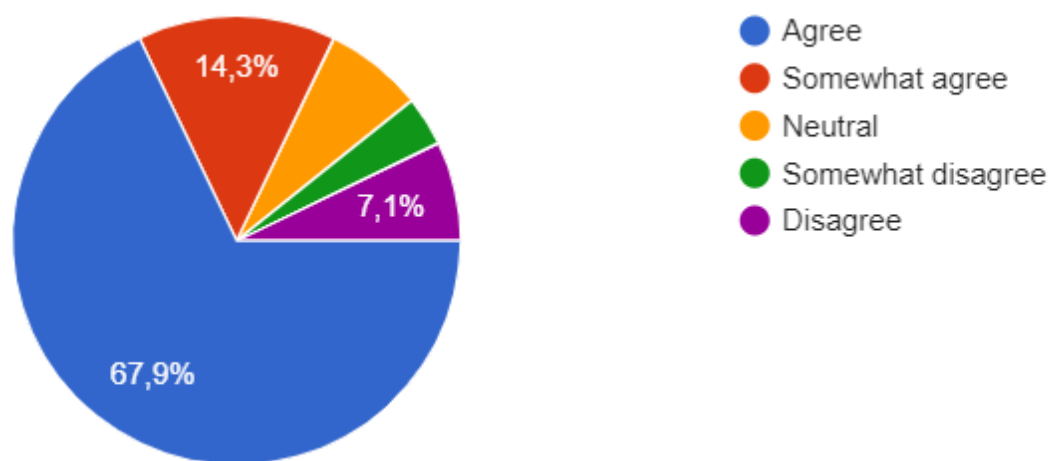


Figure 17. Whether or not respondents felt like part of the team.

The question that was asked next from the respondents was aimed to figure out if the employees felt equally respected as a person compared to the majority of the group. The answers that were collected had some variety to them but not a notable amount. Approximately 59% agreed with the statement of feeling equally respected and 14% somewhat agreed, whereas almost 18% felt neutral. All of these three answers show that the respect towards the team was equal and there were no issues regarding that aspect and leaves 9% of respondents who disagreed or somewhat disagreed, which is still a considerable amount and definitely an issue in a team. The results of this specific question are shown in the figure below.

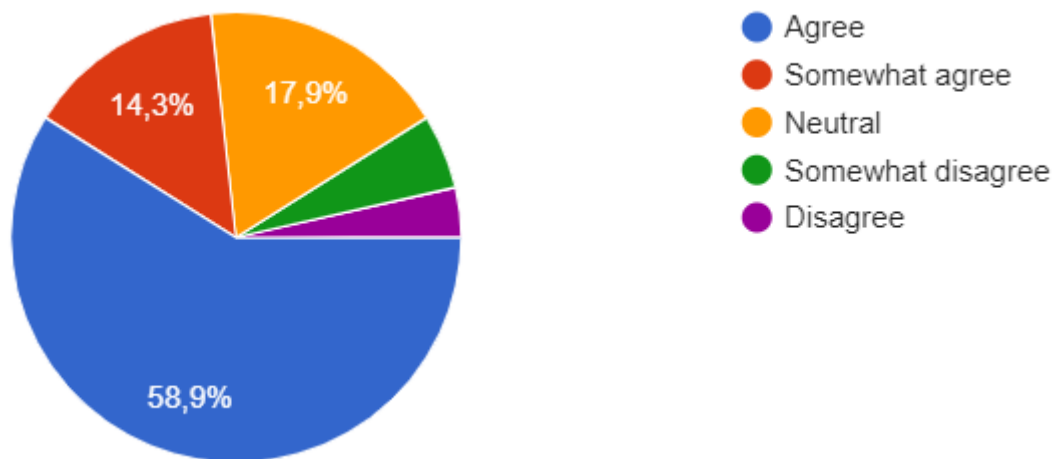


Figure 18. Whether respondents felt equally respected or not.

The next question asked is very similar to the previous question about being equally respected, yet this question specified if the person's culture was respected. The aim of this question was to find out if their cultural background, values and religion for example, are respected. As the figure below shows, this question had only a little variety from the question before. So, it can be said, the respondents who felt equally respected, felt their cultural background respected as well.

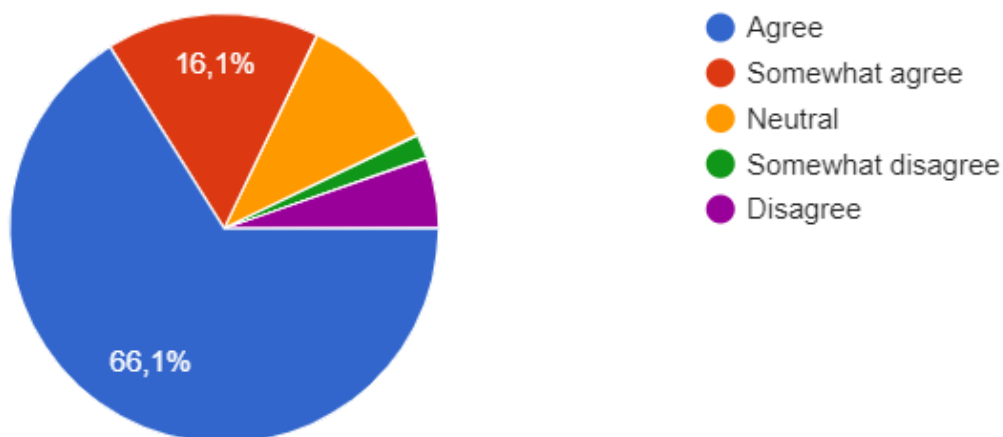


Figure 19. Whether respondents' cultures were equally respected or not.

Considering the research was to find out if managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism, discrimination is a topic that must be included. The objective was to find out if the respondents have felt any kind of discrimination when working in a multicultural team. It should be mentioned that managers cannot necessarily predict that discrimination will happen within the team, but they can stop it and make it a zero-tolerance policy. 73.2% of

the respondents have not faced any kind of discrimination, while 8,9% have definitely faced discrimination and 17,9% have faced discrimination sometimes. These numbers can be seen in the diagram below. The number of respondents who answered yes and sometimes is very high considering the sample size was 56. This means that even in the 21st century discrimination is still a huge problem in multicultural teams, and managers need to acknowledge that fact and focus on their teams' well-being.

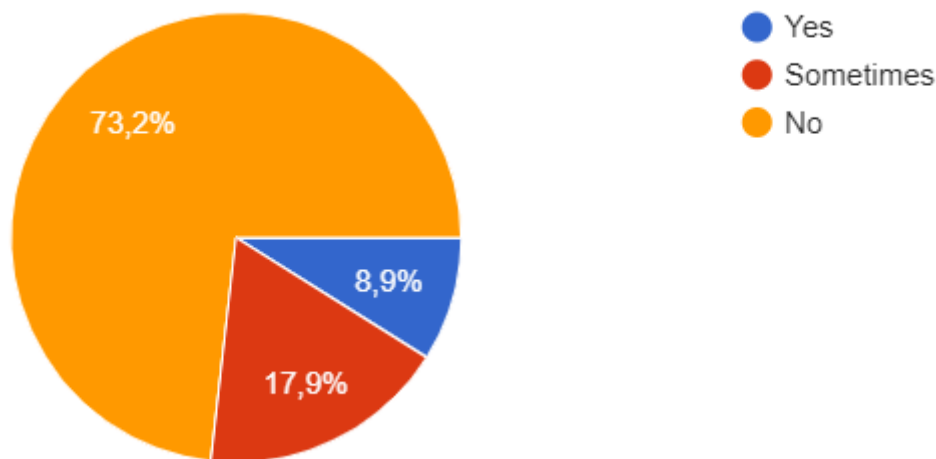


Figure 20. Discrimination in the working environment.

The next question was interwoven with the previous one about discrimination. The purpose of this question was to find out if the respondents received any help, in case they faced discrimination. It should be mentioned that in the earlier question 41 respondents stated that they did not face discrimination, whereas in this question only 35 respondents stated that they were not discriminated. To add, 54 respondents answered this question, which means that at least 5 individuals changed their minds about being discriminated.

Out of all the 19 individuals who were discriminated, in only 3 cases they received help from their manager. The figure below demonstrates that 20,4% received help from a co-worker, 3,7% from someone else and 5,6% did not receive help at all. This implies that the power distance could possibly be too high for the employees to ask help from the manager, but it could also mean that some managers did not succeed when it comes to preventing discrimination. It is surprising how many respondents got help from someone else than their managers, who should make sure that the employees feel safe in the working environment.

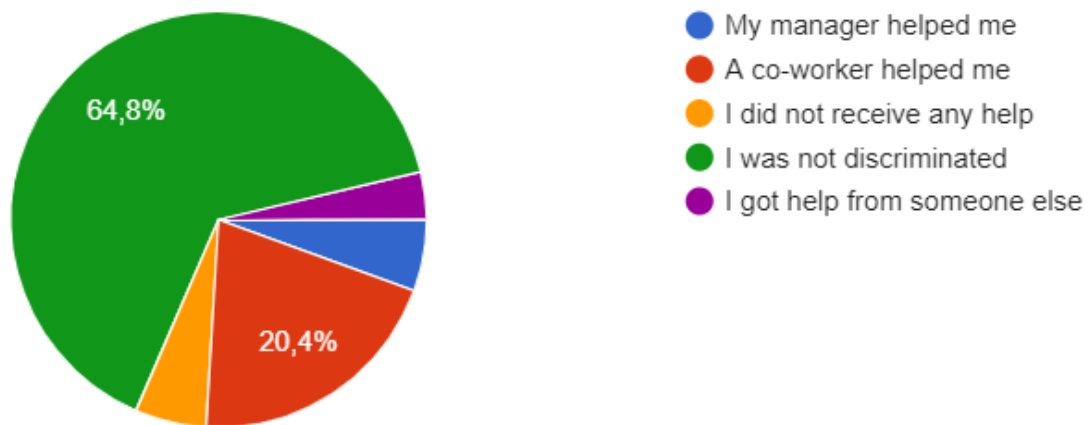


Figure 21. Helping the employees when it comes to discrimination.

An important aspect to understand is how the employees feel in the team and how they perceive culturally diverse teams. The respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the work environment when it was culturally diverse, and this gives an aspect on how well the managers succeeded to create a good work environment and tackle the possible conflicts and challenges of multicultural teams. As it has been mentioned, the manager needs to have intercultural competence, as well as the team members, but the teams need to be managed well, so that they can thrive, and the employees feel satisfied which then increases efficiency. The figure below portrays how the answers were divided with this question and it can be said that the majority of the respondents found their experience satisfying whereas only around 9% were in the middle ground. In this figure, 10 is very satisfied and 1 is not at all satisfied.

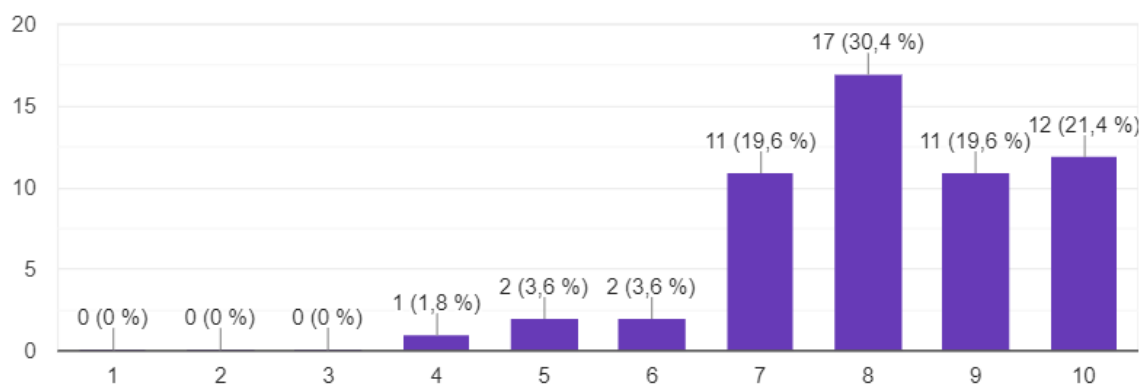


Figure 22. Satisfaction in multicultural teams.

In the last two questions of the survey, the respondents were asked to evaluate their own intercultural competence as well as what they thought to be their managers level of inter-

cultural competence. It can be seen from the figure below, which shows the results to the evaluation of respondents' own view of their intercultural competence, that all the respondents evaluated themselves to be average or above. In this figure, number one stands for poor intercultural competence and number ten refers to excellent. 9% of the respondents evaluated their intercultural competence to be excellent and more than half evaluated themselves to be close to excellent. As it was seen from the earlier results of this survey all the respondents had worked in a multicultural environment so this could mean they have more experience and feel that they succeed well in multicultural settings which would explain these results.

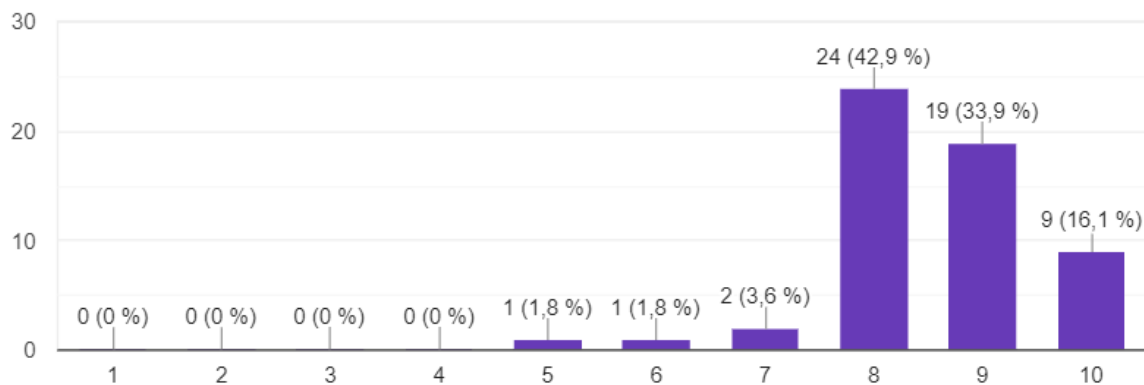


Figure 23. Respondents evaluation of their own intercultural competence.

On the contrary to the evaluation of the respondents' own intercultural competence the results for the managers had more variety to them. More of the people who answered, ranked their supervisors lower of the same options where one is referring to poor competence and ten is referring to excellent. The figure below shows that less managers were ranked to excellent and some were below average or even poor. From these results, it can be interpreted that if the intercultural competence of the respondents' has been above average it is easier for them to understand the intercultural competence of their managers and see the issues with the topic easier.

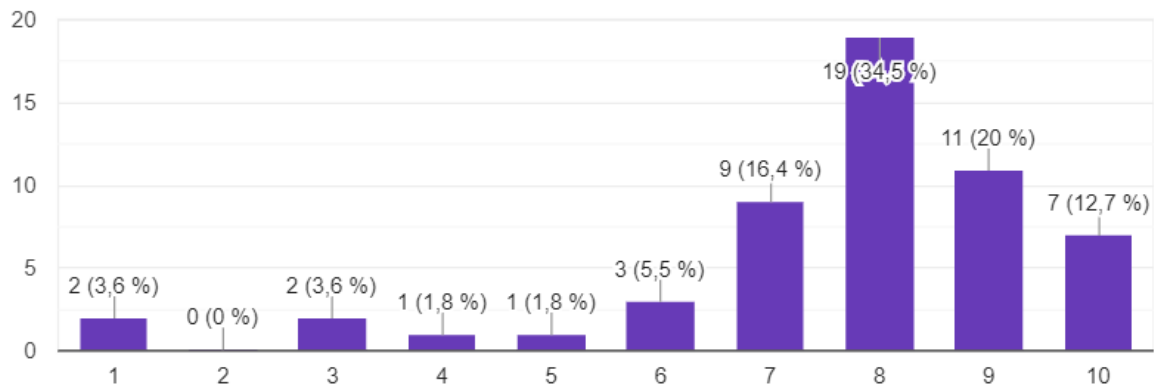


Figure 24. Respondents evaluation of their managers' intercultural competence.

4.4 Analysing the interview results

In order to understand how managers succeed in leading multicultural teams, there are two perspectives that needed to be covered. The survey was aimed to provide the information about how the employees find their managers succeeding and the expert interview was needed to understand the manager's point of view and what are the key elements to succeed and how to tackle the possible conflicts that may arise.

We interviewed a Finnish program chair and line manager, who has over 30 years of experience in different settings of multicultural work environments, from which most is from managerial positions. The interviewee has experience of both multicultural teams as well as international clients.

The first question was to find out the interviewee's strengths in intercultural situations. According to the interviewee, her strengths are related to all kinds of intercultural communication, since she has studied intercultural studies and has also applied these learnings to her everyday life for a long time. She claimed to be very well aware of intercultural dimensions which effect on communication and relationships in a working environment. Communication skills are important especially when it comes to solving conflicts in a multicultural setting, and to make sure team members do not feel like the manager gets along with some nationalities better than others. Over half of the respondents thought their manager gets along better with some nationalities, which could have been due to the lack of communication skills of their manager. Thus, it can be assumed that communication skills are an important factor when looking at whether the managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in teams or not.

Secondly, we asked the interviewee to describe the teams she had worked with in multicultural settings, and to start with the latest experience she had worked as a program

chair in an educational institution in Dubai with more than 80 nationalities. According to the interviewee, she had experience in advertising and marketing communications agencies as an executive of multicultural teams and being in charge for the creative work and profitability, as well as the operations with international clients. She also has an extensive background in the educational field with several multicultural settings, such as intercultural programs, position of a program chair, been in charge of team of lecturers and intercultural students. The educational background combined with the experience of working in such multicultural settings in different managerial positions, it can be said that the interviewee's answers stems from professionalism and personal knowledge gotten through decades, which is accurate and convenient for this research as the perspective of the manager.

After the background of the interviewee was covered, we asked her to explain what in her opinion, are the main differences between multicultural teams and teams consisting of only one national culture. The interviewee explained that the main difference between culturally homogeneous and heterogeneous teams is that as a supervisor point of view, it is easier to be in charge of teams consisting from only one national culture. According to her, this is due to the fact that there are no language barriers, the basic values of team members are rather similar, and there are no radical differences in the cultural dimensions such as power distance that can cause conflicts. This answer supports what has been mentioned in the theoretical framework about the challenges multicultural teams face and why it is so important for the manager to acquire intercultural competence so that the team is able to succeed and be as efficient as possible.

Next, we proceeded to ask what the interviewee considers as the main challenges for multicultural teams. Interestingly, the interviewee provided us with another perspective and pointed out the main challenge is to get everyone to figure out their own culture and then to make them understand the different features of other cultures. According to the interviewee, one must be very well aware of their own culture and that is the starting point. To understand one's own culture and what is the effect of it to their communication, attitudes and values and how to respond to different type of communication and values. She mentioned that it is important to know the main features of every culture one is dealing with but yet not stereotype. In her point of view, understanding one's own culture seems to be often a challenge since people do not often see their own culture to be considered while they are interacting, but she says one has to have a mirror and reflect your own culture. Thus, the interviewee expressed that her way of trying to encounter this challenge, she tries to make the team members to figure out what are the dimensions in their own culture which can be an obstacle for good interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds. Hence, in her opinion, the key is in accepting that both parties carry

the responsibility in teamwork and workplace communication with active listening, accepting, and observing.

Since the people who have worked as team members in multicultural teams were asked about critical incidents they have encountered, we found it important to ask the expert manager as well. As it turns out, the manager has countered plenty of critical incidents during her career, since she has worked in China and Thailand where the cultural norms and working environment are very different to Finland. According to the manager, most of the critical incidents she has encountered have been with male team members. This has happened when men come from cultures where women are not normally in lead, which makes it difficult for them to accept that a female leader does not appreciate or recognize the power distance between men and women in their culture. Incidents like this have happened for example in the United Arab Emirates. On the other hand, in Finland where the manager is from, women and men are seen as more equal and it is not unusual for a female to be in leading or managerial positions, which is why it is not a surprise that these kinds of conflicts can appear in such cultures.

Even though we did not receive answers related to these types of conflicts in the survey, the manager we interviewed still gave some insights about how to solve conflicts in a multicultural environment. For example, she carefully prepared private discussions with the parties involved in the conflict situations and asked how they feel about the incident and why they had behaved or communicated in that way. Her goal was to find a mutual understanding to the issue, which is typical for a cooperative approach in conflict management. The cooperative approach is often viewed as the most effective one, and as mentioned earlier the most successful managers tend to use it. To add, the manager stated that the method has been mostly effective except for one incident, where the other party somewhat refused to cooperate. Another method that she mentioned was to research the team members cultures and possible aspects that could cause conflicts. If all multicultural managers used these methods, conflict solving could be very much easier in multicultural working environments. However, as mentioned before most of the survey respondents' managers did not help to solve the conflict or ignored the cultural differences when solving the conflict. This has a direct effect on how managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism.

For the next question the aim was to get an understanding of how to ensure that every team member feels equal. According to the interviewee it is essential to create a common ground throughout the whole team which starts from recognizing the possible pitfalls in one's own communication deriving from their culture. It is helpful to create a set of shared

norms and comprehension of why and how they work. From the perspective of the interviewee, open discussion is the key and encouraging people to show respect even though they share different set of values and norms. Considering the fact that in the questionnaire we conducted, 61% of the employees agreed with the statement that their manager got along better with some nationalities than others and 14% disagreed with the statement the manager succeeded motivating everyone equally, means that from the employee perspective the managers do not completely succeed in this. Thus, the next question we asked was, what actions the manager takes to ensure that every culture is acknowledged and respected. The interviewee said that the values should be shared so that everyone knows where everyone comes from which helps figuring out the critical points where communication might suffer because of those differences. According to her, not only the differences are what matters, but the similarities in intercultural communication and teams should be found and be pointed out which makes it easier to work together as a team. Furthermore, individual feedback is something the interviewee finds effective to ensure everyone feels acknowledged and respected.

The aim of the next question was to find out how the manager motivates her team members. Since more than 60% of the survey respondents felt like their manager motivates all team members equally, it was interesting to find out how managers succeed in doing so. The first thing that was brought up was good communication, which has also been mentioned many times throughout the theory part of this paper. Some other methods of motivation were informing people equally, being open to all kinds of questions and discussions whenever it was needed, being there for team members in both private and work life, acting very promptly whenever something unexpected happens, being responsible and in general taking care of the team. It was surprising that the manager mentioned being there for team members in both private and working life. Nevertheless, that proves that the manager truly cares about her team members and wants to achieve what is best for them. Another thing worth mentioning is that she brought up the word *equally* many times when answering this question about motivating team members, which is exactly what was asked in the survey. Perhaps most managers succeed in acknowledging the multiculturalism in teams when it comes to motivating their team members, and most of them seem to succeed in motivating them equally.

Discrimination happens unfortunately often when people from different cultural backgrounds are brought together, thus it is important for managers to intervene in case discrimination happens in their team. In fact, the next question was to find out if anyone in the manager's team has ever faced discrimination, and how did the manager solve the problem. As she has experience in multicultural teams over many years, it was expected

that the answer to this question was yes. According to the interviewee, there have been incidents where bad rumours and racism were involved. When it comes to how she solves discrimination issues like this, the answer was open communication. To add, the incidents were sometimes brought up to the upper management in the form of a crisis meeting. Considering both the interview answers as well as the theoretical framework, communication seems to be one of the key factors in managing multicultural teams. Thus, if managers want to succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments, they should master their communication skills.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, multiculturalism can be an advantage for a team if it is managed well and possible conflict situations are tackled. For the next question we wanted to ask the manager perspective of how she finds cultural diversity to be an advantage or a disadvantage for the team. According to the interviewee, cultural diversity is an advantage for a team in a way that it brings more by all means. It brings more perspective to discussions, especially when it is about communications and marketing and such fields. She finds cultural diversity to make the discussion versatile, it brings second opinions and helps the team and its individuals out of the box. On the contrary, she sees the disadvantages occurring if the basics are not solved out and the team working atmosphere is not shared. She says that if team cohesion does not include all the similarities and differences, there might be misconceptions, misunderstandings and difficulties in interaction and communication, which might then cause job dissatisfaction and lead to situations where the team does not work how it is supposed.

As for the last question of the interview, we found it important to ask what is critical when managing a multicultural team. Therefore, anyone who wants to be more successful in managing multicultural teams and reads our paper could gain some valuable information from an experienced manager. According to the interviewee, it is important to understand your own culture. It is important to know what kind of practical applications there will be based on your own culture and how it affects your own behaviour, communication style, leadership style and other important aspects. For example, power distance affects very much, which was mentioned earlier when the interviewee was asked about conflict situations. To continue, it is important to be aware of your own intercultural skills and what is lacking. If a manager knows what are their weaknesses, they can look to improve them and also enhance the intercultural skills that they already have. Lastly, she mentioned that conflicts can be turned into a positive incident by deciding to learn from them, and getting feedback from team members can sometimes be critical. If all managers knew about these critical matters and looked to improve themselves, the questionnaire results could be very different.

4.5 Conclusions

Overall, the results of the survey do not directly answer the question of whether managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments, but along with the interview answers it provides valuable insights on what could be done better. For example, over 25% of the respondents found that their manager's intercultural conflict management skills were poor. Furthermore, the information gained from the interview can help managers in the future to solve conflict situations. It was stated by the manager that carefully planned private conversations have been effective except for one case. When putting it in perspective, she has worked in the field for over 30 years and in only one case this method was not successful. Thus, it could be said that managers can succeed in acknowledging the multiculturalism in their teams better if they take these practical tips into consideration and try to improve their performance in intercultural conflict management.

In general, the results prove that over half of the respondents had a positive experience with their manager when working in a multicultural environment. There was only a rather small number of respondents who had negative experiences, for example discrimination, conflicts, inequality and such. If only the results of this survey and this interview were looked at, it could be easily said that managers succeed in acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments rather well. However, considering that the sample size was quite small in relation to the number of managers and people who work in multicultural teams worldwide, the result of this research is only a small portion of the whole picture. Another viewpoint that should be mentioned is the fact that in such a small sample size there were still people who had negative experiences. For example, 15 out of 56 respondents, which is 26,8%, had faced discrimination and in only 3 cases they received help from their manager. If the sample size was one million and the results remained the same, that would mean 268000 people faced discrimination in their working environment, and only 56000 of them would receive help from their manager.

In conclusion, the research proves that there is still room for improvement when it comes to how the managers succeed in managing their multicultural teams. Even though globalization has been happening for over a century now, which has pushed companies towards more multicultural settings, it is still relatively new to managers. This means that perfection cannot be expected, but as mentioned by the interviewee, managers should continuously keep learning and improving to ensure that the working environment stays healthy and appropriate. Nevertheless, considering the amount of respondents who had positive experiences with their managers it can be concluded that even though there are some things to

improve, the managers in general are on the right track when it comes to acknowledging multiculturalism in working environments.

4.5.1 Validity and reliability

The validity and reliability of the research are an important measurement, especially considering a quantitative research. Reliability means how consistent the measure that is used in the research is. (Middleton 2019). In this case, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used, more precisely an online questionnaire and a semi-structured expert interview. The questions designed for the quantitative questionnaire were very clear and well-thought, and the questions did not try to mislead the respondents to choose a specific answer. To add, the data from the answers was clearly presented in pie charts and bar charts, to ensure the reader can understand how the results were divided. However, more survey and interview participants could increase the reliability of the research.

On the other hand, validity means how accurate the measures as well as the research results are. More precisely, it answers whether results really measure what they are supposed to measure or not. (Middleton 2019). In the case of this research, the accuracy of the interview results is hard to measure considering they are more of the interviewee's opinion rather than actual facts. However, the interviewee is very experienced in her field, and the interview answers were interwoven with the theoretical framework. The questionnaire results measured what they were supposed to measure, the experiences and opinions of people who have worked in multicultural settings. The questionnaire results answered the questions that were asked, and the multiple-choice options were well-thought considering the specific questions that were asked. Therefore, the results of the research are rather valid and reliable. However, as mentioned before both the reliability and validity could be significantly increased if the number of participants was higher, or if the research was limited to one case company.

4.5.2 Suggestions for further research

The first suggestion for further research is to interview more managers, even ones who do not have as much experience in the field. In this paper, the authors decided to use the expert interview as a method and therefore only one manager was interviewed. The answers were compared with both the questionnaire answers as well as the data collected from reliable sources. By interviewing more managers, reasons behind the questionnaire answers could be easier explained. For example, why so many team members find their

manager to get along better with some nationalities than others, or why managers helped to solve discrimination in only three cases.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was not directed to a specific organization, but rather opinions from different people from many different cultures were collected. For example, it is impossible to find out if some organizations have managers that acknowledge multiculturalism better than other organizations' managers. Thus, the questionnaire could be directed to a case company in the future in order to find out how interculturally competent a specific case company's manager is. In this paper, the findings are rather general.

Lastly, one suggestion is that the same questionnaire could be directed to both managers as well as team members in order to make the comparison of the results easier. However, in this timeframe it was impossible to find enough managers to answer the survey and therefore for the results to be reliable. Thus, in further research with more time, both managers and team members could answer the same questionnaire only with the questions slightly modified.

5 Summary

Cultural diversity is an inevitable aspect of managerial knowledge in the 21st century, due to the fact that most of the teams are somehow culturally diverse, whether it is national or regional cultures or different religions et cetera. In this thesis we have gathered the most accurate and convenient theories to support the managerial success in terms of managing culturally diverse teams. These theories are presented in the theoretical framework part and reflected to our own research. As the aim of this thesis was to find out how to successfully manage multicultural teams and figure out how managers succeed in their jobs from the employees' point of view, we managed to get an understanding of the benefits and challenges that multicultural teams and managers face.

This thesis shows that managing multicultural teams has its' own challenges but when these challenges are managed to tackle with the intercultural competence of the manager as well as the team members, it is possible for the teams to thrive and possible provide better results in creativity for example, than culturally homogeneous teams.

The questionnaire that was conducted for this research gave a perspective from total of twelve different nationalities' experiences on a multicultural work environment. The issues that were found in those answers about the managers way of leading and supporting the team members equally could have been tackled by the information provided from the different theories analysed in this report, as well as with the knowledge provided from the expert interview. The theory part supported completely the expert interview and the interview provided more in detail experience-based knowledge which gave the other perspective needed on what type of challenges the work environments might face when they are culturally diverse.

To conclude, multicultural teams require more concentration on how they are led due to the differences among values and dimensions. It is important for the manager to acquire intercultural competence and help the team understand all the different aspects of culture and how to work with one another if there are big cultural differences so that miscommunications can be avoided.

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Appendix 1. Online questionnaire

How old are you?

- ☐ < 20
- ☐ 21-25
- ☐ 26-30
- ☐ 31-35
- ☐ 35 <

What is your gender?

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Non-binary/non-conforming
- ☐ Prefer not to respond

What is your nationality?

Lyhyt vastausteksti
.....

Have you worked, or do you currently work in a multicultural environment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How many different nationalities are in your multicultural team?

- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-10
- ☐ 10 <

Multicultural work environment has a positive impact on my work performance

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree

Do you get free days from work on your cultural holidays? If not, do you wish to get free days on your cultural holidays?

- ☐ I get free days
- ☐ I do not get free days, but I wish I would get them
- ☐ I do not get free days and I do not care

Have you experienced conflicts in the multicultural work environment due to the cultural diversity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you have experienced conflicts, did the manager consider your cultural differences when solving the conflict?

- ☐ The manager considered our cultural differences
- ☐ The manager ignored our cultural differences
- ☐ The manager did not help us solve the conflict
- ☐ I have not experienced conflicts at work environment

If there were critical incidents due to cultural diversity, please give an example:

Pitkä vastausteksti

.....

I felt like the manager understood the cultural differences and changed their approach accordingly.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree

I had to adapt to different ways of working and receiving orders due to cultural differences.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree

My manager succeeded in motivating all team members equally

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree

My manager got along better with some nationalities in the team than others.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree

I felt like I belonged to the team.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree

I felt equally respected as a person when compared to the majority group.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree

My culture was equally respected like any other in our team.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree

Did you feel any kind of discrimination when working in a multicultural team?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

- ☐ My manager helped me
- ☐ A co-worker helped me
- ☐ I did not receive any help
- ☐ I was not discriminated
- ☐ I got help from someone else

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all satisfied ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very satisfied

[illegible][illegible]

Appendix 2. Interview questions

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is your nationality?

What is your title?

What is your background considering multicultural work environments?

MULTICULTURALISM

What are your strengths in intercultural situations?

Please describe the teams you have worked with.

In your opinion, what are the main differences between multicultural teams and teams consisting of one national culture?

What do you consider the main challenges for multicultural teams?

What kind of critical incidents have you encountered due to cultural differences? How did you solve them?

How do you ensure that every team member feels equal?

What actions do you take to ensure that every culture is acknowledged and respected?

How do you motivate your team members?

Has anyone from your team ever faced discrimination? If so, how did you solve the problem?

How do you find cultural diversity to be an advantage for the team?

How do you find cultural diversity to be a disadvantage for the team?

What is critical when managing a multicultural team?