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CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT

Bachelor thesis

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ECONOMIC UNIVERSITY IN BRATISLAVA
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Declaration

I hereby declare, that I have elaborated the final thesis independently and I have listed all the literature used.

Date:

Student signature

Acknowledgement

I hereby would like to thank my supervisor PhDr. Jarmila Rusiňáková, PhD. for the assistance and valuable help in the preparation of the thesis.

Abstract

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This bachelor's thesis examines the impact of cultural differences on the business environment, particularly in the areas of communication, leadership, and conflict resolution. The research employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, with the empirical part based on the analysis of employees' experiences in multicultural teams. Data were collected through surveys and in-depth interviews, providing a detailed insight into the dynamics of intercultural collaboration.

The results highlight the importance of intercultural education, effective conflict resolution strategies, and inclusive leadership in improving cooperation within multicultural teams. The findings of this study can serve as a practical guide for managers and employees working in international environments and contribute to a better understanding of cultural differences in workplace settings.

Keywords: differences, communication, conflict, management, multicultural

Abstrakt

SEBESTYÉN, Sebastián: Kultúrne rozdiely v pracovnom prostredí – Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta Aplikovaných jazykov; Katedra interkultúrnej komunikácie: Školiteľ: PhDr. Jarmila Rusiňáková, PhD – Bratislava: FAJ, rok 2025, 59s.

Táto bakalárska práca skúma vplyv kultúrnych rozdielov na obchodné prostredie, najmä v oblasti komunikácie, vedenia a riešenia konfliktov. Výskum využíva kombináciu kvalitatívnych a kvantitatívnych metód, pričom empirická časť je založená na analýze skúseností zamestnancov z multikultúrnych tímov. Dáta boli získané prostredníctvom dotazníkového prieskumu a hĺbkových rozhovorov, ktoré poskytli detailný pohľad na dynamiku interkultúrnej spolupráce.

Výsledky poukazujú na význam interkultúrneho vzdelávania, efektívnych stratégií riešenia konfliktov a inkluzívneho vedenia pre zlepšenie spolupráce v multikultúrnych tímoch. Zistenia tejto práce môžu slúžiť ako praktický návod pre manažérov a zamestnancov, ktorí pracujú v medzinárodnom prostredí, a prispieť k lepšiemu pochopeniu kultúrnych rozdielov v pracovných kolektívoch.

Kľúčové slová: komunikácia, konflikt, manažment, multikultúrne, rozdiely

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized business environment, cultural diversity has become an everyday reality for us all. As companies expand internationally and form multicultural teams, understanding and managing cultural differences is critical for organizational success. While diversity offers benefits such as innovation, broader perspectives, and access to global markets, it also brings its fair challenges, particularly in communication, leadership, conflict resolution and individual's expectations.

Cultural differences influence how individuals express opinions, interpret messages, and resolve disagreements. A behaviour considered polite or respectful in one culture may be perceived as rude or passive in another one. These misunderstandings can lead to tension within teams, reduce efficiency, and negatively impact collaboration if not properly and promptly addressed. Therefore, managing cultural diversity requires more than acknowledging differences, it demands the implementation of active strategies that promote mutual understanding and inclusion, a safe environment.

Frameworks such as Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory have been instrumental in identifying how values such as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and many other dimensions affect workplace behaviour and decision-making. These models offer valuable tools for managers, seeking to adapt leadership styles and team processes to diverse cultural teams. However, theoretical knowledge must be complemented by practical approaches, such as intercultural communication training, inclusive HR policies, and a generically culturally aware leadership, which respects and supports differences.

Despite the growing awareness of these issues, cultural conflicts remain common in international teams and probably will continue to be so. Many organizations struggle to balance cultural sensitivity with operational efficiency. In some cases, a lack of cultural awareness leads to ineffective teamwork, poor decision-making, high turnover, and so many more potential issues. This thesis focuses on such situations and seeks to understand how cultural differences affect conflict emergence and resolution in a multicultural workplace and/or teams.

The main aim of this bachelor thesis is to explore how cultural differences influence conflict dynamics in diverse business environments and to identify strategies organizations can use to manage these differences effectively. Using a structured questionnaire, the research captures insights from individuals with international work experience, highlighting key areas where cultural misunderstandings are most likely to arise.

The thesis is structured into several parts. The first chapter presents an overview of cultural diversity in business, including communication, leadership, and decision-making. The second chapter defines the research aim and problem statement. The third chapter describes the research methodology. The practical part analyses the results of the questionnaire, and the final section offers recommendations for managing cultural differences in professional settings.

As businesses become more interconnected, the ability to work effectively across cultures will remain a critical competence. This thesis aims to contribute to that understanding by offering both theoretical insight and practical guidance for navigating cultural diversity in the workplace.

1 Current state of the issue at home and abroad

*“Cultural differences can be a double-edged sword for global businesses.”*¹ On one hand, they can lead to misunderstandings, inefficiency, and even lost deals. On the other hand, cultural awareness can be a strategic advantage, opening doors to new markets and fostering innovation.

1.1 Cultural Diversity Management at Workplace

Cultural diversity is any significant difference of an individual shown in a culture. The cultural environment in a workplace is reflecting the present demographics, social and cultural differences on a societal level. For any organisation, to manage a culturally diverse workforce is a great challenge. No person is the same, every individual is different from each other depending on their religion, background, age, education, perceptions etc.²

Sharma explained six reasons for having a diverse workforce, such as:³

- Improved understanding of customer base,
- Increased productivity,
- Greater innovation and creativity,
- Increased skill set,
- Improve new employee and retention,
- A larger talent pool.

In the first reason, “Improved understanding of customer base”, the author mentions that, with a wide range of multicultural workforce with different backgrounds and experiences, it is easier to serve the customers. The next reason is about increased

¹ Appliances, Electrical, and Electronics Manufacturing. The Impact of Cultural Differences on Global Business [online]. Michigan: ETAJ Engineering Solutions, 2024. [ret. 02-12-2024]. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-cultural-differences-global-business-etajes20-agijf>.

² MATEESCU, V. CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE - DISCOURSE AND PERSPECTIVES [online]. On-Line Journal Modelling The New Europe, 2018. [ret. 02-12-2024]. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24193/ojmne.2017.24.02>.

³ SHARMA, U. Managing Diversity and Cultural Differences at Workplace. IPE Journal Of Management, 6, 2016. (2249 - 9040).

productivity, where the author mentions that diversity comes with different ways of thinking, combining ~~of~~ various experiences and expertise, which results in teamwork, greater productivity and employee satisfaction. The third reason explains that having a diverse workforce leads to an increased level of skills, talents, ideas and innovation. The fourth reason mentions that with a diverse environment, that has numerous different skills, it becomes easier to cope with, adjusting to, and further succeed in a constant changing market. Reason number five discusses that new employees ~~that~~ are more comfortable in a multicultural environment since they can easily integrate with everyone, and they also feel more valued. This later benefits into building the expertise and experience of an employee. In the last reason, the author states that rather than viewing and referring to only select groups with potential applicants, organisations can benefit from taking advantage of a larger talent pool, since there are individuals from different backgrounds that provide a variety of skills.

1.1.1 Communication in Culturally Diverse Workplace

There are also many different types of communication styles. It's important to recognise that different ethnic and economic backgrounds communicate in different ways.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of success in diverse workplaces. Understanding how cultural differences change the way people speak and interact is vital. This can affect:

- the language they use,
- the non-verbal cues they give,
- their communication style,
- levels of eye contact.

Communication is fundamental in business, because business is a collaborative activity. Goods and services are created and exchanged through the close coordination of many persons, sometimes within a single village, and sometimes across global distances. Coordination of this kind requires intense communication. Complex product specifications and production schedules must be mutually understood, and intricate deals between trading

partners must be negotiated. *“Communication styles vary enormously around the world, and these contribute to a staggering variety of business styles.”*⁴

1.1.2 Changes and Benefits of Cultural Diversity Management

Diverse workforce is a “double edged sword” that generates both positive and negative results. However, if the diversity management is managed effectively, it can lead to great advantages. There are various challenges and benefits when it comes to diversity management, however they are likely to vary depending on different countries. Another author pointed out that a workplace cultural diversity could be both unfavourable and favourable. *“Unfavourable in the sense that harmony is difficult to achieve amongst work colleagues which could also bring lost productivity, and favourable, in terms of creating a strong force on knowledge because of cultural differences or experience.”*⁵

1.2 Impact of Cultural Differences on Global Business

Cultural differences influence the business environment in many ways, presenting both challenges and opportunities. One of the main difficulties is communication, as different cultures have unique styles of expressing themselves. This can lead to misunderstandings in tone, directness, or even humour. What is considered confident and professional in one culture might be seen as rude or inappropriate in another. Another challenge is business etiquette, which varies worldwide. Differences in punctuality, greetings, negotiation styles, or dress codes can affect professional relationships and influence how individuals are perceived in the workplace. Decision-making is also an area where cultural norms play a significant role. While some cultures follow a strict hierarchical approach where leaders make final decisions, others prefer open discussions and teamwork. Without cultural awareness, these differences may cause frustration, delays, and ineffective collaboration. At the same time, cultural diversity creates many opportunities. Companies that understand and respect cultural differences can adapt their products, marketing, and business strategies to

⁴ HOOKER, John. Cultural Differences in Business Communication [online]. Carnegie Mellon University: Tepper School of Business, 2008. p. 1-2. [ret. 03-12-2024]. Available at: <https://johnhooker.tepper.cmu.edu>.

⁵ MARTIN, G. The Effects Of Cultural Diversity In The Workplace [online]. Journal Of Diversity Management (JDM), 9(2), 89. [ret. 03-12-2024] p. 6-7. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19030/jdm.v9i2.8974>.

local preferences, helping them expand into new markets and increase profitability. Diverse teams also bring a variety of perspectives, which can boost creativity and innovation, leading to better problem-solving and new ideas in product development. Additionally, businesses that demonstrate cultural awareness can build trust and strong relationships with international customers and partners, improving their brand reputation and competitive position in the global market.

To manage cultural differences effectively, companies should focus on several key strategies. Providing employees with intercultural communication training can help them navigate cultural challenges more confidently and avoid misunderstandings. Promoting diversity in the workplace fosters inclusivity, supports innovation, and strengthens team collaboration. Finally, conducting thorough market research enables businesses to understand cultural preferences and consumer expectations, allowing them to tailor their strategies accordingly. By addressing these aspects, organizations can turn cultural diversity into a powerful advantage and create a more inclusive and successful business environment.

By acknowledging both the benefits and difficulties that come with cultural diversity, companies can enhance their performance in the international market.⁶ „*National culture, through its influence on corporate culture, has a strong but often invisible impact on the success of global companies.*“⁷

1.3 Managing cultural differences in business

Managing cultural differences in business is essential for creating a productive, inclusive, and harmonious work environment. Understanding and navigating cultural diversity can lead to improved communication, enhanced teamwork, and better decision-making. As globalization continues to shape the business landscape, companies that manage cultural differences effectively gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

⁶Available at [ret. 01.2025]: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-cultural-differences-global-business-etajes20-agijf/>

⁷ HAMMERICH, K., and Lewis, R. D. (2013). *Fish Can't See Water: How National Culture Can Make or Break Your Corporate Strategy*. John Wiley and Sons, p. 1.

To succeed in diverse environments, businesses must effectively manage cultural differences. Misunderstandings between people from different backgrounds can lead to communication breakdowns, strained relationships, lost opportunities, and costly mistakes. In today's interconnected world, even small cultural missteps can impact a company's reputation, hinder negotiations, or create workplace tensions that reduce productivity.

To prevent these issues, companies should cultivate cultural intelligence by prioritizing cultural awareness, open dialogue, and cross-cultural training. Strong communication skills enable teams to:⁸

- adapt their strategies,
- promote collaboration,
- build strong relationships across cultures.

Successfully navigating cultural differences requires education, flexibility, and empathy. By recognizing cultural nuances, adjusting approaches, and fostering inclusivity, businesses can strengthen international teams, form valuable partnerships, and tackle global challenges more effectively. Embracing cultural diversity not only enhances teamwork and innovation but also helps businesses expand into new markets and connect with a broader customer base. „*Being culturally sensitive and adaptable is important when dealing with different cultures in the business environment.*“⁹

1.3.1 Best Practices for a Diverse Workforce

Farren and Nelson have described the four best practices for a healthier diverse workforce. The first practice is to have an open communication, since communication is what holds an organisation together. An open communication is the first critical step, which subsequently must be followed by taking actions that shows the concern and needs of an

⁸ HAMILTON, Robin, N. *How to Handle Cultural Differences in Business* [online]. Ipswich, A Round Robin Production Company, 2023. [ret. 03-12-2024]. Available at: <https://fleximize.com/articles/229269/cultural-differences-business>.

⁹ FLEXIMIZE. *Cultural Differences in Business*. [online]. 2023 [ret. 2025-02-23]. Available at: <https://fleximize.com/articles/229269/cultural-differences-business>

employee in a workplace. In companies where the workers respect each other, they are more successful in retaining and maintaining the employees. Another practice is to educate and give training about other people's cultures, and to make them more sensitive towards discrimination and other employee's feelings. Some companies have training towards how to handle situations regarding the occurrence of cultural clashes. The third practice is to provide mentors, to decrease discrimination. Allocating mentors to employees, aids in networking possibilities that can often be missed out for women, people of colour, and disabled people at work. Finally, the last practice is to make managers more accountable, by including diverse accountability in the job descriptions to intensify their actions towards diverse workforce. Even though the top managers believe that diversity programs are significant, however not many companies link the diversity practices to performance and compensation.¹⁰

1.3.2 Approaches to Managing Cultural Differences

*"Effective global leaders must recognize that managing cultural diversity is not about eliminating differences but about leveraging them for innovation and problem-solving."*¹¹

The first and the weakest approach is to ignore the differences, where the managers in an organisation do not see the cultural differences, or the effect it has on the company. The manager in this situation sees diversity as irrelevant and believes in what they do is the correct way. Another method is to minimise the differences, which is followed by an ethnocentric organisation. In this approach the managers see the diversity itself as a problem of the source and reduces the problem by eliminating diversity overall. The last strategy is to manage the differences, where an organisation sees the effects of having a diverse workforce and also its advantages and disadvantages. The managers in this organisation adopt a synergistic approach, where they try to minimise the issues by managing the impact of cultural diversity rather than eliminating the diversity itself and instead increasing the advantages of a diverse

¹⁰ FARREN, C. – NELSON, B. *Retaining Diversity. Executive Excellence*, 1999. 16(5).

¹¹ TROMPENAARS, F., and HAMPDEN-TURNER, C. (1997). *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business* (2nd ed.). Nicholas Brealey Publishing. (1997, p. 14).

workforce. In this strategy, the organisations train the managers and employees to identify cultural differences and to turn them into advantages.

1.3.3 The Role of Human Resources in Diversity Management

Human Resource Management plays a key role in fostering diversity and inclusion within an organization. Effective diversity management enhances performance when HR practices support a multicultural workforce and leverage diversity as a strategic advantage. HRM ensures compliance with equality policies while actively integrating diversity into the organizational culture and strategy.

A core Human Resource responsibility is implementing fair recruitment, selection, and promotion processes to eliminate bias and ensure equal opportunities. Additionally, HR develops inclusive workplace policies, such as flexible work arrangements and mentorship programs, to enhance employee engagement and retention.¹²

Human Resource Management also provides training on cultural competency and bias awareness, fostering collaboration in diverse teams. To ensure long-term success, Human Resource continuously assesses diversity initiatives, using feedback and performance data to drive improvements. By embedding diversity into its strategy, HRM enhances innovation, productivity, and the organization's competitive advantage.

Diversity in the workplace encompasses a broad spectrum of differences, including but not limited to cultural, gender, age, and experiential aspects. Each element brings unique viewpoints and skills, creating a rich blend of ideas and perspectives.¹³

¹² ARMSTRONG, M., and TAYLOR, S. (2020). Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice (15th ed.). Kogan Page

¹³ Available at [ret.01.2025]: <https://www.oxfordcollegeofmanagement.com/blog/leveraging-diversity-for-competitive-advantage/>

1.4 Conflicts in a multicultural work environment

In today's globalized business environment, cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace have become a significant challenge due to the diverse workforce.

Conflict is generally defined as a disagreement or clash between individuals or groups due to differences in interests, values, or perceptions (Rahim, 2011). In a multicultural workplace, conflicts often arise from variations in communication styles, leadership expectations, and problem-solving approaches.¹⁴

Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context communication theory explains how indirect vs. direct communication styles can lead to misunderstandings. Additionally, Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory highlights power distance as a key factor in workplace tensions, as hierarchical and egalitarian cultures perceive authority differently.

Effective conflict resolution strategies, such as cross-cultural training, mediation, and adaptive leadership, are essential for fostering collaboration and minimizing tensions. By understanding cultural differences, organizations can create a more cohesive and productive work environment.¹⁵

1.4.1 Conflict Resolution Process

Effectively managing conflicts in the workplace requires a structured approach. The first step is to **acknowledge the conflict and set goals** by reflecting before engaging, inviting all involved parties, and clearly defining the purpose of the discussion to work toward a positive resolution. Next, it is essential to **share perspectives** by encouraging open dialogue, actively listening, paraphrasing viewpoints, and recognizing both positive and negative contributions while identifying commonalities and differences.

Once perspectives have been shared, the focus shifts to **building understanding**, which involves clarifying concerns, finding common ground, and exploring differences using neutral language while considering assumptions, interests, and emotions. After a thorough

¹⁴ RAHIM, M. A. (2011). *Managing conflict in organizations* (4th ed.). Transaction Publishers.

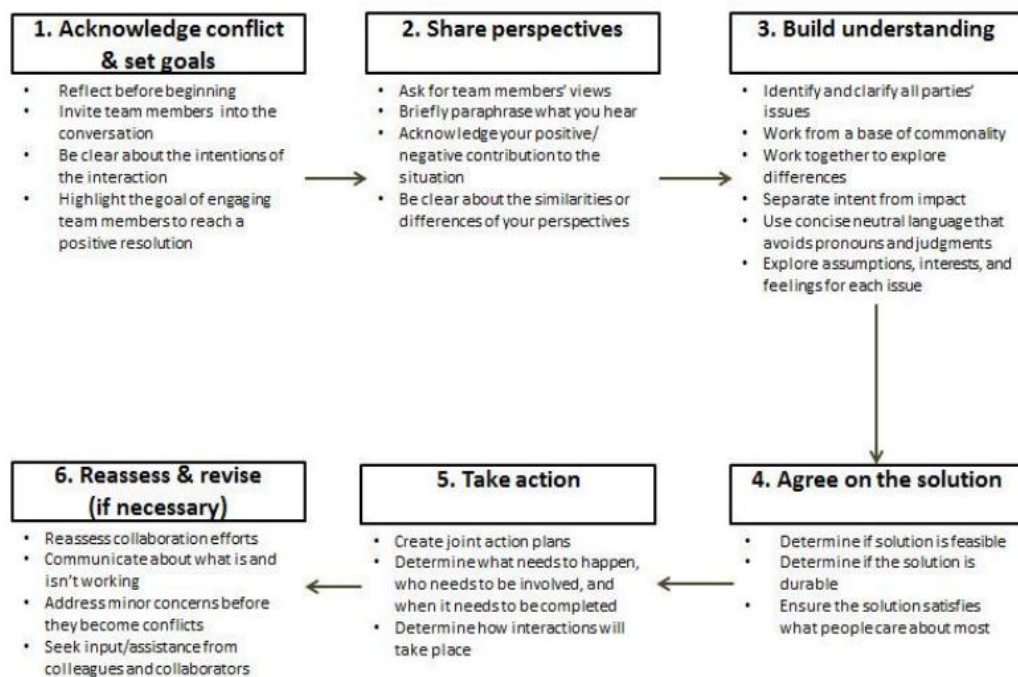
¹⁵ HALL, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Doubleday.

discussion, the parties involved must **agree on a solution** by assessing whether the proposed resolution is feasible, durable, and aligned with the team’s priorities.

With a solution in place, the next step is to “**take action**” by developing a concrete plan that specifies responsibilities, timelines, and how interactions will be managed. Finally, it is crucial to **reassess and revise** if necessary, ensuring continuous evaluation of progress, addressing minor issues early, and seeking input from colleagues to refine collaboration and maintain a productive working environment.

MANAGING CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE

Picture 1 MANAGING CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE



Source: *Conflict management process Journal of Informatics Education and Research* ISSN: 1526-4726 Vol 4 Issue 3 (2024)

The effective management of cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace is not just about resolving disputes but about creating a culture of inclusivity and respect. By adopting best

practices and strategies, organizations can turn cultural diversity into a competitive advantage, driving innovation and fostering a positive work environment.¹⁶

1.4.2 Diversity in the Workplace

Conflicts in a multicultural work environment are inevitable, as differences in cultural backgrounds, values, and communication styles can create misunderstandings, friction, and tension among team members. However, these conflicts can also offer opportunities for growth, innovation, and learning if managed effectively.

Most companies are currently adopting having a diverse team. Largely having a diverse team guarantees long-term success in managing cultural conflict. Besides common sense, scientific studies have also revealed the fact that people with distinctive points of view and personalities increases the creativity of a team in solving their tasks. This is an honest assumption if we consider that every team member is pulling in the same direction.

1.4.3 Leadership and Cultural Awareness

In an increasingly globalized world, leadership requires more than traditional management skills. The rise of international business operations, multicultural teams, and cross-border collaborations necessitates a heightened sensitivity to cultural differences. Effective leadership in such a context extends beyond understanding business strategies and financial metrics; it encompasses the ability to navigate and manage cross-cultural conflicts. Leadership training that emphasizes cultural awareness and sensitivity has emerged as a crucial component for managing and mitigating these conflicts, fostering inclusive environments, and enhancing organizational performance.

Cultural awareness in leadership involves recognizing and understanding the diverse cultural backgrounds of team members. It requires leaders to go beyond superficial knowledge of cultural norms and stereotypes and engage deeply with the underlying values,

¹⁶ WANG, J. Strategies for managing cultural conflict: Models review and their applications in business and technical communication [online]. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 2018. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281617722263>

beliefs, and practices that shape individuals' behaviours and interactions. Such awareness is vital for preventing and addressing conflicts that arise from cultural misunderstandings. For instance, what might be perceived as a minor communication error in one culture could be seen as a significant offense in another. Leaders who are attuned to these cultural nuances are better equipped to address issues sensitively and constructively, fostering a more harmonious work environment.¹⁷

1.4.4 Organizational Success through Cultural Awareness

In addition to improving internal dynamics, culturally aware leadership can enhance an organization's external relationships. In global business dealings, understanding and respecting cultural differences can lead to more successful partnerships and negotiations (Hurain, 2023). Leaders who demonstrate cultural sensitivity are better able to build rapport with international clients, partners, and stakeholders. This ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions with grace and respect can significantly impact an organization's reputation and success in the global marketplace. Leadership training focused on cultural awareness and sensitivity is essential for managing and mitigating cross-cultural conflicts in today's diverse and interconnected world. By equipping leaders with the skills to understand and respect cultural differences, such training enhances conflict resolution, fosters inclusive work environments, and supports organizational success (Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2019). As globalization continues to shape the business landscape, investing in culturally competent leadership will be critical for achieving sustainable growth and maintaining a competitive edge.

1.5 The Influence of National Culture on Decision-Making Styles

According to Hofstede (2001), “culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group from another.”¹⁸ National culture plays a crucial role in shaping managerial decision-making processes. One of the most recognized frameworks for analysing cultural differences is **Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory**, which

¹⁷ EREZ, M. Cross-cultural and global issues in organizational psychology, 2011.

¹⁸ HOFSTEDE, Geert. Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001, p.9. ISBN 978-0-8039-7323-7.

identifies key aspects that influence decision-making styles across cultures. These dimensions help explain why managers from different cultural backgrounds may approach decisions in distinct ways.

Cultural dimensions significantly influence decision-making processes across different societies. **Power distance** plays a crucial role, as in high power distance cultures such as China and Russia, decision-making tends to be centralized, with managers making unilateral choices and employees expected to follow instructions. In contrast, low power distance cultures like Sweden and the Netherlands favour a participative style, encouraging employees to contribute to the decision-making process.

Another key factor is **individualism versus collectivism**. In individualistic cultures, such as the USA and the UK, personal responsibility is emphasized, and individuals are expected to make independent decisions. On the other hand, collectivist cultures like Japan and Mexico prioritize consensus-based decision-making that aligns with the interests of the group.

Uncertainty avoidance also shapes decision-making approaches. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, including Germany and Greece, rely on structured decision-making with clear rules and regulations. Meanwhile, countries like Denmark and Singapore, which have low uncertainty avoidance, are more comfortable with flexible and innovative approaches.

The contrast between **masculinity and femininity** further differentiates decision-making styles. In masculine cultures, such as Japan and Italy, competitive, result-oriented decisions are prioritized. In contrast, feminine cultures like Sweden and Norway focus on collaboration, inclusivity, and work-life balance.

Another important dimension is **long-term versus short-term orientation**. Societies with a long-term outlook, such as China and South Korea, make decisions based on future benefits and sustainability. In contrast, short-term oriented cultures, including the USA and Nigeria, tend to focus on immediate outcomes and quick returns.

Finally, the distinction between **indulgence and restraint** affects the degree of flexibility in decision-making. Indulgent cultures, such as Brazil and the USA, encourage open, adaptable approaches, whereas restrained cultures like Russia and Pakistan adhere to stricter societal norms and guidelines. These cultural dimensions collectively shape how decisions are made in different parts of the world, influencing business, leadership, and daily interactions.

1.5.1 Decision-Making in Different Cultural Contexts

The way managers make decisions varies significantly across different cultural settings. Understanding these differences is essential for multinational corporations and global business leaders.

1.5.2 Decision-Making in Western vs. Eastern Cultures

In **Western cultures**, such as the USA and Germany, decision-making is often rational, analytical, and individual-driven. Managers rely on data, facts, and logical reasoning. Conversely, in **Eastern cultures**, such as China and Japan, decisions are often based on relationships, long-term considerations, and a balance between rationality and intuition.

1.5.3 Hierarchical vs. Egalitarian Decision-Making

Cultures with **high power distance** (e.g., India, Saudi Arabia) tend to have hierarchical decision-making structures, where top executives hold the authority. In contrast, **egalitarian cultures** (e.g., the Netherlands, Canada) encourage decentralized decision-making, where employees at all levels participate.

1.5.4 Risk-Taking vs. Risk-Averse Approaches

Countries with **low uncertainty avoidance**, such as the UK and the USA, embrace risk and encourage innovation in decision-making. On the other hand, **high uncertainty avoidance** cultures, like Japan and France, prefer structured and cautious decision-making to minimize potential failures.

1.5.5 Implications for International Business and Management

Understanding cultural differences in decision-making helps multinational companies navigate global business environments effectively. Adapting managerial strategies to fit cultural expectations can improve cooperation, negotiation, and overall business performance. Managers operating in diverse environments must develop **cultural intelligence** to balance different decision-making styles while ensuring effective communication and collaboration.¹⁹

¹⁹ ¹⁹ HOFSTEDE, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/> [ret. 01.2025]

2 Aim of the thesis

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to explore how cultural differences influence the emergence and resolution of conflict in a multicultural work environment. The thesis will focus on identifying specific areas where differences in communication, perceptions of authority and problem-solving styles can lead to misunderstandings and tensions between employees. Further, the thesis will aim to analyse effective strategies that organizations and managers can use to mitigate these conflicts, including cross-cultural training, mediation, and adapting leadership styles. The thesis will provide recommendations for managing multicultural teams to increase the effectiveness of collaboration and minimize the negative impact of cultural differences on working relationships and team performance.

Problem: Cultural differences greatly affect how individuals communicate, understand relationships between workers, and solve problems. These differences can lead to an increased likelihood of conflicts in teams that work in an international or multicultural environment. Conflicts can arise because of different expectations about interaction, decision-making, problem-solving, and how opinions and feelings are expressed in the workplace.

Hypothesis 1: Employees working in multicultural environments are more likely to experience interpersonal misunderstandings and conflict due to cultural differences in communication styles, leadership expectations, and workplace behaviour.

Hypothesis 2: Organizations that actively promote intercultural awareness, inclusive leadership, and conflict resolution strategies are better equipped to reduce the negative impact of such differences and improve team collaboration and effectiveness.

3 Work methodology and research methods

3.1 Objective of the Empirical Part

The practical part of this bachelor thesis aims to empirically explore how cultural differences influence professional working dynamics in multicultural workplaces. More specifically, it seeks to understand the role of our cultural background in shaping employee communication preferences, approaches to resolution of conflicts, attitudes towards the hierarchy and the leadership, and perceptions of organizational support in handling cultural diversity and cultural differences in the workplace.

This empirical component builds directly upon the **aim, problem, and hypothesis** formulated in the previous chapter of the thesis. The aim is to examine how intercultural differences affect team dynamics, particularly in the emergence and resolution of conflict. The problem lies in the fact that such differences, if unmanaged, may lead to misunderstandings and reduced team cohesion, collaboration and feeling. The hypothesis assumes that conflict is more likely in multicultural environments due to these immense differences but can be effectively mitigated if organizations implement inclusive leadership practices, intercultural training, and clear communication strategies to the benefit of the whole organization.

To investigate this hypothesis, a **quantitative research method** was applied using a structured questionnaire with two open-ended question possibilities. The data obtained from this survey serves as the basis for an **empirical analysis** that allows measurable patterns and statistically interpretable findings to emerge due to the selected method. The questionnaire was carefully designed to reflect the key dimensions of the hypothesis, offering closed-ended response options to enable comparative analysis across participants in the easiest sense.

The research was conducted through an online questionnaire distributed in **February 2025**, with a total of **19 respondents** participating. These individuals represent a diverse range of professional backgrounds within the **hospitality and service industries**, including

hotel management, reception, culinary services (chefs, cooks), waitstaff, housekeeping, gym reception, and ice hockey facility services.

The respondents come from **three nationalities: Slovak (12 participants), Finnish (5 participants), and Hungarian (2 participants)**. Their ages range from **under 17 to over 56**, with the majority falling into the **18-55 age group**. Specifically, there are **5 participants aged 18-25, 4 aged 26-35, 4 aged 36-45, 4 aged 46-55, 1 under 17, and 1 over 56**.

Regarding experience with multicultural teams, **14 participants noted that cultural differences sometimes create challenges but can be managed, while 5 respondents viewed cultural diversity as enriching and beneficial for teamwork.**

The survey aimed to explore **intercultural communication, workplace conflict resolution, and the impact of cultural diversity in professional settings**. By analysing respondents' communication styles, training experiences, and attitudes towards cultural differences, the study provides insights into current challenges and opportunities for fostering a more inclusive work environment.

This research follows a **quantitative methodological approach** for two main reasons. First, the use of closed-ended questions provides clarity, consistency, and comparability of data across all respondents with a very clear outcome. Second, it enables the identification of patterns and trends regarding how employees experience and evaluate cultural differences in their own workplaces and how they shape their experience. The choice of a survey-based design allows for a broader data set and a statistically informed interpretation of findings, which is appropriate for testing the hypothesis and answering the core research questions.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The research instrument used in this study was a **standardized questionnaire** consisting of **15 multiple-choice questions**. All questions were **closed-ended**, with predefined response options to ensure uniformity of answers and facilitate later analysis, except two questions that allowed a qualitative answer, which was not taken up by a single respondent unfortunately. The questionnaire was designed with the purpose to cover the key

thematic areas derived from the theoretical part of the thesis - specifically the communication preferences, the conflict resolution styles, the leadership perceptions, the organizational support mechanisms, and the general impact of cultural diversity in teams within organizations.

Below is an overview of the questionnaire content and its underlying logic:

Section 1: Communication and Conflict

1. **Preferred communication style:** Assesses whether individuals lean toward direct, indirect, or situationally adaptive communication within their workplace.
2. **Frequency of conflict due to cultural differences:** Measures how often cultural diversity leads to tension in the workplace.
3. **Conflict resolution strategy:** Captures the most common method used by respondents when dealing with interpersonal issues within their workplace - and if conflicts occur.
4. **Attitude toward authority of supervisors:** Explores preferences around decision-making and leadership roles within their organization, and what preferences respondents do have.
5. **Perception of hierarchy:** Evaluates whether respondents value positional authority or prefer flat organizational structures.
6. **Reaction to culturally different problem-solving styles:** Assesses adaptability and openness to approaches in relation to problem-solving styles that stem from different cultural backgrounds.

7. **Core values in conflict resolution:** Identifies which values (*e.g., harmony, honesty/openness, speed*) are prioritized when handling conflict inside of their organization.

Section 2: Organizational Culture and Feedback

8. **Handling of criticism:** Looks at workplace norms regarding feedback delivery connected to criticism of someone.
9. **Experience with intercultural training:** Evaluates whether companies provide formal diversity education and how useful it is perceived to be by the individual respondents.

Section 3: Perception of Cultural Impact

10. **Impact of cultural differences on daily work:** Assesses how much cultural diversity influences everyday operations within the organization.
11. **Overall experience with culturally diverse teams:** Measures whether diversity is seen as enriching, neutral, or problematic within their working environment.

Section 4: Organizational Support

12. **Effectiveness of company's diversity approach:** Evaluates the satisfaction with the employer's strategy for managing cultural issues within their working environments.
13. **Support for conflict resolution:** Evaluates whether employees feel supported in addressing culture-based conflicts or less so.

Section 5: Exposure and Recommendations

14. **Frequency of interaction with colleagues from other cultures:** Provides insights into the degree of multicultural occurrence of teamwork within the working environment.

15. **Suggestions for improving intercultural collaboration:** Identifies what employees believe would help, such as training, communication, or policy development regarding to improve the multicultural collaboration within the organization.

This questionnaire was designed to progress from individual attitudes towards the topic (*like communication preferences*) to broader organizational experiences and opinions (*like company effectiveness*) within the organization. This structure ensured a logical flow and helped respondents gradually build on their answers as they advanced through the online form.

The chosen format enabled a **statistical interpretation** of cultural awareness and management practices across a diverse sample. The results of this questionnaire are presented in the following chapter, where data analysis, interpretation, and comparison with theoretical models will be conducted.

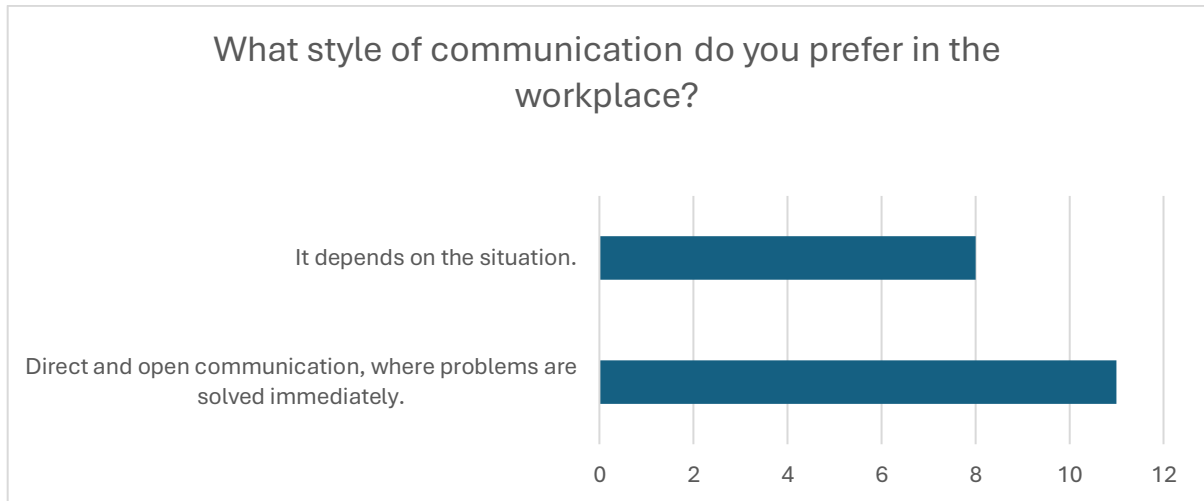
4.1 Results / Data Analysis

The survey that was conducted in this research involved 19 respondents, primarily from the hotel and hospitality industry, representing mainly Slovak, but also Hungarian and Finnish nationalities within different age groups. All respondents had experience working in multicultural teams to a varying degree, making their insights especially valuable for the conducted empirical analysis. Below we are analysing each of the 15 questions from the structured questionnaire in detail, interpreted through the lens of the thesis hypothesis and the theoretical context outlined previously.

Q1: What style of communication do you prefer in the workplace?

Out of 19 respondents, 11 preferred direct and open communication, while 8 selected “*it depends on the situation.*” Notably, none opted for indirect communication. This overwhelming preference for mainly for clarity (= *direct and open*) and situational flexibility reflects a practical and adaptive communication style. The dominance of direct communication aligns with low-context cultures, yet the large number who prefer situational adaptability suggests intercultural awareness and maturity within their working environments.

Table 1 What style of communication do you prefer in the workplace?

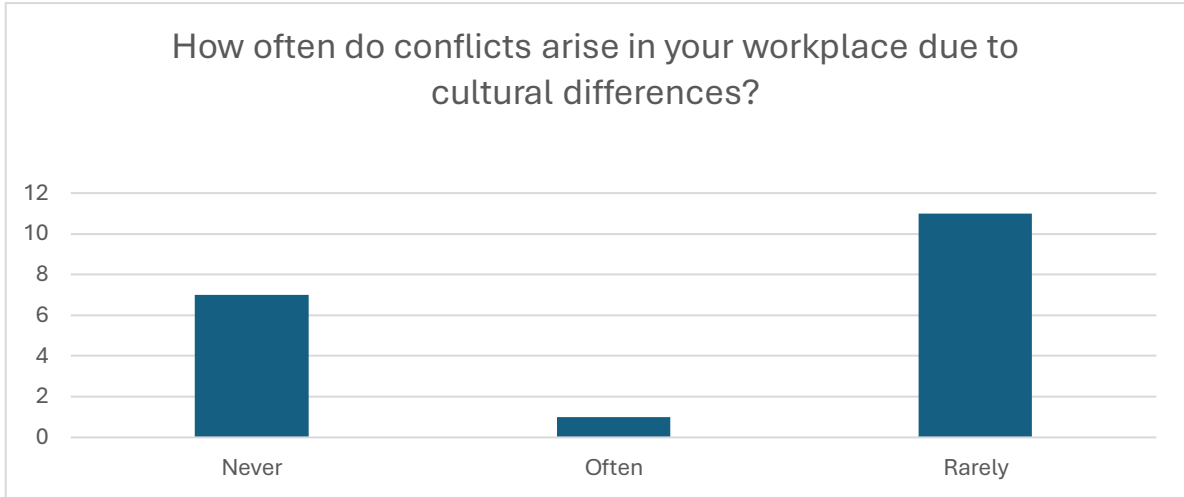


Q2: How often do conflicts arise in your workplace due to cultural differences?

The results show that 11 respondents experience such conflicts rarely, 7 say never, and only one reports frequent/often issues. This supports the idea that while diversity exists, it does not necessarily result in open conflict within the organization - either because tensions are resolved before escalating, or because teams have adapted informal coping mechanisms within each other. It may also indicate that individuals have developed or have been brought up in situations where they learned it, personal intercultural competencies that help them

navigate potential frictions with ease. Respondents might also be aligned with each other to such a degree, that conflicts do not arise (anymore).

Table 2 How often do conflicts arise in your workplace due to cultural differences?



Q3: How do you resolve conflicts in your workplace?

Nine respondents selected “*direct discussion*”, while four rely on self-resolution of the given conflicts, and two on mediation through a third-party and/or supervisor. Four noted that conflicts do not usually occur in their workplace. This suggests a cultural preference for autonomy and openness in resolving conflicts, potentially signalling a very trust-based team dynamic. However, the relatively low use of supervisors or mediators may also reveal the absence of formal conflict resolution frameworks - highlighting a possible gap in organizational support structures around conflict resolution in the workplace.

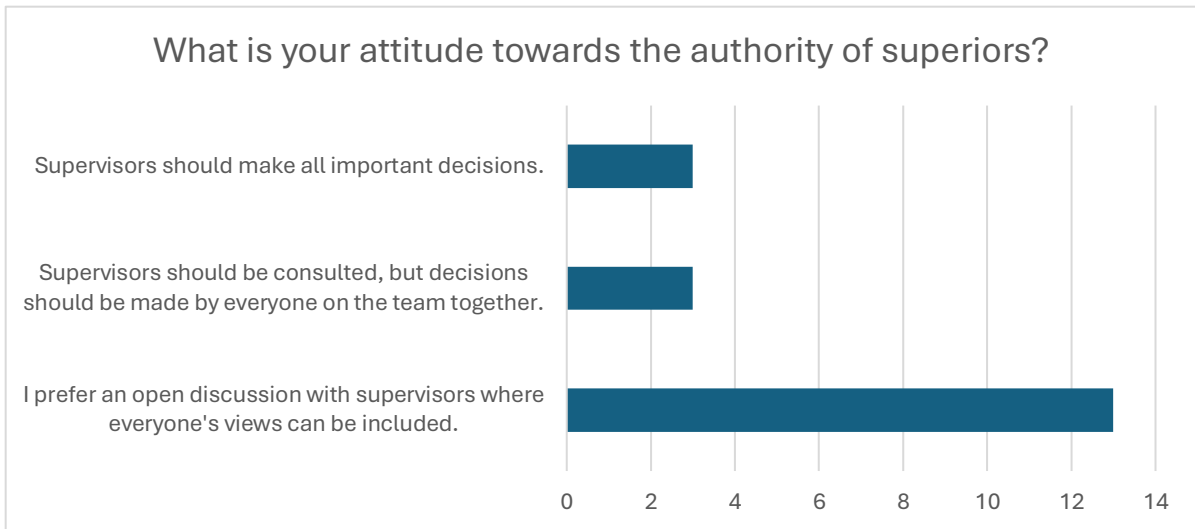
Table 3 How do you resolve conflicts in your workplace?



Q4: What is your attitude towards the authority of superiors?

Thirteen respondents favoured open discussions with superiors, where everyone's views can be included. While only three supported strict hierarchical decision-making from top-down. Another three preferred shared decision-making within teams with supervisors acting like consultants. These answers indicate that most participants operate within or prefer flat hierarchical cultures. The result supports Hofstede's model where low power distance is associated with participatory leadership - a principle often found in literature promoting inclusive and collaborative workplaces. It is interesting to note, that exactly three respondents want to make the decision in the team together, while another three want the supervisor to take all important decisions - indicating a split between top-down and bottom-up management approaches.

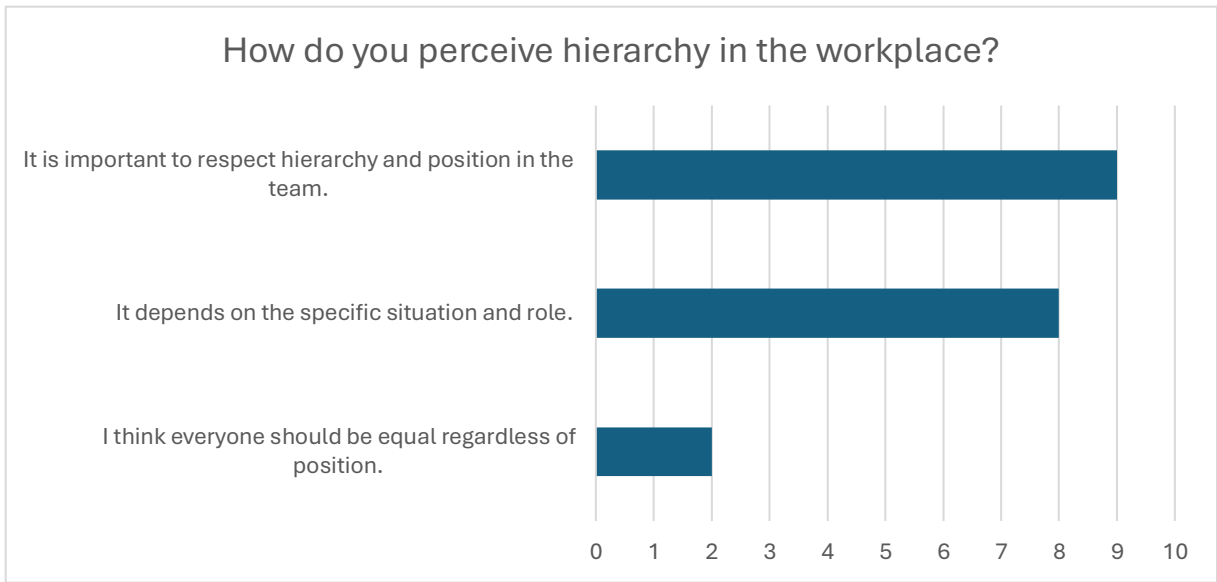
Table 4 What is your attitude towards the authority of superiors?



Q5: How do you perceive hierarchy in the workplace?

Here the answers were more nuanced. Nine respondents believe in respecting hierarchy of the organisation, eight believe it depends on the situation and role, and only two support full equality regardless of position in the organization. This illustrates a subtle but important duality - while many accept hierarchy as an organizational standard and necessity, they also expect flexibility and decision making that involves taking context into account.

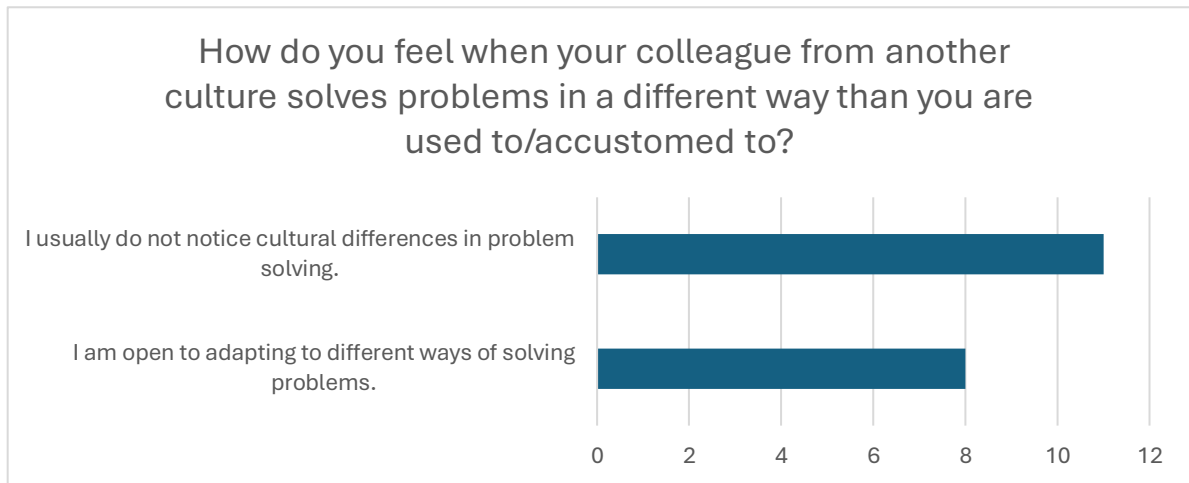
Table 5 How do you perceive hierarchy in the workplace?



Q6: How do you feel when your colleague from another culture solves problems in a different way than you are used to/accustomed to?

A significant number (11) said they do not even notice cultural differences in problem-solving. The remaining 8 were open to adaptation of problem-solving. The absence of negative responses suggests strong openness, tolerance, and possibly long-term team working experience, or exposure to multicultural teams in the past or the upbringing of the respondents. This aligns well with the hypothesis, that individuals can mitigate the negative impact of cultural differences through awareness and adaptability.

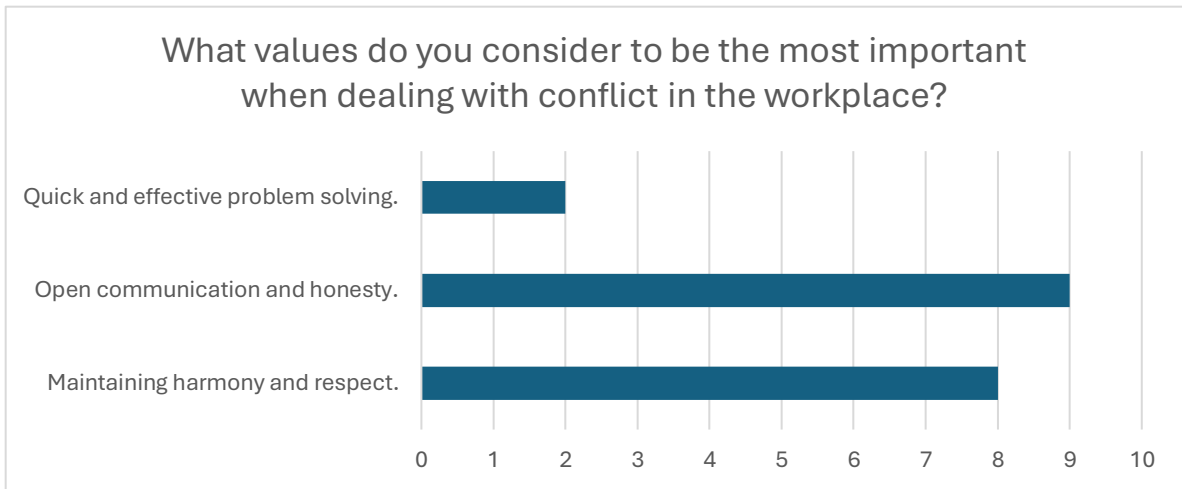
Table 6 How do you feel when your colleague from another culture solves problems in a different way than you are used to/accustomed to?



Q7: What values do you consider to be the most important when dealing with conflict in the workplace?

Nine respondents emphasized open communication and honesty, eight favoured maintaining harmony and respect, while only two prioritized quick and effective resolution. This reflects two dominant cultural philosophies - one group favouring transparency and directness, and the other valuing emotional stability and cohesion. Both are valid approaches, yet when unmanaged in a team, they can conflict with each other - reinforcing the importance of culturally aware leadership and mediation in various situations.

Table 7 What values do you consider to be the most important when dealing with conflict in the workplace?



Q8: How is criticism handled in your workplace?

Answers were evenly split between “*open and direct feedback*” (8) and “*private feedback*” (8), with 3 indicating “*gentle feedback to not offend*”, These results reflect the coexistence of both direct and indirect feedback cultures in the specific workplaces, suggesting that leaders and team members must continuously navigate and adapt their delivery styles depending on the recipient.

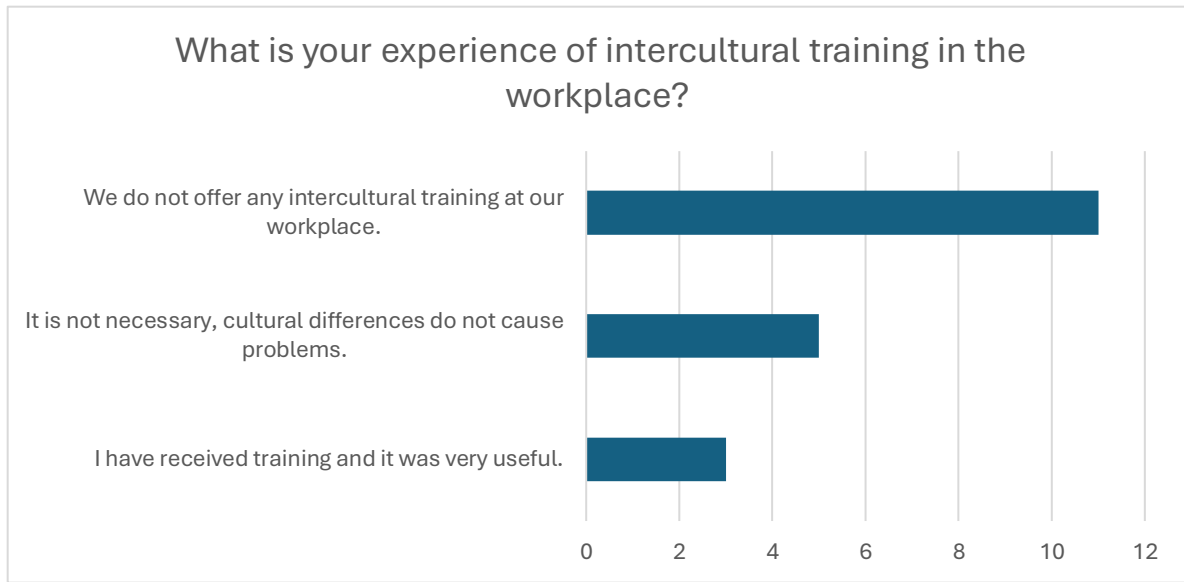
Table 8 How is criticism handled in your workplace?



Q9: What is your experience of intercultural training in the workplace?

Eleven respondents stated that their workplace does not offer such training, while five said it is not necessary, and only three have received useful training on the matter. This supports the hypothesis that most organizations lack formal mechanisms for enhancing cultural competences within their workforce. It also highlights a gap between employee needs and organizational offerings, as many respondents still acknowledge cultural differences in communication and teamwork, but the training does not seem to be of importance for the higher management.

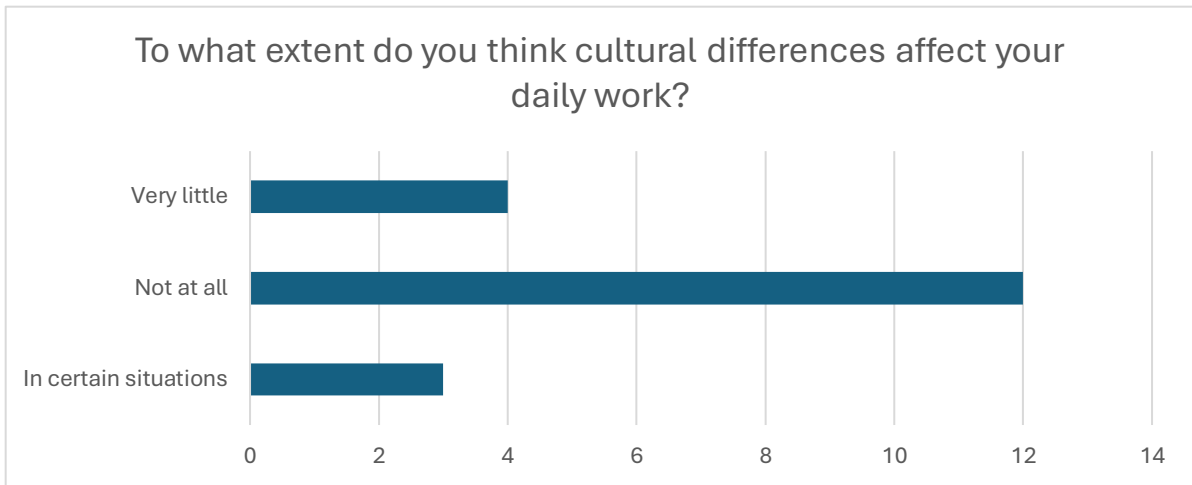
Table 9 What is your experience of intercultural training in the workplace?



Q10: To what extent do you think cultural differences affect your daily work?

Twelve respondents indicated that cultural differences do not affect their work at all, while four selected “*very little*” and three said it affects them in certain situations. This might seem inconsistent with the rest of the data, but it reinforces the idea that cultural influences have become normalized and are not perceived as problematic until a situation of misunderstanding or conflict occurs, which in these cases does not seem to be the case - indicating a highly multicultural working environment.

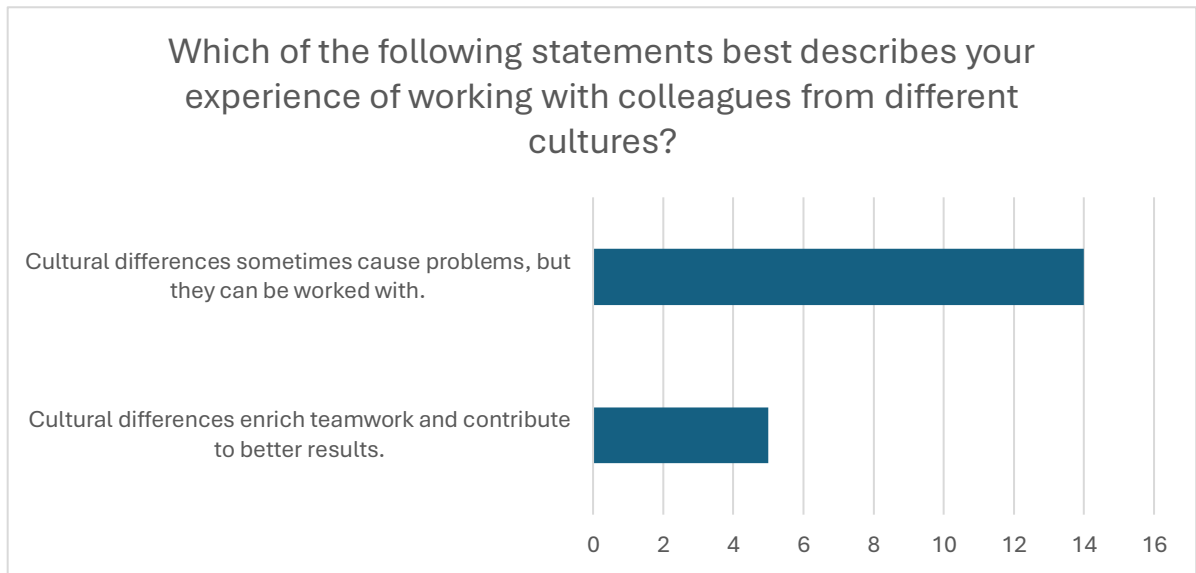
Table 10 To what extent do you think cultural differences affect your daily work?



Q11: Which of the following statements best describes your experience of working with colleagues from different cultures?

Most respondents (14) acknowledged that cultural differences sometimes cause problems but can be worked with. Five found them enriching and contributing to better results in general. The data shows that while respondents are not overly negative, they recognize that cultural diversity requires effort, strategy and adaptation. This echoes the central argument of this thesis - that diversity is valuable, but only when managed constructively and with great care.

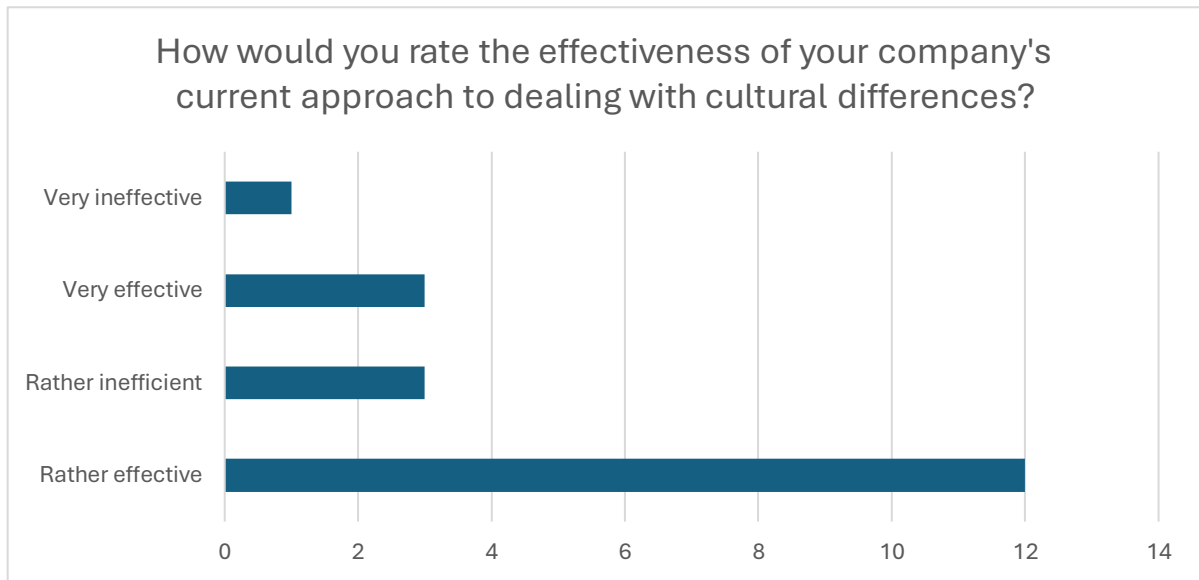
Table 11 Which of the following statements best describes your experience of working with colleagues from different cultures?



Q12: How would you rate the effectiveness of your company's current approach to dealing with cultural differences?

Twelve respondents rated it as “rather effective”, three as “very effective”, and four as “ineffective”. These answers reflect a moderately positive view of organizational efforts but also suggest uneven experiences within certain respondents. It indicates that while many companies have begun incorporating diversity strategies, they are not always systematic or comprehensive.

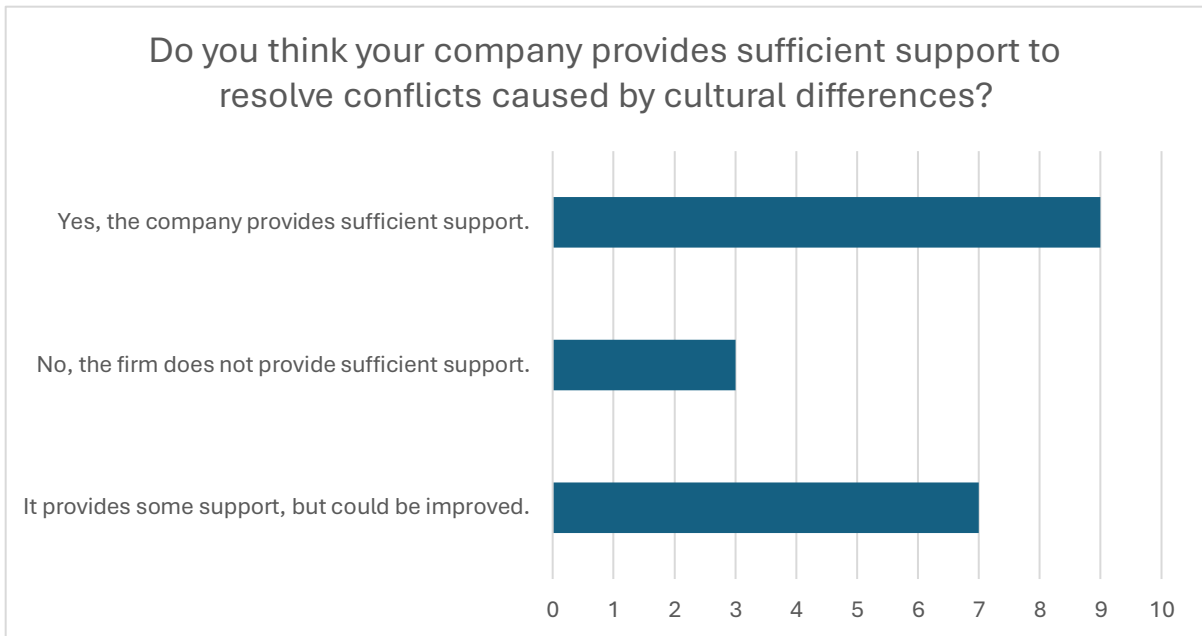
Table 12 How would you rate the effectiveness of your company's current approach to dealing with cultural differences?



Q13: Do you think your company provides sufficient support to resolve conflicts caused by cultural differences?

Nine respondents believe sufficient support exists within the organization, while seven said it could be improved, and three believe there is no real support. This supports the hypothesis that formal support systems are inconsistently implemented and reinforces the argument for organizational cultural competence and mediation trainings, frameworks and teachings.

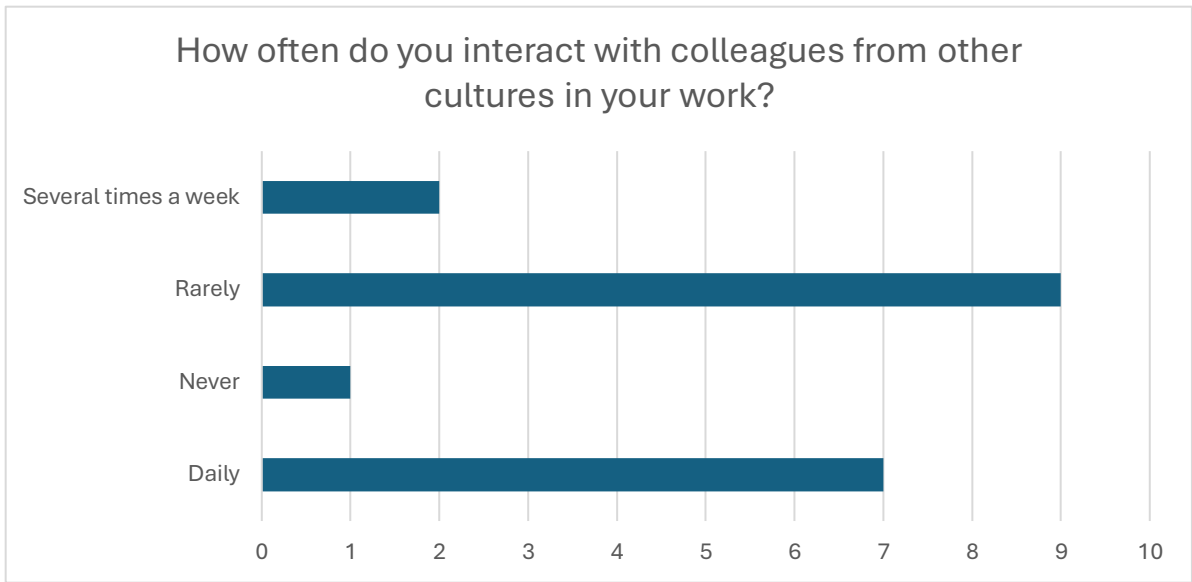
Table 13 Do you think your company provides sufficient support to resolve conflicts caused by cultural differences?



Q14: How often do you interact with colleagues from other cultures in your work?

A surprisingly large portion - nine respondents - reported rare interaction, followed by seven who interact daily. Only two interact several times a week, and one reported never interacting with another culture. This indicates that while multicultural exposure exists, it is not uniform across the individual working departments. It highlights the need for either context-specific strategies or department strategies, as the current one-size-fits-all solutions do not seem to be effective.

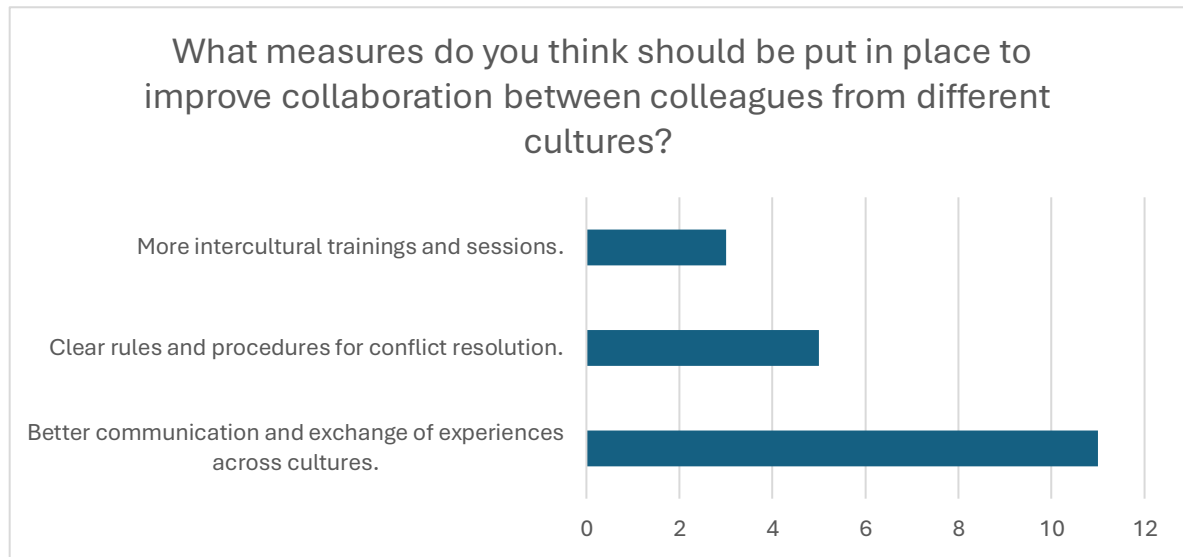
Table 14 How often do you interact with colleagues from other cultures in your work?



Q15: What measures do you think should be put in place to improve collaboration between colleagues from different cultures?

Eleven respondents emphasized better communication and experience-sharing amongst different cultures, five wanted clearer rules and procedures for conflict resolution, and three supported more intercultural training and sessions. This demonstrates strong alignment between employee needs and the thesis recommendations: focusing on proactive communication, leadership training, and conflict sensitivity as primary enablers of effective multicultural collaboration.

Table 15 What measures do you think should be put in place to improve collaboration between colleagues from different cultures?



4.2 Interpretation / Discussion

The results reveal a workforce that is generally open and not negative towards cultural diversity but operates in environments that are only partially (*or not at all*) equipped to manage it. Although most respondents report minimal or rare open conflict, they also indicate that cultural differences influence all areas of their work, including communication, values, feedback, and expectations around leadership and authority. The lack of widespread formal intercultural training or structured support systems confirms the hypothesis that organizations often underestimate the importance of investing in cultural competence or simply ignore it.

It is especially interesting that many respondents believe that cultural differences do not affect their daily work, while simultaneously acknowledging that these differences shape how conflict is handled, how feedback is delivered and received, and how hierarchy is perceived. This suggests that many employees are managing cultural complexity subconsciously or have internalized adaptive behaviours - maybe from their past working experience and/or their multicultural upbringing. However, this can also mask deeper issues, such as unresolved micro conflicts or emotional disengagement, that do not surface unless

triggered by crisis or conflict, and long-term can yield to issues that can escalate to bigger problems.

The responses also confirm that while diversity is seen as manageable and even enriching by some, it is not automatically productive for all. Diversity alone does not guarantee better performance or teamwork within an organization. Rather, it requires active leadership, intentional support mechanisms, and ongoing communication from top-down. This reinforces the conceptual framework discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis: cultural diversity is a potential asset, but its benefits depend on how well it is understood, integrated, and supported within the organizational structure itself.

4.3 Summary of Findings

The findings of the empirical research confirm and elaborate upon the central hypothesis of this thesis. While employees generally perceive cultural diversity as manageable and even positively influencing, they also report that organizations are not consistently prepared to address the subtle but important differences in communication, leadership, and conflict resolution that arise in multicultural teams in organizations. It seems, like organizations do not address this topic in detail as they should. Most respondents are highly adaptive, showing openness to other perspectives and self-initiative in conflict management resolution. However, very few have access to intercultural training or structured mediation procedures, indicating a gap between the complexity/diversity/difference of the workplace and the tools available to address it from top-management and the organization.

Moreover, respondents exhibit a tendency to downplay the daily impact of cultural differences, even while acknowledging variations in feedback delivery, leadership expectations, and value systems. This suggests that many employees either tolerate the differences without addressing them openly or have developed coping strategies that allow them to function across cultures without direct confrontation, maybe they even build a defence system by simply ignoring the fact this does indeed exist and has a big effect on their day-to-day work and wellbeing. At the same time, their responses to other questions indicate that these differences do cause friction, albeit in subtle or indirect forms.

The empirical data strongly supports the conclusion that cultural diversity must be strategically managed from top-down as part of a strategy of the organization. Formal training programs, structured conflict resolution channels, open discussions and feedback rounds, and leadership that is both inclusive and culturally sensitive are not just desirable - they are essential for turning cultural diversity from a passive element in the workspace into an active strength of the whole organization. Without these, even well-meaning multicultural teams may fall short of their potential, and misunderstandings - even if they are very rare - may compound over time like a snowball and create very negative and lasting side-effects for the wellbeing of all respondents. The next chapter will offer recommendations based on these findings to help organizations better harness the power of cultural diversity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this thesis, several recommendations can be made for companies, HR departments, and team leaders working in multicultural environments:

In today's diverse work environments, fostering effective intercultural communication is essential. Rather than leaving it to chance, organizations can take several steps to create an inclusive and harmonious workplace. This requires a combination of structured training, clear processes, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

One important step in this direction is **investing in formal intercultural training programs**. Regular workshops that incorporate role-playing, case studies, and self-reflection exercises can help employees better understand different cultural perspectives. Ideally, these programs should be tailored to reflect the specific cultural composition of the organization, ensuring that they are both relevant and engaging.

At the same time, **having a clear conflict resolution framework** can make a significant difference. Misunderstandings and tensions are natural in diverse teams but addressing them in a structured way can prevent them from escalating. Instead of relying solely on informal approaches, organizations might benefit from defining transparent

procedures for resolving conflicts. Trained mediators—whether internal HR professionals or external experts—can provide valuable guidance in these situations.

Of course, leadership plays a crucial role in shaping an inclusive work culture. This is why **leaders should be equipped with cultural intelligence and adaptive leadership skills**. Beyond traditional management techniques, developing sensitivity to different communication styles and feedback preferences can help leaders guide their teams more effectively.

Another key aspect is **encouraging open dialogue and regular feedback**. When employees could reflect on collaboration and address challenges in a respectful setting, potential issues can be identified early. Creating an environment where all voices are heard—without power imbalances limiting participation—can lead to more meaningful discussions and solutions.

However, intercultural awareness should not be limited to isolated initiatives. For a truly inclusive workplace, **diversity and inclusion need to be embedded in the company's overall strategy**. This means integrating diversity principles into hiring processes, performance evaluations, and long-term business goals, rather than treating them as separate or optional efforts.

Finally, as teams and workplace dynamics evolve, **continuously evaluating and adjusting intercultural strategies** becomes essential. Regular check-ins, anonymous surveys, or structured feedback loops can help organizations stay attuned to emerging challenges and adapt their approaches accordingly.

Ultimately, fostering intercultural collaboration is an ongoing process rather than a one-time initiative. By integrating structured training, open communication, and a company-wide commitment to diversity, organizations can create workplaces where employees from all backgrounds feel valued and empowered to contribute.

Epilogue

In an increasingly interconnected world, cultural diversity in the workplace is no longer an exception but a standard that we should be expecting in our day-to-day work life. The question is no longer whether we will work across cultures, but how we will do so effectively in a long-term setting. This thesis has shown that while individuals may adapt, organizations must also - to balance each other out. Cultural competence, once considered a soft skill, is now a strategic necessity in the skillset of the leadership. Companies that embrace, do not only avoid conflict, but they also position themselves to innovate, grow, and thrive in global markets and multicultural environments.

While the research was limited to a relatively small and sector-specific sample size, it offered valuable insights that can inform broader organizational practices. Future research could expand on this by examining industry-specific trends as well.

Ultimately, this thesis serves as both a reflection of the challenges and an invitation to future action. As businesses seek not only profit but also purpose and people-first leadership, the way they engage with cultural diversity will determine not just their performance, but their future legacy they leave behind.

Conclusion

This bachelor thesis set out to examine the influence of cultural differences on workplace dynamics, particularly in the context of conflict emergence and resolution within multicultural teams and organizations. The central research aim was to investigate how communication styles, perceptions of authority, and values related to conflict differ across cultures, and how these differences affect collaboration in diverse business environments. The hypothesis guiding this research stated that employees working in multicultural environments are more likely to experience interpersonal misunderstandings due to cultural differences, but that organizations equipped with intercultural awareness, inclusive leadership, and structured conflict management are better prepared to minimize these tensions and enhance team performance across the organization.

The research was conducted through a two-part approach. The theoretical part explored major academic concepts, including the challenges and benefits of managing cultural diversity, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, best practices for communication in multicultural teams, and the evolving role of leadership and HR in fostering inclusive work environments. This review highlighted the double-edged nature of cultural diversity: while it fosters innovation, creativity, and global competitiveness, it also increases the likelihood of miscommunication, conflicting expectations, and unconscious bias—especially when not addressed through deliberate strategies.

The empirical part of the research, based on a structured questionnaire with 19 respondents from multicultural work environments (primarily in the hospitality sector), offered a practical reflection of the theoretical insights. The results reveal a workforce that is generally culturally tolerant, open-minded, and experienced in working across cultural lines and differences. Most respondents reported minimal open conflict and expressed a willingness to adapt to different working styles, confirming a high degree of cultural maturity and resilience within individuals.

However, the data also uncovered several crucial challenges the organization is facing. While employees demonstrate cultural openness on an individual level, many believe that

the organization is not providing adequate support in this area. Most respondents have not received formal intercultural training, and some believe such training is even unnecessary. This suggests that many organizations are operating under the assumption that cultural harmony can be left to chance or to the personal adaptability of individuals—an assumption that contradicts academic findings, and, in my opinion, lacks foresight. Similarly, few respondents reported access to structured conflict resolution mechanisms, relying instead on informal or self-managed strategies. While this might reflect a high level of autonomy within the organization, it also indicates that employees may not always have the skills, tools, or support needed to address deeper cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations—especially when emotions or power dynamics are involved, which can happen quite often.

A notable finding is the apparent contradiction in respondents' perceptions. While many claimed that cultural differences do not affect their day-to-day work, they also acknowledged that differences in communication, leadership expectations, and values are present and can sometimes lead to conflict or misunderstandings. This indicates that many employees have developed adaptive behaviours—likely the result of long-term exposure to diversity, multicultural environments, or even a multicultural upbringing—but it also suggests the potential for unresolved micro-conflicts, emotional detachment, or unspoken tensions that could escalate over time if not proactively addressed by upper management.

In terms of hypothesis validation, the results of the research offer partial confirmation. The first part of the hypothesis—that cultural differences contribute to misunderstanding and conflict—is moderately confirmed, but with the caveat that such conflicts are often managed informally or remain latent. I would personally estimate this is due to the ignorance of multicultural differences in the workplace, and the fact that people are simply used to it. The second part of the hypothesis—that organizations equipped with intercultural strategies are better positioned to manage these dynamics—is strongly confirmed in theory but weakly reflected in practice, as many workplaces still lack such strategies or apply them inconsistently. Employees often don't realize the potential benefits these strategies could bring to the organization, and when this topic is not given proper importance, it naturally remains unaddressed by upper management.

These findings have several implications. First, they underscore the need for organizations to move beyond a passive approach to cultural diversity and training. Diversity should not only be acknowledged but actively managed through strategic interventions, training, education, and more. Second, the data suggest that individual adaptability, while valuable, is not a substitute for organizational support in this area. Companies need to complement employee openness with customized training, structured conflict resolution processes, and ongoing intercultural education. Finally, the research demonstrates that even in environments where cultural differences are normalized, their influence remains significant and should not be underestimated—even if employees themselves tend to downplay their impact.

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Resume

Bakalárska práca sa venuje problematike kultúrnych rozdielov v pracovnom a obchodnom prostredí so zameraním na ich vplyv na komunikáciu, vedenie tímov a riešenie konfliktov. Kultúrna diverzita sa stala bežnou súčasťou moderných organizácií, ktoré pôsobia na medzinárodnej úrovni alebo zamestnávajú pracovníkov z rôznych krajín. V globalizovanom svete je nevyhnutné porozumieť tomu, ako kultúrne pozadie jednotlivcov ovplyvňuje ich správanie, hodnoty, rozhodovanie a interakciu s kolegami či nadriadenými. Cieľom práce je priblížiť túto tému a poukázať na to, ako sa dá kultúrna rôznorodosť vnímať nielen ako potenciálny zdroj konfliktov, ale predovšetkým ako príležitosť na rast, inovácie a zlepšenie tímovej spolupráce.

V teoretickej časti sa opisujú základné pojmy súvisiace s kultúrnou diverzitou, ako aj modely kultúrnych rozdielov, najmä Hofstedeho kultúrne dimenzie. Pozornosť je venovaná aj komunikačným štýlom, rozhodovacím procesom, postaveniu autorít a rozdielom v hodnotách medzi kultúrami. Zdôrazňuje sa, že kultúrne rozdiely môžu predstavovať pre organizácie výzvu, ale zároveň aj významnú výhodu, pokiaľ sú vhodne riadené. Rôzne prístupy ku komunikácii, vyjadrovaniu názorov, riešeniu problémov či k vedeniu tímov môžu v multikultúrnom prostredí viesť k nedorozumeniam, ale zároveň vytvárajú priestor pre nové pohľady, nápady a inovatívne riešenia. Dôležité je, aby organizácie neponechávali zvládanie týchto odlišností len na individuálne schopnosti zamestnancov, ale aby aktívne podporovali rozvoj interkultúrnych kompetencií.

Dôležitou súčasťou práce je aj oblasť riadenia kultúrnej diverzity v praxi. V texte sa analyzujú osvedčené prístupy, ktoré môžu organizáciám pomôcť lepšie zvládať rozdiely medzi kultúrami – napríklad zavádzanie interkultúrneho vzdelávania, vytváranie prostredia založeného na rešpekte, školenia v oblasti inkluzívneho líderstva a podpora otvorenej komunikácie. Zvláštny dôraz sa kladie na rolu ľudských zdrojov a manažmentu, ktoré by mali byť nositeľmi kultúry rešpektu a diverzity. Vhodne nastavené HR procesy ako nábor, školenie, hodnotenie či podpora zamestnancov môžu mať výrazný vplyv na to, ako sa kultúrne rozdiely prejavujú v každodennom chode organizácie.

Empirická časť práce je zameraná na výskum v praxi. Výskum bol realizovaný formou dotazníkového prieskumu medzi 19 respondentmi z oblasti hotelierstva a služieb, ktorí pracujú alebo pracovali v multikultúrnych tímoch. Dotazník obsahoval 15 otázok zameraných na oblasti komunikácie, riešenia konfliktov, vnímania autority, interkultúrneho školenia a celkovej skúsenosti so spoluprácou s kolegami z iných kultúr. Výsledky boli následne analyzované a porovnané s teoretickými poznatkami.

Získané údaje ukazujú, že väčšina respondentov preferuje priamu a otvorenú komunikáciu a v prípade konfliktov uprednostňuje ich riešenie rozhovorom alebo samostatným zvládnutím situácie. Konflikty spôsobené kultúrnymi rozdielmi sa podľa odpovedí vyskytujú len zriedkavo alebo vôbec. Väčšina opýtaných sa vyjadrila, že sa im darí kultúrne rozdiely zvládať, pričom tieto rozdiely nevnímajú ako prekážku, ale skôr ako výzvu či obohatenie pracovného prostredia. Zároveň však viacerí priznali, že ich zamestnávateľ neposkytuje formálne školenia v oblasti kultúrnej diverzity, čo môže byť z dlhodobého hľadiska nedostatok.

Pozoruhodným zistením bolo aj to, že viacerí respondenti síce tvrdia, že kultúrne rozdiely ich prácu neovplyvňujú, no v iných odpovediach priznávajú odlišnosti vo vnímaní autority, poskytovaní spätnej väzby alebo riešení problémov. To môže naznačovať, že si tieto rozdiely neuvedomujú vedome, alebo ich považujú za samozrejmé. Na druhej strane, môže to tiež poukazovať na určitý stupeň adaptácie a vnútornej tolerancie, ktorú si zamestnanci osvojili počas práce v rôznorodých tímoch.

Na základe doteraz uvedených zistení sa ukazuje, že kultúrna diverzita v pracovnom prostredí je veľmi komplexný jav, ktorý zahŕňa množstvo faktorov od individuálnych preferencií zamestnancov až po strategické rozhodnutia na úrovni vedenia organizácie. Nejde len o to, aby sa ľudia z rôznych krajín dokázali navzájom rešpektovať, ale aj o to, aby boli vytvorené systémové podmienky, ktoré tento rešpekt umožnia a podporia. To znamená nielen vytvoriť rozmanitý tím, ale aj zabezpečiť, aby v ňom mohli všetci efektívne spolupracovať a cítili sa ako rovnocenná súčasť organizácie.

Osobitný význam nadobúda interkultúrna komunikácia, ktorá ovplyvňuje každodenné interakcie medzi kolegami, nadriadenými a podriadenými. V práci sa uvádza, že štýl komunikácie môže byť v niektorých kultúrach viac priamy, zatiaľ čo v iných sa preferuje nepriamy a zdvorilostný spôsob vyjadrovania. V praxi to znamená, že bez správneho pochopenia týchto rozdielov môže ľahko dôjsť k nedorozumeniam, ktoré sa nemusia okamžite prejavovať ako konflikt, ale môžu znížiť efektivitu spolupráce alebo vytvoriť napätie. Preto je dôležité nielen vedieť, že rozdiely existujú, ale aj chápať ich význam v konkrétnych situáciách.

Rovnako podstatné sú rozdiely v chápaní autority, vedenia a hierarchie. Kým niektoré kultúry akceptujú a očakávajú silné hierarchické štruktúry a rešpektovanie autority bez otázok, iné podporujú rovnostársky prístup a participantove rozhodovanie. Práca poukazuje na to, že väčšina respondentov preferuje otvorený dialóg s nadriadenými a zdieľanie názorov v tíme, čo poukazuje na nízku mieru preferencie autoritárskeho vedenia. Z toho vyplýva, že úspešné vedenie v multikultúrnom prostredí si vyžaduje schopnosť prispôbiť sa rôznym očakávaniam a zároveň vytvoriť prostredie dôvery, kde sú všetky hlasy vypočuté.

Z výsledkov výskumu tiež vyplýva, že mnoho respondentov síce kultúrnu rozmanitosť nepovažuje za problém, no zároveň si želá väčšiu podporu zo strany organizácie. Najčastejšie odporúčania sa týkali zlepšenia komunikácie, vytvorenia jasných pravidiel pre spoluprácu a organizovania školení. To poukazuje na túžbu po lepšom pochopení kolegov z iných kultúr, ako aj po získaní nástrojov, ktoré by zamestnancom pomohli predchádzať konfliktom alebo ich efektívne riešiť.

Významným aspektom je tiež to, ako zamestnanci vnímajú spätnú väzbu a kritiku. V niektorých kultúrach je bežné vyjadriť názor priamo, zatiaľ čo v iných je potrebná jemnosť a rešpektovanie hierarchie pri podávaní spätnej väzby. Výsledky výskumu ukazujú, že tieto rozdiely existujú aj medzi respondentmi, pričom niektorí uprednostňujú otvorenú kritiku, iní sú zvyknutí na súkromné a citlivé riešenie problémov. Aj tento faktor zohráva významnú úlohu pri budovaní tímovej súdržnosti a dôvery medzi zamestnancami.

Závěrečné odporúčania práce možno zhrnúť do niekoľkých kľúčových bodov. Po prvé, organizácie by mali podporovať interkultúrne školenia pre všetkých zamestnancov, nielen pre manažment. Takéto školenia by mali byť zamerané na praktické situácie a rozvoj kultúrnej citlivosti. Po druhé, je vhodné zaviesť interné mechanizmy pre riešenie konfliktov, ktoré budú zohľadňovať kultúrne rozdiely a poskytovať bezpečný priestor pre vyjadrenie názorov. Po tretie, vedenie organizácií by malo ísť príkladom v oblasti rešpektovania a integrácie rozmanitosti a systematicky zapracovať princípy inklúzie do firemnej kultúry.

V širšom kontexte práca poukazuje na to, že kultúrna diverzita nie je len otázkou ľudských zdrojov, ale súvisí s celkovou stratégiou organizácie. Firmy, ktoré dokážu vytvoriť prostredie otvorenosti, rešpektu a vzájomného porozumenia, získavajú výhodu nielen v oblasti internej spokojnosti zamestnancov, ale aj v konkurencieschopnosti na globálnom trhu. Schopnosť porozumieť kultúrnym nuansám a prispôbiť im svoje stratégie môže viesť k úspešnejšiemu vyjednávaniu, lepšej zákazníckej skúsenosti a vyššej inovačnej kapacite.

Záverom možno povedať, že efektívne riadenie kultúrnych rozdielov je dôležitou súčasťou moderného manažmentu. Výsledky výskumu ukazujú, že hoci zamestnanci vo všeobecnosti dokážu kultúrnu diverzitu zvládnuť, existuje priestor na zlepšenie zo strany organizácií. Systematický prístup, dôsledná podpora a ochota učiť sa od iných kultúr sú kľúčové prvky, ktoré môžu zabezpečiť harmonickú a produktívnu spoluprácu v každom tíme.

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