

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of International Business Administration

Nazrin Huseynzade

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION- THE CHALLENGES  
FACED BY COMPANIES IN ESTONIA**

Bachelor's thesis

Programme Business Administration, specialisation Marketing

Supervisor: Ricardo Ferraz Raats

Tallinn 2021

I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis/paper (choose one) independently. and all works, important standpoints, and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper. has not been previously presented for grading.

The document length is 10361 words from the introduction to the end of conclusion.

Nazrin Huseynzade .....

(signature, date)

Student code: 177737TVTB

Student e-mail address: nazrin.quseynzade@gmail.com

Supervisor: Ricardo Ferraz Raats:

The paper conforms to requirements in force.

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee: / to be added only in graduation thesis / Permitted to the defence.

.....

(name, signature, date)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT /ONLY IN GRADUATION THESIS/ .....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	7
1.1. Problem.....	9
1.2. Aim .....	11
2. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION.....	12
2.1. Cross-cultural communication barriers.....	13
2.2. Causes of barriers.....	14
3. RESEARCH.....	15
3.1. Research strategy .....	16
3.2. Data collection .....	16
3.3. Research method.....	16
3.4. Result analysis .....	19
3.5. Discussion.....	31
3.6. Recommendations.....	33
CONCLUSION .....	34
LIST OF REFERENCES .....	36
APPENDICES.....	39
Appendix 1. Questionnaire.....	39
Appendix 2. Questionnaire answers.....	46
Appendix 3. Interview questions.....	51
Appendix 4. Interview Transcription .....	52
Appendix 5. Non-exclusive licence / to be added only in graduation thesis as the last appendix /.....	58

## **ABSTRACT /ONLY IN GRADUATION THESIS/**

Our behaviour is influenced by culture. Culture, according to Hofstede, is the "collective programming of the human mind that separates members of one community from those of another." (Hofstede et al. 2010)

Culture, in this context, is a collection of shared values." Imposing a common cultural outlook on workers is an inefficient strategy that can impede interpersonal interactions in the workplace. Managers must celebrate cultural differences as a form of creativity rather than adapting to them. The diverse values, attitudes, actions, and reactions of a culturally diverse team working in a firm would generate new ideas and the perception of customer demands in a diverse cultural context.

Diversity in the workplace necessitates attention to each other's cultures. Dress code, religious rituals, festivals, and nonverbal conduct are all examples of cultural markers. Furthermore, the generation gap and gender issues may cause gaps in the relationship between employers and workers and between employees.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, communication barriers, business communication, cultural dimensions, cultural differences.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Communication is a process of sharing thoughts, facts, and figures from one individual to the next. The word cross-cultural means contact with people of various cultural, ethnic, age and class backgrounds. Communication is immersive and is strongly affected by our interaction with others. For different people, words and phrases can mean different things. What makes cross-cultural communication very challenging is the difference in vocabulary; even the same word can mean different things (UKEssays. November 2018).

Cross-cultural communication is a type of communication that explains how people of different cultures connect and interact with each other in different ways. Cross-cultural communication is a research field that focuses on how we have learned to communicate and address non-verbal messages.

Culture is a way of thinking and living by which one adopts a collection of behaviors, values, norms, and beliefs taught and reinforced by other community members. This collection of simple principles and solutions to the world's problems is a shared framework handed down from generation to generation to ensure survival. A culture comprises unwritten and written values and laws that guide how a person communicates with the outside world. Members of a culture may be identified by the fact that they have a certain resemblance (UKEssays. November 2018).

Cross-cultural communication is essential to business today for a wide variety of reasons. Next, people conduct business differently across cultures. Company ties are improved when workers are qualified to interact and cope with tension across cultures. Besides, foreign cooperation increases as businesspeople may predict discrepancies and similarities. Finally, business gains when people across cultures can work together to create innovative approaches to problems (UKEssays. November 2018).

Cross-cultural communication thus refers to communication between people who have differences in working styles, age, nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Cross-cultural contact may also apply to attempts to exchange, discuss, and mediate cultural differences through language, gestures, and body language. It is how people from different backgrounds interact with each other.

They may be united by religion, geography, race, or ethnicity. Our cultural view of the environment and everything in it eventually influences our communication style as we begin to learn the ways of one's society simultaneously as we begin to learn how to communicate. Culture has an impact on the words we say and our actions.

Each person can practice culture at different levels. There is a culture of the group in which he develops, there is a culture of work at his job, and there are other cultures in which one becomes an active participant or slowly withdraws. A person is continually faced with the clash between his original culture and the majority culture he is subjected to every day. Cultural clashes arise because of individuals claiming that their culture is better than others.

If two people with different cultures meet each other, they have different cultural backgrounds, but their turn structures are also different. Cross-cultural contact would be more efficient and more straightforward if both speakers have experience of the turn-around mechanism used in conversations (For example, one person should not monopolize the conversation or only one person should talk at a time).

The thesis aims to research the challenges and difficulties companies based in Estonia face cultural differences and use cross-cultural marketing. The term itself cross-cultural indicated interaction with people from different countries, cultures, ethnic groups, and backgrounds. It is also essential to keep in mind that culture can also be a choice. Culture can be how and where you spend your time with whom you have communicated.

This paper's underlying task is to investigate how vital cross-cultural communication is and how they impact employees. The questions that will be studied throughout the paper are:

Research question 1: Do companies based in Estonia aware of cross-cultural communication in the workplace?

Research question 2: What are the significant issues concerning cross-cultural communication during the interaction between employees?

Research question 3: How do cultural differences influence them (the issues) and why?

## **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Awareness of cultural differences can provide managers with helpful guidance when designing different business strategies, but managers do not always have the time or resources the issue and obtain the knowledge.

Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions was developed in 1980 by Geert Hofstede, a Dutch management researcher. The goal of this study was to investigate the dimension to which cultures differ. The framework is used to differentiate between various national cultures and cultural

dimensions and their effect on the business environment. Hofstede concluded that people in various countries view and experience their environment in five dimensions.

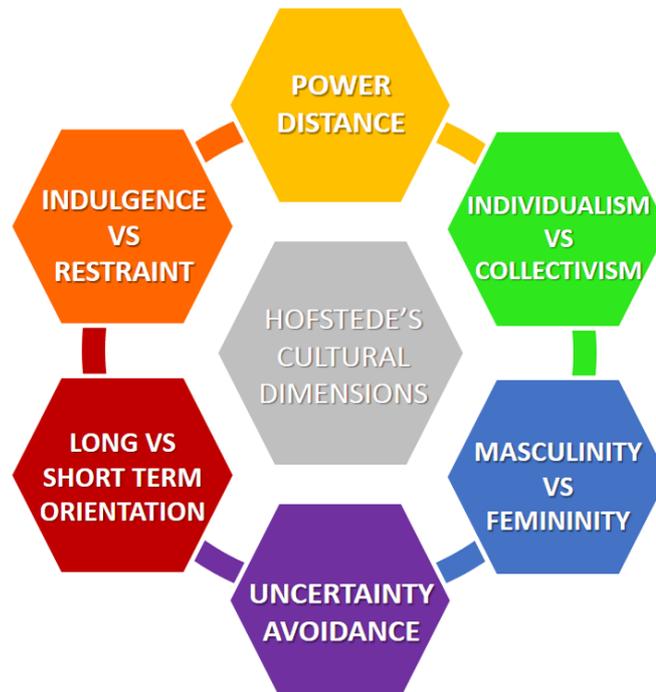


Figure 1: Hofstede Cultural Dimensions

Source: Business to business (June 17, 2017)

The first dimension is the gap of influence, which refers to the disparity between people in academic and physical terms, varying from relatively equal to increasingly divided. In societies exhibiting a significant degree of power gap, power is focused on the few people at the very top of the company who make all decisions, while other people below the top-level make decisions. They are more likely to accept the disparity in power and resources. However, in low power distance societies, power is broadly distributed, and more individuals engage in the decision-making process, less hierarchical than in high power distance societies (Hofstede et al. 2010).

The second dimension of the model is uncertainty avoidance, which regards the degree to which people in a country either prefer formal rules, such as laws and fixed patterns of life, such as career structures, called high uncertainty avoidance societies, to enhance security. On the other hand, they

might prefer a low uncertainty avoidance society where one faces the future as it takes its shape. However, in high uncertainty avoidance, society's managers formulate to avoid future, long-term planning, and structure anxiety. (Hofstede et al. 2010)

Individualism is the third dimension of Hofstede's model: the degree to which individuals learn to behave as individuals rather than as community members and to be more self-centered and not as dependent on other people. They also strive to accomplish their objectives instead of the objectives of the organization. However, in a much less individualistic culture, managers have a high degree of loyalty to the organization and favour collective decision-making.

The fourth dimension of the model is masculinity, which refers to how so-called masculine values such as accomplishment, success, and money are perceived to be greater than the more feminine values such as quality of life, service, and solidarity. In traditionally masculine cultures, such as the United States of America, something significant is viewed as necessary, unlike in female societies, where small items are essential in Denmark and Sweden. (Hofstede et al. 2010)

The final and fifth dimensions of the structure are the time perspective; this dimension was created by Hofstede and Bond in 1988 and describes the way people in the organization look to the future in either a long-term orientation or a short-term orientation. Long-term orientation is about longevity and orderly status relationships, and short-term orientation requires personal consistency and stability. (Hofstede et al. 2010)

## **1.1. Problem**

The background points to a working atmosphere for all those involved in the company. Both managers and workers are highly exposed in a company that requires them to collaborate successfully with people from different cultures with different values. Misunderstandings result in a poor or worse efficiency, a business loss.

Many challenges exist in our workplace today due to the obstacles that cultural diversity imposes on cross-cultural contact. Cross-cultural communication barriers such as anxiety, ambiguity,

stereotyping, and ethnocentrism were triggered by low cultural awareness and lack of intercultural communication skills. Organizations should concentrate on removing cross-cultural barriers to contact.

According to Hofstede, people prefer to assume that every human being, no matter what culture, deep down is the same when it comes to actions. They make clear that this is not the case, and a lot of poor business decisions are made, so managers are behaving in the same manner as they would have done in their domestic culture.

One should not claim that his way of communicating is the only correct way of communicating; one should continue to doubt his assumptions about the best way of communicating. Try to listen to me consciously and empathically. By putting yourself in someone else's shoes, mainly when other people's perceptions and ideas are radically different from your own, you might need to work on the edge of your comfort zone.

This research's motivation is the authors' interest towards Cross-Cultural Differences and how it affects our daily communication at a workplace. The topic was chosen because it focuses on individual experiences of everyday conflict in some current multinational organizations.

Conflicts trigger misunderstandings, delays in the project, and poor job performance.

Studying cross-cultural communication started after authors moving to Estonia, as unfortunately, the hometown researcher could not feel and see these cultural differences. Some of the misunderstandings happened while communicating with people from other countries. After facing many issues, the author started researching cross-cultural differences and how they affect our daily life communication. After finding out so much information and details regarding so many cultures, the idea of writing a research paper on this topic was born.

## **1.2. Aim**

This study aims to understand and examine how culture affects employee contact in a multinational organization. The topic was chosen because it focuses on individual experiences of everyday conflict in some current multinational organizations. Conflicts trigger misunderstandings, delays in the project, and poor job performance. It is, therefore, crucial to research the cultural effect on communication to improve the quality of cross-cultural communication because of business performance.

The purpose of the research is to increase the awareness of companies based in Estonia about cross-cultural differences in communication.

Cross-cultural communication is becoming critical. Despite that, businesspeople are not taking cross-communication seriously, which is the common mistake made by lots of companies and their failure. This is the leading purpose of beginning this research and making this study. Estonia is becoming more diverse; day by day, companies face many communication mishaps for reasons. Lots of people are coming from different countries, making the country more diverse. People consider that they know a lot about cultural differences, but in the end, without a customized and advanced research method, you cannot succeed.

## **2. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

Cross-cultural communication is often referred to as intercultural communication, a branch of organizational communication that includes verbal and non-verbal communication. This, in turn, requires the sharing of information and expertise between individuals in an organization of vastly different people in different languages and cultures. "We describe cross-cultural communication as a topic that focuses on the communicative activities of people of different cultural backgrounds and the essence and rules of communicative activities." (Jia, 1997, 563).

When communicating, many cultures have their etiquette. Communication will only be effective if the messages are correctly transmitted and received. In cross-cultural contact, two-sided people come from two different countries with different cultures, customs, ideas, and languages. This would make it more challenging to achieve good communication. Miscommunication can lead to conflict or to a more severe conflict that already exists.

Practical and good communication is vital to all organizations. In today's business world, good communication skills at the workplace are necessary to connect with the outside world. Some issues compound cross-cultural contact in the workplace. There is a lack of contact in communication between individuals within the organization with substantially different ethnographic profiles. Besides, words have different meanings in different languages.

Cross-cultural communication has become strategically relevant for businesses due to the growth of a global business, technology, and the Internet. Cross-cultural communication is critical for any organization that has a diverse workforce or plans to conduct global business. This communication form includes understanding how people from different cultures talk, connect and interpret the world around them.

## 2.1. Cross-cultural communication barriers

Successful cross-cultural communication with people across cultures is complex. "Culture is the pattern of taken-for-granted assumptions about how a given collection of people should think, act, and feel as they go about their daily affairs." (Tayeb, 1998).

From the above definition, it can be concluded that culture gives people a particular way of deciphering things from outside the world. If two people with different cultural backgrounds talk, they can both perceive the definition of the word differently, even if the conversation is in the same Language since the exact words can have multiple interpretations in their respective cultures.

There are three known common barriers to cross-cultural communication.

We also have an average propensity to look at other cultures with our lenses. Ethnocentrism happens when we implicitly assume that our way of doing things and seeing things is the best and the only way. As a result, we negatively evaluate actions that are not in line with our worldview. We view the actions of others as strange and inappropriate. Ethnocentrism also produces a "us versus them" mindset that can be negative.

It is also common to rely on oversimplified clichés about people from different cultures—various cross-cultural training courses in the market concentrate on memorizing cultural differences and perpetuating stereotypes. Learning about differences can be a useful starting point. However, individuals are unique; you can never predict a person's actions based on their nationality. When I moved to Estonia, people told me that Estonians are very cold and never invite you to dinner or be friends.

However, I happened to have so many Estonian friends that always invite me to dinner and have a lovely evening.

Imagine a team where all the team members are English speakers. However, this kind of situation can also cause some issues when some team members are more fluent.

In global teams, people who are less fluent in English appear to withdraw from contact, which means that the team cannot get all the feedback it wants. Understanding what has meant can be difficult if people talk too quickly or use too much slang. This may also affect how people's integrity and success are viewed. I worked for an organization where non-English native speakers thought their career advancement prospects were not the same as for English native speakers.

To reduce the above obstacles to cross-cultural contact, one should try to improve one's listening skills. This will ensure that we begin to hear the true sense of what is said instead of understanding face value. Becoming aware of others' expectations will ensure that we avoid prejudging or stereotyping an individual. By respecting people and their differences and knowing that we do not know anything, we will be open to people and their differences, leading us to use contextual knowledge for better understanding.

## **2.2. Causes of barriers**

Cultural barriers in communication exist primarily when communication takes place between two different cultural backgrounds. In daily life, we face cultural barriers.

Non-verbal communication includes gestures, signals, and even unconscious motions like body language. A social group's cultural and ethical values play a crucial role in the non-verbal communication of an individual, such as hand movements, twitching, and physical distance and their meaning. Each gesture and symbol have a different cultural background. (Vyshnavi Basuthkar, 2019)

Misunderstanding and misconception is often the biggest obstacle to successful communication in a multicultural environment. This is a fundamental concern for people of diverse social backgrounds, each of whom has different values. The peculiar existence of each person and each society results in uneasiness and instability, which leads to a misunderstanding. (Vyshnavi Basuthkar, 2019)

It is necessary to avoid or resolve obstacles to successful and effective communication. It is imperative to avoid all forms of cultural barriers in the context of cross-cultural communication. This will build conflict between various cultural contexts. The reasons for wars between two nations, business rivalry, may be due to cultural differences between communications. The following are the points that need to be kept in mind to avoid cultural communication barriers (Vyshnavi Basuthkar, 2019):

1. Avoid frame of reference
2. Use mutual Language and signs
3. Ask questions when in doubt
4. Provide space for mutual respect
5. Open to new ideas
6. Accepting and adapting the different culture
7. Understand the context of communication
8. Avoid Stereotyped notions
9. Promote positive reception of cultural divergences
10. Learn about other cultures and their norms

### **3. RESEARCH**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the approach – technique, process, and research design followed by an assessment of the opportunities and limitations of the method chosen. Finally, the problems of generalization, validity, and reliability of this study are discussed.

### **3.1. Research strategy**

Background knowledge on cross-cultural communication barriers in the market context was gathered from peer-reviewed publications. A large amount of information offered a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Further reading led to a deeper understanding of the subject and familiarity with the ideas, key concepts, and basic vocabulary of the study area chosen. The research question was then formulated. An ensuing methodology has been developed based on our topic of interest and the field of study.

### **3.2. Data collection**

Sources are usually classified as primary or secondary. According to Boslaugh (2007), primary data is obtained for further study by the researcher with a clear goal. If the researcher has the data obtained by someone else for some other reason, this is secondary data. In this thesis, only primary data was used, the results were evaluated, and, subsequently, several inferences were drawn.

Besides, the researcher's ideas are being synthesized and incorporated into the results.

### **3.3. Research method**

There are two dominant types in market research quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research varies in a variety of ways from qualitative research. As Bryman and Bell (2007) put it in general terms, the quantitative approach is all about collecting numerical data. Contrarily, qualitative research is interested in answering questions about why, observing conditions, knowing the causes, and not simply accepting findings based on numerical interpretations. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the approach – technique, process, and research design followed by an assessment of the opportunities and limitations of the method chosen. The choice of the best research method depends on the field of study and the form of research. For this research, the qualitative approach is the most applicable.

The research method will base on multiple methods of qualitative research. This research method suits this research paper the best. The outcomes of the questionnaire and interviews will be evaluated using the current Hofstede Six-Dimension theory.

The goal is to get 60 respondents from the questioner and based on it; six people will be chosen for the interviews after collecting the results.

The questionnaire was chosen because it is relatively simple to interpret and because the structure is familiar to most respondents. Questions were asked in both open-ended and multiple-choice formats. Respondents could remain anonymous. The online survey was entirely voluntary, and everyone who wanted to participate could. The respondent only required a computer or smartphone with internet connectivity. Link to the questionnaire was distributed via Facebook in Expats group Estonia, between colleagues at work, and with the help of Deans, the link has been shared with students of TalTech.

After collecting the responses, the interviews will be performed in Semi-structured- open-ended questions prepared in advance; however, the interview goes with a flow where new questions may arise.

The author decided to use semi-structured interviews with prepared questions in advance and tape recording the interview to have precise results. The purpose behind choosing the semi-structured approach is for the interview to be both structured and open simultaneously. With semi-structured methods, there is an opportunity to gain more knowledge from the interviewee; new questions may come up depending on the conversation. The interview will be online using skype or other online communication methods, or the interview can be face-to-face.

The interviews will give us a more in-depth insight into the problem and information sufficient to draw an excellent conclusion to help other companies to prevent cross-cultural communication issues.

Reflexive thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data in order to address general or narrow research questions regarding people's experiences, perspectives, and representations of a given phenomenon. It is theoretically versatile in that it can be motivated by principles from a variety of fields and used in a variety of analysis methods (inductive, deductive, semantic).

Mojtaba Vaismoradi (January 10, 2016)

The research may focus solely on what people say (semantic), or it may attempt to report on the assumptions underlying the data, i.e. the “ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations — and philosophies — that are theorized as defining or informing the semantic quality of the data.”

Mojtaba Vaismoradi (January 10, 2016).

This form of inquiry and analysis approach requires qualitative data. Diaries, interviews, surveys, data from participatory design, visual approaches such as sketches and storyboards, or secondary sources such as "internet forums, blogs, websites, magazines, newspaper articles, and police records" may all be used. It can also be used across datasets when analysing various sets of data.

In semantic approach there is no formulas or coding just capturing the results of the interviews. Listening very carefully to the audios and going through the transcriptions. Mojtaba Vaismoradi (January 10, 2016)

Given that qualitative research is inherently interpretive, the researchers' positions, beliefs, and judgments must be clearly recognized so that they can be taken into account when making sense of the final report and assessing its content. In the qualitative culture, this level of transparency and reflection is regarded positively. Researchers form their work and serve as the instrument for gathering and analysing data. It is beneficial to establish and keep a reflexivity journal in order to consider the researcher as the instrument of study. The reflexivity method involves the researcher reflecting on and recording how their beliefs, positionings, choices, and research methods affected and shaped the study and the final data analysis. Researchers should keep clear records of the creation of each of their codes and possible themes during the coding process. Mojtaba Vaismoradi (January 10, 2016)

Questions will be prepared ahead of time. In the interview, there will be asked five questions.

### 3.4. Result analysis

The data collection period was one week. The questionnaire had 61 respondents in total.

The survey consisted of 18 questions and approximately took 5 to 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire was divided into two different section sections. The first section had demographic questions, and it had questions linking to the views that employees have regarding cross-cultural communication and if they are aware of it.

The second part of the questionnaire was related to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Open-ended and close-ended questions were used in the questionnaire also; demographic, rating, and multiple-choice questions appeared in the questionnaire.

Figure 2 shows that 41 of the respondents were female, and only 19 were male, and only one of the 60 respondents preferred not to indicate its gender.

Many of the respondents are between 18-25 and 31-40, while 16 are between ages 26-30, and only 8 of the respondents are 41-55 years old.

As it seems, none of the 61 respondents were over 56 years.

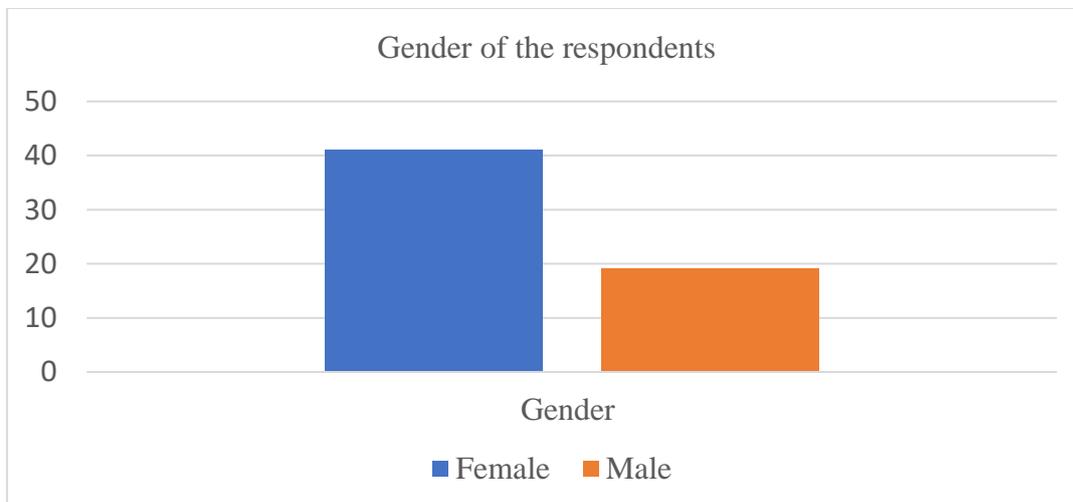


Figure 2: Gender of the respondents

Source: Composed by the author

Many of the respondents are between 18-25 and 31-40, while 16 are between ages 26-30, and only 8 of the respondents are 41-55 years old.

As it seems, none of the 61 respondents were over 56 years

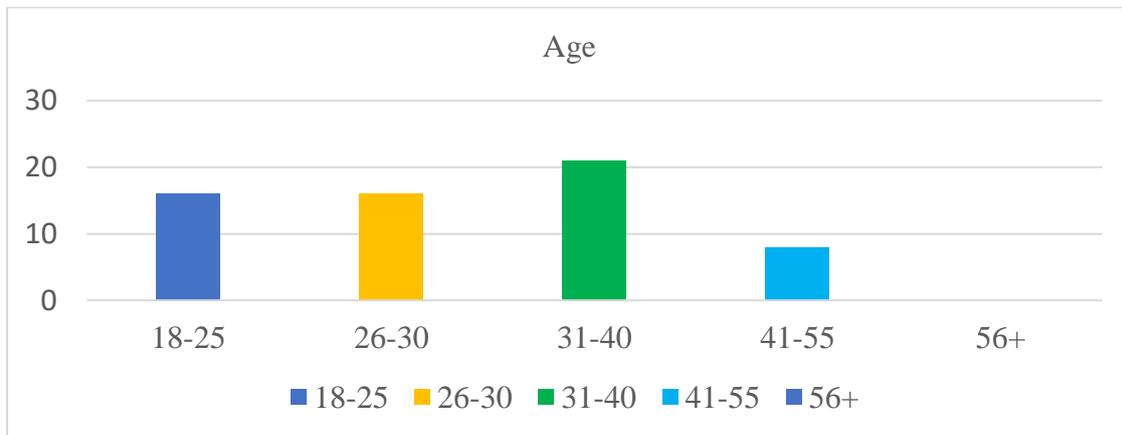


Figure 3: Age of the respondents

Source: Composed by the author

The questionnaire author found out that 13 of the respondents are working in the IT sector while 10 are in Finance and Accounting. In figure 4, you can see that majority are aware of Cross-Cultural Communication while only 6 out of 60 are not aware of it. Analysis have been analysed only by number 55.

According to Figure 4 represents only 33 respondents have sometimes faced cultural misunderstandings at work, and 23 had only rarely faced it. However, 2 of the respondents, have never faced misunderstandings at work, which will be eliminated from the analysis. Three of the respondents have experience with cultural misunderstandings at work very often. Surprisingly, nobody has always faced. As most had experience with cultural misunderstanding, sometimes it means that employees are familiar with cross-cultural communication.

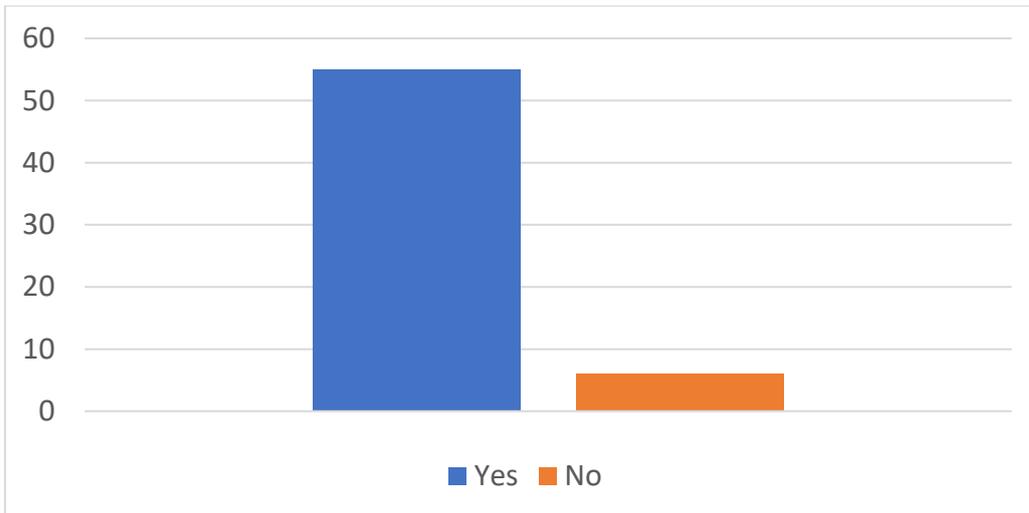


Figure 4: Are you aware of cross-cultural communication?

Source: Composed by the author

According to Figure 5 represents only 33 respondents have sometimes faced cultural misunderstandings at work, and 23 had only rarely faced it. However, 2 of the respondents, have never faced misunderstandings at work, which will be eliminated from the analysis. Three of the respondents have experience with cultural misunderstandings at work very often. Surprisingly, nobody has always faced. As most had experience with cultural misunderstanding, sometimes it means that employees are familiar with cross-cultural communication.

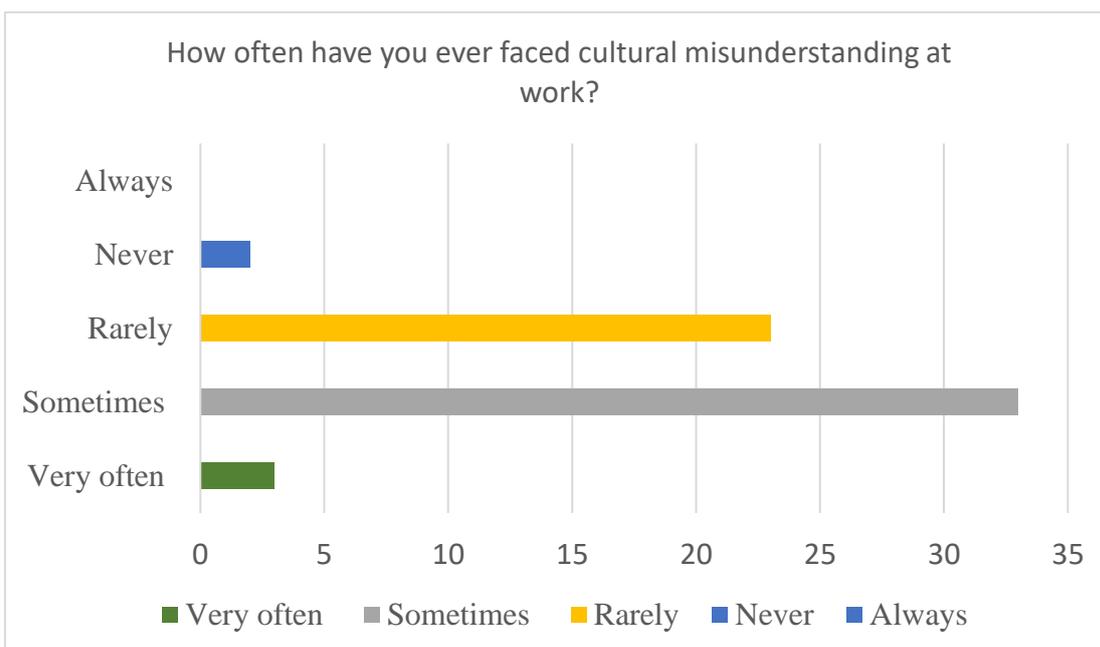


Figure 5: How often have you ever faced cultural misunderstanding at work?

Source: conducted by the author

Cultural norms and values cultural barriers have been why 33 of the respondents have faced cultural misunderstanding. Figure 5 also indicates that for 28 people, the reason is stereotypes and beliefs. Body language and gestures were chosen only by 15 of the people. However, only one answered that he or she had not faced any, and another one answered that none of these barriers have been the reason.

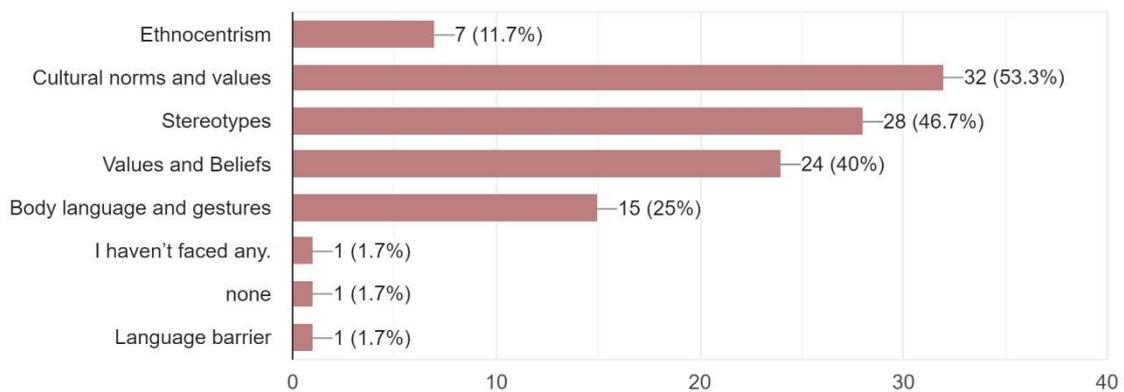


Figure 6: “I have faced cultural misunderstanding because of these cultural barriers”.

Source: Taken from the survey

Continuing with this part of the questionnaire on the open question "What do you think are the major communication obstacles at work?". The author received 60 different answers.

Unfortunately, only one employee did not understand the question. Most of the answers were related to the fact that due to Covid-19, most of us started working from home. Employees cannot understand what their colleagues are feeling while communicating; they cannot see some of the gestures and body language. Some of the respondents think that major communication obstacles at work are the Language barrier and not being familiar with other colleagues' religions. Meanwhile, three of the answers indicate that in Estonia, people do not share their emotions and are introverts, which is hard for them to build communication and might lead to assumptions and

confusion. Also, respondents believe that the issue can be not knowing the communication techniques, and this reason led them to some misunderstandings at work.

Figure 7 shows that majority of the companies based in Estonia are very aware of cultural diversities.

Regarding displaying emotion or anger at work, which can be very common, 26 respondents believe that some emotional display at work is normal as sometimes it is not in our hands to control it. However, 19 out of 61 have never displayed emotion or anger at work. Meanwhile, 11 feel that emotion is inappropriate at work. Some of the respondents could not choose the exact one, so they decided to split between the answers and, only one employee answered that emotion is appropriate under some circumstances evenly.

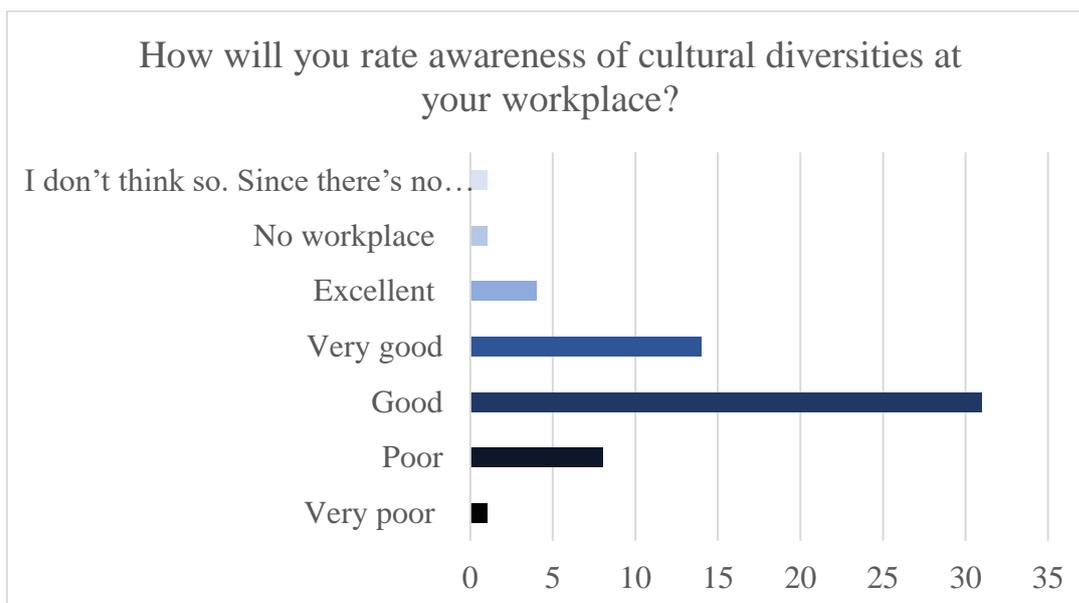


Figure 7: “How will you rate awareness of cultural diversities at your workplace?”

Source: Composed by the author

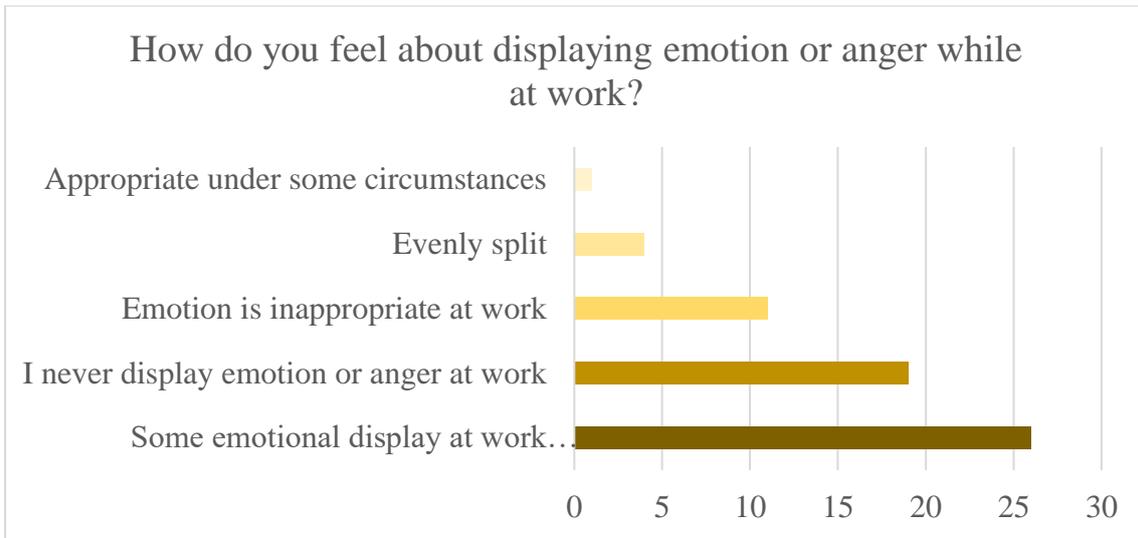


Figure 8: “How do you feel about displaying emotion or anger while at work?”

Source: Composed by author

Figure 9 shows that the majority, 49 people, have developed communication strategy adjustments during work and in communication with their colleagues. However, 12 out of 54 respondents have not experienced that.

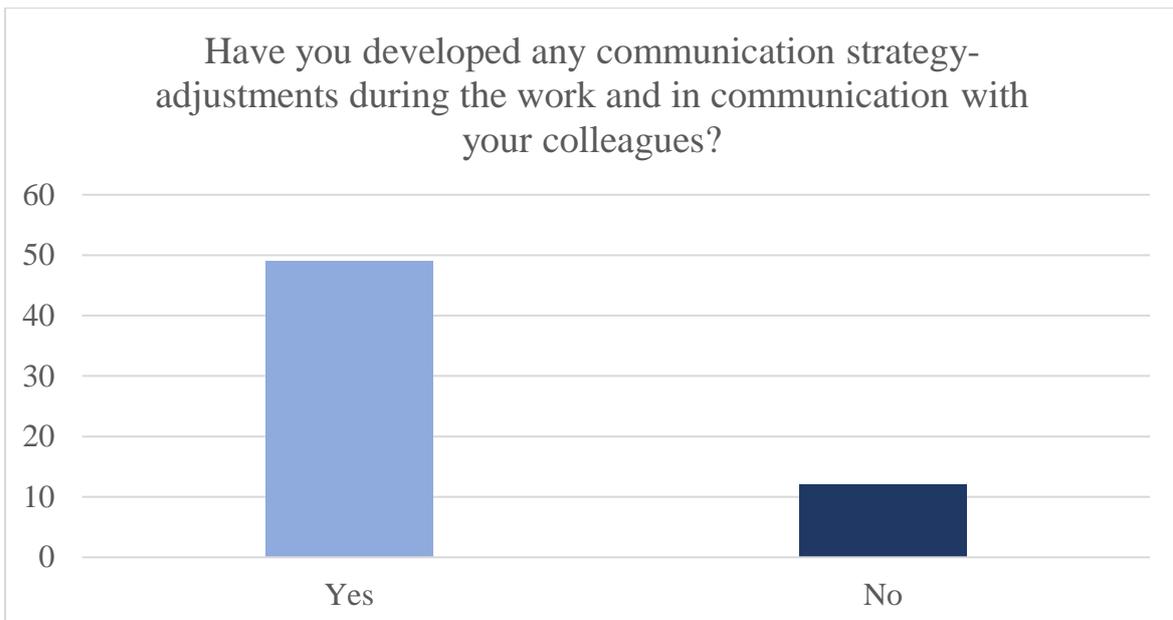


Figure 9: “Have you developed any communication strategy-adjustments during the work and in communication with your colleagues?”

Source: Composed by author

As English is one of the common languages used in multinational organizations in Estonia survey also had a question regarding "Have you ever had a different interpretation of an English word or sentence (assuming English is the most commonly used communication language in multinational organizations in Estonia) that could be attributed to cultural differences?".

Many answers indicates that respondents have not had such experience. However, 21.3% never faced this kind of issue.

This last section of this survey was about the importance of cross-cultural communication as training at work. On a scale of 10, most of the respondents, 19 people, given the rate 9. Meanwhile, two out of 60 decided that it is not important and gave the rate 1 and 2. In the following open-ended question, employees indicate that awareness is always good. If organizations use those training programs, then it reduces those cultural misunderstandings.

How far is "Cross-Cultural Communication" important as a subject to be included as a training provided by the companies?

61 responses

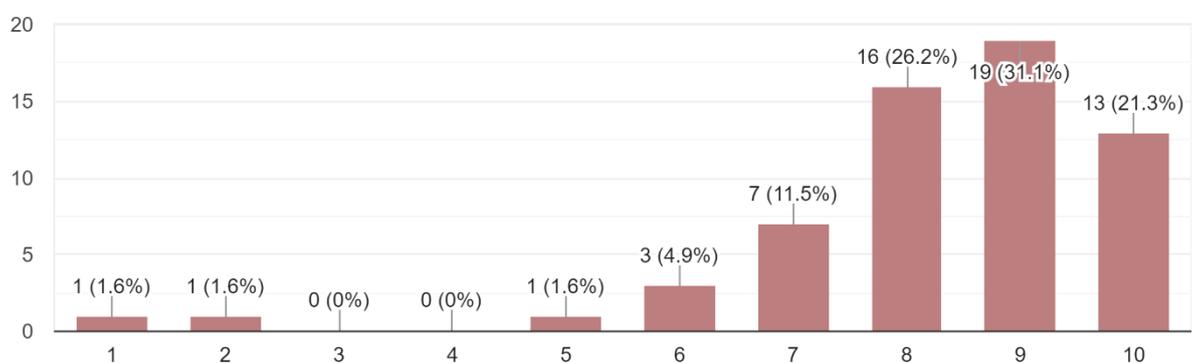


Figure 10: How far is "Cross-Cultural Communication" important as a subject to be included as a training provided by the companies?

Source: Taken from the survey

The second part of the questionnaire is about Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Respondents needed to rate themselves from 1 to 10 scale how comfortable they are with referring to a higher authority.

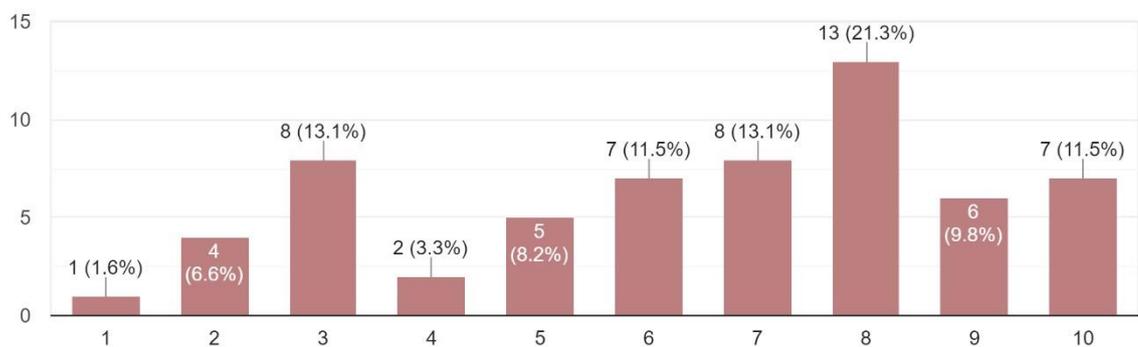


Figure 11: "(Power distance) How comfortable are you with deferring to a higher authority, whether hierarchical or social? Rate yourself between 1 and 10."

Source: Taken from the survey

Most of them rated themselves as 8, which means that they are more comfortable referring to a higher authority.

In Figure 12, it is shown that 29 of the respondents are evenly split between the answers. So, they are for both collectivism and individualism together. On the other hand, 18 out of 61 believe more in collectivism and 12 in individualism.

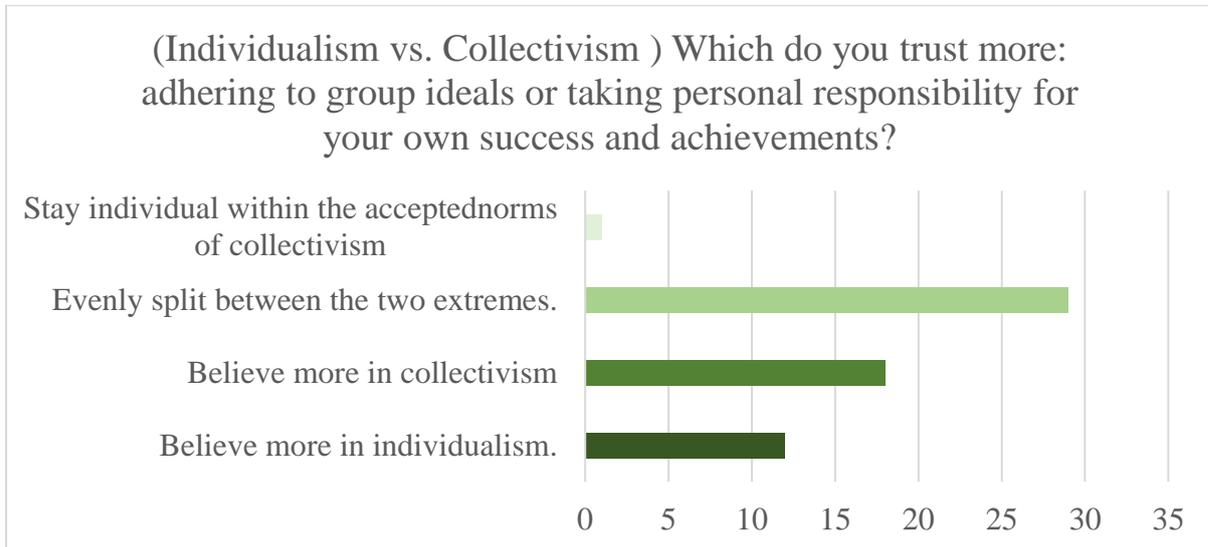


Figure 12: “(Individualism vs. Collectivism) Which do you trust more: adhering to group ideals or taking personal responsibility for your own success and achievements?”

Source: Composed by the author

The majority could not choose with whom they prefer to work, men or women. They decided to split evenly. Meanwhile, 8 of the respondents have some preference for men and only 4 for women. However, the author received other answers as well. One of the respondents indicates that as a supervisor, he or she would prefer men. Three of the answers show that employees do not care about which gender is their colleagues.

Majority 26 respondents strongly disagreed with this statement and found very inappropriate and racist. Meanwhile 12 agree that we cannot compare them, and all are equal. However, 13 believe that some countries are more developed in some ways and 7 are evenly split between the answers.

Majority 26 respondents strongly disagreed with this statement and found very inappropriate and racist. Meanwhile 12 agree that we cannot compare them, and all are equal. However, 13 believe that some countries are more developed in some ways and 7 are evenly split between the answers.

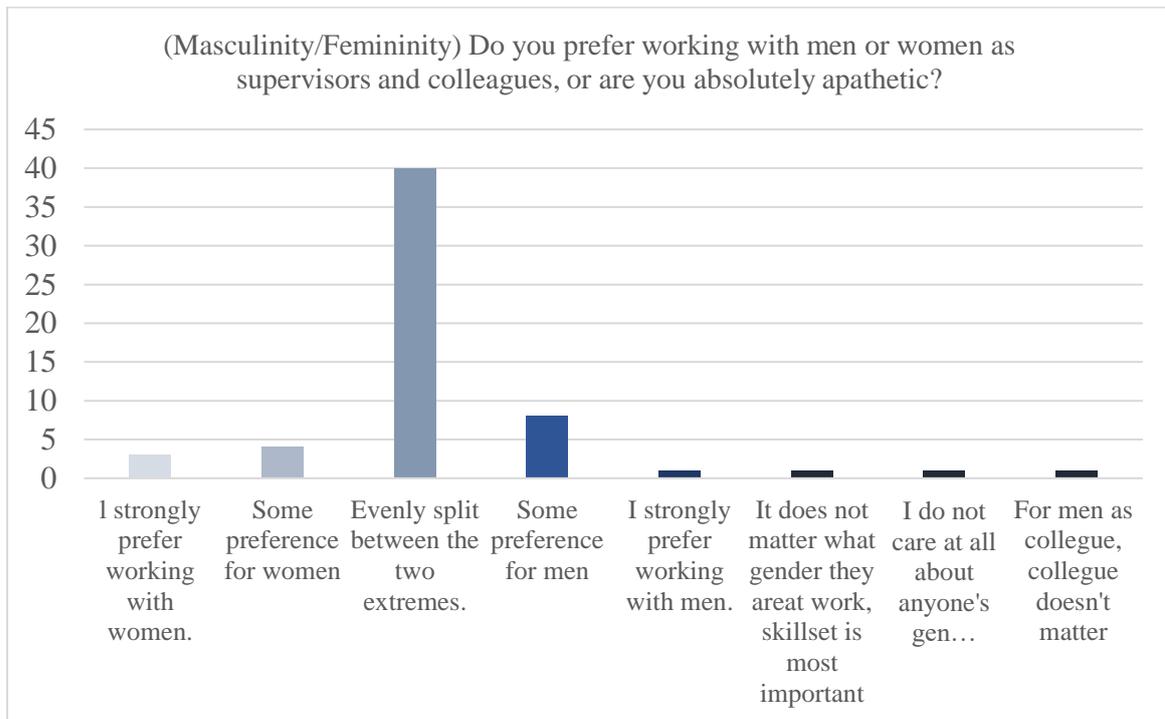


Figure 13: “(Masculinity/Femininity) Do you prefer working with men or women as supervisors and colleagues, or are you absolutely apathetic?”

Source: Composed by the author

According to Figure 14, 26 of the respondents completely disagreed with the statement they considered as unacceptable and somewhat racist. Meanwhile, only three of the respondents agreed with the statement below.

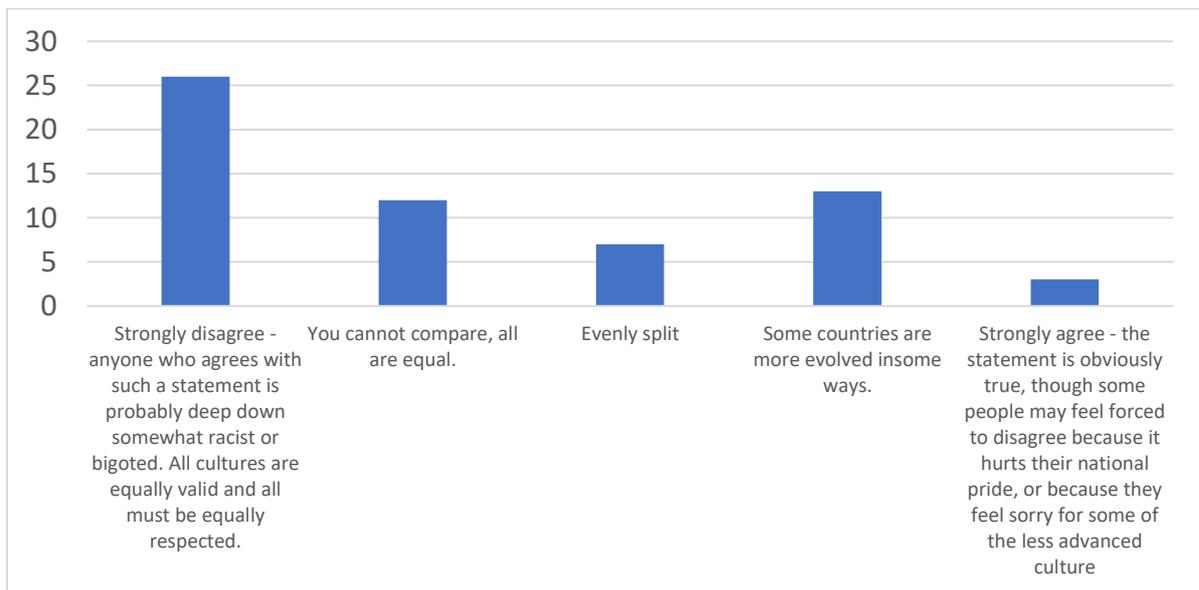


Figure 14: “(Uncertainty Avoidance) To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "While all cultures must be respected, some cultures are indeed more advanced than others." People in advanced cultures are more likely to be trustworthy, hardworking, diligent, coordinated, compassionate, and law-abiding. People in less developed societies are less strict, more superstitious, more intolerant, less disciplined, and less respectful of the law. Less developed cultures can emulate advanced cultures, even though it means abandoning some of their old customs. The definition of "racial dominance" has some validity.”

Source: Composed by the author.

The next step of the qualitative research is conducting interviews. As a result, I conducted 3 successful interviews with managers and Team Leads of an organization with very diverse workforce. Meeting place for Interviewee 1 and 2 was Zoom platform, and for Interviewee 3 it was face to face meeting. All the interviewees have been chosen randomly from the emails left in the questionnaire.

Table1. Interviewee 1 results

Interviewee 1	"They'd start to argue and very often. They are like mistake with no, communication somehow passive."	Dimension
		Power Distance (PD)
	"You know, to avoid communication programs somehow. We Estonians are not very emotional yet quite reserved quite an introvert."	Individualism or Collectivism
	"Not the opening up very quickly. It takes time to start the trust and people are quite much like, like, closed and passive."	Time Perspective

Source: Composed by author

Interviewee 1 stated that cross-cultural communication is a very important topic to touch. As a director of a very diverse organization Interviewee 1 admitted that a lot of cultural misunderstanding are happening currently in organizations. Most of them are due to cultural norms, values and beliefs also stereotypes.

Table 2. Interviewee 2 results

Interviewee 2	"Just don't get too much into, like, our space. I mean, that the, what you, it's not like, you don't have to be like us".	Dimension
		Individualism or Collectivism

Source: Composed by author

Interviewee 2 is a very Individualism person that does not like somebody to get in his/her space. Meanwhile working in a team is comfortable for this respondent, but working in a less culturally diverse team.

Table 3. Interviewee 3 results

Interviewee 3	"When I have already identified, I approach each of them individually. When everything already settled, I will organize something and	Dimension
		Power Distance (PD)

Interviewee 3	discuss and understand each other for all of us. Maybe there was a, let's say, this information or any type of stereotypes or anything, you know, it might be real. So yeah, this is you have to talk to understand and you have to be equal to everyone".	Power Distance (PD)
---------------	--	---------------------

Source: Composed by author

Interviewee 3 believes that we are all equal to everyone. Managers does not need to be superior to others. Better to sit down and understand the issues of your team.

### 3.5. Discussion

Since only 59 out of 61 respondents have faced cross-cultural misunderstandings at work, result analysis and discussion will cover only this number. Most of the respondents answered that awareness of the cultural diversities at their workplaces is good. This means that organizations are acting towards cross-cultural communication issues. As an example, the author will explain how cross-cultural communication is handled at her workplace. At work, we have Expat's program. Where each employee who is working in the company will have a chance to present their country by making a presentation where they can touch the topic of culture, bring some examples of the stereotypes about their countries, dos. Sometimes at such events, presenters bring their traditional food and even teach us how to dance. This is one of the good options for spreading cross-cultural awareness at work by making it exciting and funny. Some of the respondents contacted the author privately from the conversation author found out how companies handle cultural diversities. One of the organizations has a program to get to know the Language. On this kind of training, one of the international workers or the employees from one country can group. For one hour, they teach their mother language to their colleagues, show some gestures, or body language, and perceive some common gestures in their country. For instance, an "ok" sign in France uses it to show zero, and in some countries, it is offensive to use this sign.

Our body language always conveys more than our words. It can alter — or even nullify — the meaning of our words at times. Almost every finger gesture is bound to offend someone, somewhere, at some point. As a rule, avoid using a single finger as a gesture unless you are entirely sure it is suitable for a specific culture or region. The best method is to make open-handed movements with both fingers generally together.

Interviewee 2 believe that cultural barriers such as values and beliefs also stereotypes is one of the cultural barriers that influences cultural misunderstandings at work. Especially stereotypes as each one of us have a bit of knowledge on stereotypes about some cultures. For instance, stereotypes that I heard from the participants about Estonians: Estonians are less communicative and that they are more of the introverts. Meanwhile, participants agreed that Estonians are very helpful, the fact that they are less emotional is a good side when it comes to cross-cultural communication.

Most of the respondents mentioned that the significant issue in communication at work is not paying attention to your words and movements. For example, if you see your colleague for the first time at work and the communication has started, it is better to ask where your colleague from. After finding out this information, a person can already have a picture of the culture and act. Another issue is relying too much on stereotypes. For instance, such stereotypes as Canadians are incredibly lovely, and Middle Eastern people are very angry. Even though this is a nice stereotype, not offensive, people are still trying to make fun of it. The author's stereotype about Estonians is that it is not possible to make friends with them. I would disagree with this kind of stereotype as Estonians have been very friendly to me here. However, one can do not rely on a stereotype as people are different.

Stereotypes are a significant source of concern in culture and the workplace. Stereotypes are cognitive constructs that govern what people know, believe in, and expect from others because of their social identities. Stereotypes predict how people perceive and handle one another at work, leading to false generalizations about people based on their group membership. As a result, it is essential to deconstruct and counteract the use of stereotypes in workplace decision-making. Fairness and diversity in organizations are more likely if stereotypes can be overcome in the workplace.

Hofstede's cultural dimension Masculinity vs. Femininity plays a significant role in cultural misunderstandings at work. In the survey, 66.7% answered that they would prefer working with both women and men. Meanwhile, 13.3% had a strong preference for men and only 6.7 for women. From this, we can assume that 13.3% are more comfortable working with men. Also, they mention that as a superior or manager, they would prefer men. It is erroneous to believe that performance ability and character characteristics are consistent between genders. The mere mention of a feminine individual in a leadership position in an organization should not elicit feelings of loss of power and weak leadership.

However, it seems that when a masculine figure is in control, people feel more at ease. Most selection committees in companies prefer to employ men over women for positions of authority.

### **3.6. Recommendations**

Participants of the interview are willing to participate in future researchers and they are interested in this topic.

It can also be stated that more information regarding cross-cultural communication in the workplace should exist in Internet, because majority of respondents have asked author regarding what those is and where to find detailed information about the product and some of them were interested in the results of my research.

A recommendation for future research would be to choose much more narrow topicality and focus on only one process of consumer decision making rather than different ones. As well as prepare broader number of questions. However, author believes that participants still do not have high involvement with cultural communications in Estonia,

Overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that if training would be used in the organizations, then it would be easier for the employees. Interview 1 stated that in the organization had these kinds of trainings before but currently they added some cultural rules in the code of conduct. However, occurrence of the cultural misunderstandings has been more and more. Interviewees mentioned that Russians love authority hierarchy, some Asian countries are extremely polite.

Conducting numerous studies considers to may help set up steady determinants as well as the key variables. Afterwards dispensing one variable at a time to discover out which variable is the foremost influential one. Some of these factors may be age, gender, occupation, geographical location etc.

Study shows that participants are very curious about this topic and believe it need to be studied more to avoid such cultural misunderstandings as in the organizations where the work stuff is very diverse it is common. Interviewees stated that when your work with International people in the same organization, many nationalities then it is important to set some ground rules, Universal rounding rules and make sure that everybody understands it in the similar way the same way.

When the data collection process is completed and the researcher begins the data analysis phase, they can make notes on their initial observations of the data. Logging ideas for future research can help in having thoughts and reflections written down and can act as a guide for new coding ideas as one moves through the thematic analysis process.

In this research Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis has been used. Very first step read and re-read data to become acquainted with what it contains, paying special attention to trends that emerge.

Very last phase is when the author writes the study, author must determine which themes contribute significantly to understanding what is going on in the data. In addition, researchers can perform "member checking." This is the stage at which the researchers return to the sample to determine if their interpretation is correct.

The transcription of the interviews can be found in the Appendix 4.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this research paper, the thesis paper's conductor decided to limit it and focus on the Estonian market instead of all emerging markets worldwide. Nevertheless, the limitation will not apply to the types of the company.

Different companies will be the research parts, either small, global, or a new start-up. It will make it much easier to focus on the study and complete it in the best possible way.

This research aims to understand and examine how culture affects employee communication in a multinational organization. Words, behaviours, and movements have common meanings in different cultures. Prejudices, ethnocentrism, manners, and beliefs are all influenced by culture. It shapes how people think and act. When people from different cultures interact with one another, these factors may become barriers.

As a result, norms are more closely related to our behaviour, while values are more closely related to our attitudes, morals, and beliefs. Our beliefs and norms are instilled in us and our culture by current structures such as family, schooling, and government.

Many respondents indicate that due to cultural norms and values, they have faced cultural misunderstandings at work. Even when employees attempt to express themselves in their native language, many misunderstandings occur. When people speak various languages, it becomes more profound.

Organizations should prioritize the creation of new business culture widely recognized society in which one accepts and respects the ideals and beliefs of others. The top management should commit to creating an organizational environment free of disputes and disagreements, improving employees' cross-cultural skills through cross-cultural awareness training, and focusing on a shared benefit approach that creates a win-win situation for the workplace multi-cultural population. Cultural competence entails a great deal of learning about different cultures to address cross-cultural barriers.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

Adelman, Mara B., & Levine, Deena R. *Beyond Language: Cross-cultural communication*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Regents/Prentice Hall (1993).

Delecta Jenifer R Raman G *International Journal of Management*, (2015), 348-351, 6(1).

UKEssays *Cross-Cultural Differences* (November 2018).

UKEssays. *Examining Cross-Cultural Communication In Organizations Cultural Studies Essay* (November 2018).

UKEssays. *Barriers to Cross-Cultural Communication* (November 2018).

Astrid Podsiadlowski, Daniela Gröschke, Marina Kogler, Cornelia Springer, Karen van der Zee, *Managing a culturally diverse workforce: Diversity perspectives in organizations* Volume 37, Issue 2, March 2013, Pages 159-175.

John W. Berry *Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures* Volume 29, Issue 6, November 2005, Pages 697-712.

Steve J. Kulich, Adam Komisarof, L. Ripley Smith, Kenneth Cushner *Re-examining intercultural research and relations in the COVID pandemic*, Volume 80, January 2021, Pages A1-A6.

UKEssays. *Hofstede's Culture, Dimensions And Decision-Making Process* (April 2017).

Stobierski, T. *How to Improve Cross-Cultural Communication in the Workplace*. Northeastern University Graduate Programs (2019).

Jenifer, R., . *Cross-Cultural Communication Barriers in Workplace*. pp 332-335 (2015).

Huettinger, M. "Cultural dimensions in business life: Hofstede's indices for Latvia and

Lithuania.” (2008).

Bannon, Gerard, Al-Omari, Dr Jehad, Reed, Bill, Guy, Vincent, Pooley, Richard, White, Nigel, Cross-Cultural Communication, Revised Second edition. Kogan Page Limited (2003).

Harris, Philip R., Moran, Robert T, 1999. Managing Cultural Differences, Fifth edition. Gulf Publishing Company (1999).

UKEssays "Barriers to Cross-Cultural Communication. Cultural Barriers to Communication.” (January 2018).

R. Delecta Jenifer and G. P. Raman, “Cross Cultural Communication Barriers in Workplace.” (2015) pp 333-334.

A study on the significant role of Cross-cultural communication in business firms Gagandeep Kaur pp 210-215.

M. Kvantaliani, O. Klimina . Implications of cross-cultural communication in business: A study of Swedish small enterprise “ImseVimse” and its international distributors and retailers (2011).

P. Sharon “Cultural Communication Barriers in the workplace.” (June29,2018).

Hofstede, G., Hofstede G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind. Revised and Expanded 3rd Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. London, England: Sage.

“Individualism versus collectivism” retrieved from:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/develop-cultural-intelligence/0/steps/49772#:~:text=Individualism%20stresses%20individual%20goals%20and,by>

[%20personal%20rewards%20and%20benefits.&text=The%20collectivist%20is%20motivated%20by%20group%20goals.](#)

“Examples of Cultural Dimensions” retrieved from: <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/cultural-competence/examples-of-cultural-dimensions/#:~:text=Power%20distance%20refers%20to%20the,power%2C%20but%20from%20the%20followers.>

"Cultural Barriers to Communication," in Businessstopia, January 6, 2018, retrieved from: <https://www.businessstopia.net/communication/cultural-barriers-communication.>

“10 Methods to Tackle the Cultural Barriers For Communication In The Workplace” retrieved from: <https://www.troopmessenger.com/blogs/cultural-barriers-for-communication.>

How to do a Thematic analysis retrieved from: <https://medium.com/usabilitygeek/thematic-analysis-in-hci-57edae583ca9>

Intercultural Communication in the Spanish-Language Classroom in Thailand: Differences in Power Distance, Individualism, and Expressiveness retrieved from: <http://immi.se/intercultural/20-3-54/Jenvdhanaken-Intercultural-54-2.html>

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Questionnaire

# CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION- THE CHALLENGES FACED BY COMPANIES IN ESTONIA

Dear respondent!

My name is Nazrin Huseynzade, and I am a student at Tallinn University of Technology. Currently, I am writing my bachelor thesis on the topic: Cross-Cultural Communication- The Challenges faced by companies in Estonia.

Cross-cultural misunderstanding happens when people from different cultures communicate or interact with one another. People from one culture act according to their norms and values, but the other does not understand how it was conveyed and might interpret it differently due to cultural differences. Cultural misunderstanding also occurs when a word, gesture, or social context has different meanings in different cultures.

I kindly ask you to participate in this questionnaire. Read each question carefully and if the possible answer. Please choose an answer most appropriate to your opinion, and indicate it.

To have more proper research based on this questionnaire, 6 people will be chosen and asked to participate in the interview. If you would like to, you can also reject the offer. To participate in the interview, please indicate your email.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration!

Based on this questionnaire, 6 people will be chosen for the interview to conduct better research. Please indicate your email if you would like to participate in the interview.

Short answer text

Please indicate your age \*

- 18-25
- 26 -30
- 31-40
- 41-55
- 56+

Which gender do you represent? \*

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other...

In which sector are you working? (Example: IT) \*

Short answer text

---

Are you aware of cross-cultural communication? \*

- Yes
- No
- Other...

How often have you ever faced cultural misunderstanding at work? \*

- Very Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Always
- Other...



I have faced cultural misunderstanding because of these cultural barriers: \*

- Ethnocentrism
- Cultural norms and values
- Stereotypes
- Values and Beliefs
- Body language and gestures
- Other...

What do you think are the major communication obstacles at work? \*

Long answer text

---

How will you rate awareness of cultural diversities at your workplace? \*

- Very poor
- Poor
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent
- Other...

How do you feel about displaying emotion or anger while at work? \*

- Some emotional display at work is normal.
- I never display emotion or anger at work
- Emotion is inappropriate at work.
- Evenly split
- Other...

Have you developed any communication strategy-adjustments during the work and in communication with your colleagues? \*

- Yes
- No
- Other...

Have you ever had a different interpretation of an English word or sentence (assuming English is the most commonly used communication language in multinational organizations in Estonia) that could be attributed to cultural differences? \*

- Yes
- No
- Other...

If yes. Please give an example. \*

Long answer text

How far is "Cross-Cultural Communication" important as a subject to be included as a training provided by the companies? \*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all important           Very important

Because

Short answer text

## Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's cultural aspects theory serves as a foundation for cross-cultural communication. It was founded in 1980 by Geert Hofstede, a Dutch management researcher. Hofstede's cultural aspects theory shows how a society's culture influences its members' values. It also shows how these values are linked to behavior by the use of a framework derived from factor analysis.

(Power distance) How comfortable are you with deferring to higher authority, whether hierarchical or social? Rate yourself between 1 and 10 \*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Total lack of deference is normal. No one is better than anyone else. I am as good as anyone.

Total deference is normal. The world's wealthy, popular, and famous people have every right to extra social perks. These individuals have gained their positions through hard work and contribution to society. In general, people should respect and obey their superiors.

(Individualism vs. Collectivism ) Which do you trust more: adhering to group ideals or taking personal responsibility for your own success and achievements?

- Believe more in individualism.
- Believe more in collectivism
- Evenly split between the two extremes.
- Other...

(Masculinity/Femininity)

Do you prefer working with men or women as supervisors and colleagues, or are you absolutely apathetic?

- I strongly prefer working with women.
- Some preference for women
- Evenly split between the two extremes.
- Some preference for men
- I strongly prefer working with men.
- Other...

(Uncertainty Avoidance)

To what extent do you agree with the

\*

following statement: "While all cultures must be respected, some cultures are indeed more advanced than others." People in advanced cultures are more likely to be trustworthy, hardworking, diligent, coordinated, compassionate, and law-abiding. People in less developed societies are less strict, more superstitious, more intolerant, less disciplined, and less respectful of the law. Less developed cultures can emulate advanced cultures, even though it means abandoning some of their old customs. The definition of "racial dominance" has some validity.

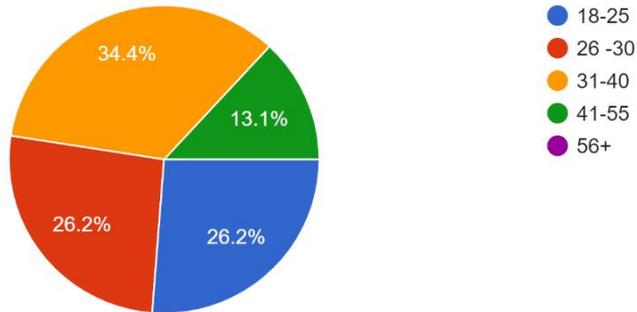
- Strongly disagree - anyone who agrees with such a statement is probably deep down somewhat racist or b...
- You cannot compare, all are equal.
- Evenly split
- Some countries are more evolved in some ways.
- Strongly agree - the statement is obviously true, though some people may feel forced to disagree because ...
- Other...

[Link](#) to the questionnaire.

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire answers

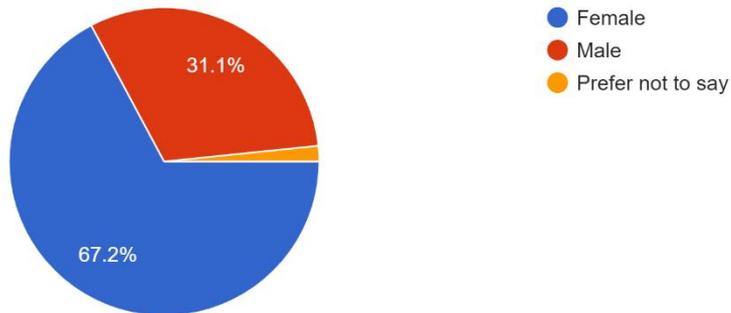
Please indicate your age

61 responses



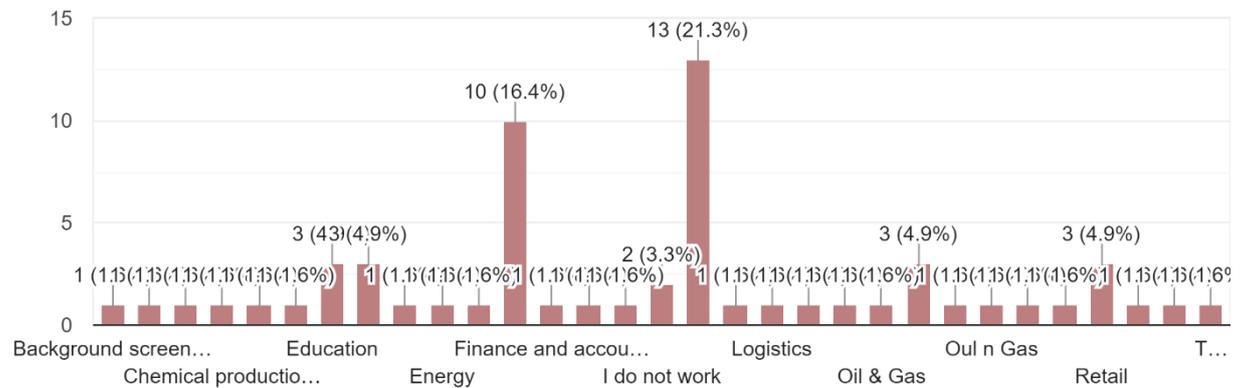
Which gender do you represent?

61 responses



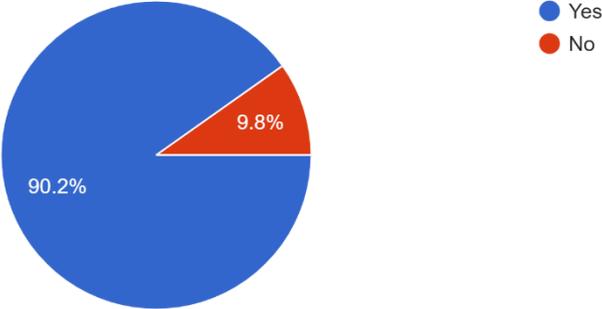
In which sector are you working? (Example: IT)

61 responses



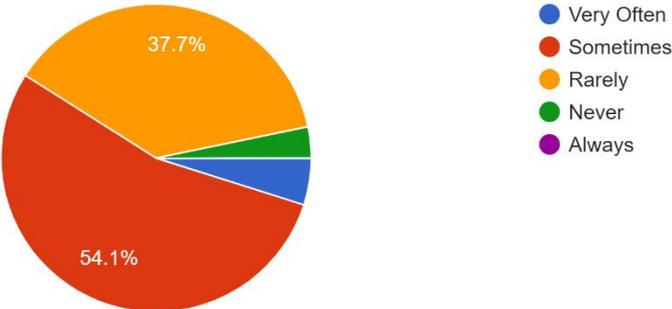
Are you aware of cross-cultural communication?

61 responses



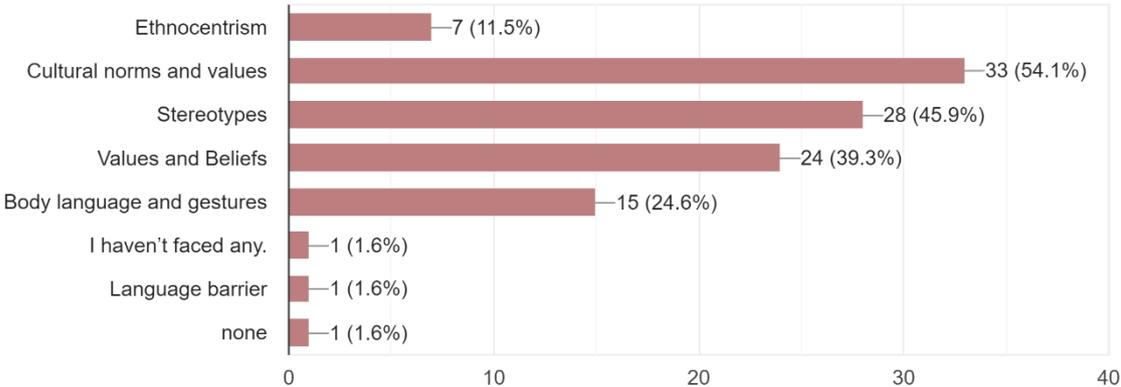
How often have you ever faced cultural misunderstanding at work?

61 responses



I have faced cultural misunderstanding because of these cultural barriers:

61 responses



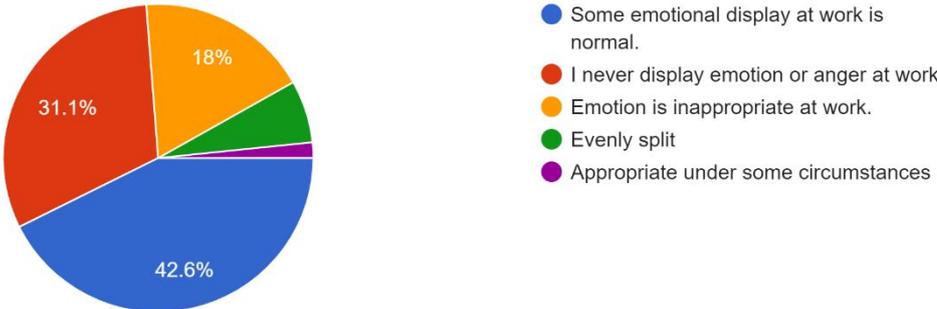
How will you rate awareness of cultural diversities at your workplace?

61 responses



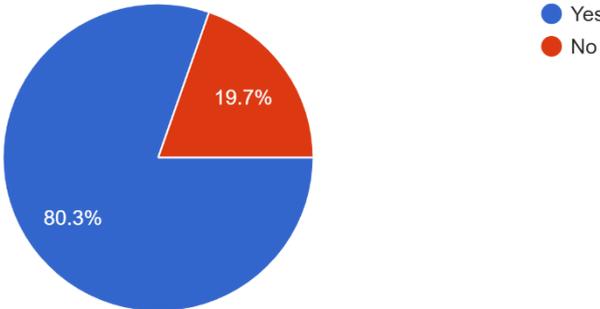
How do you feel about displaying emotion or anger while at work?

61 responses

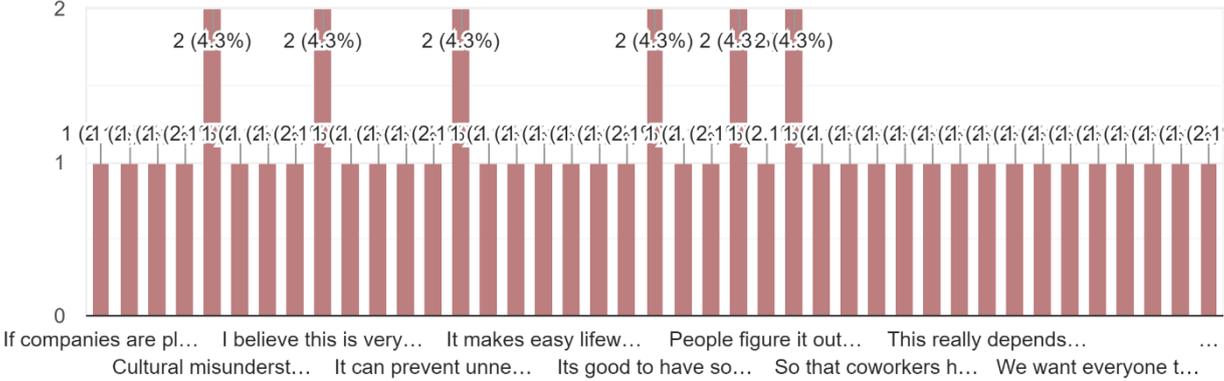


Have you developed any communication strategy-adjustments during the work and in communication with your colleagues?

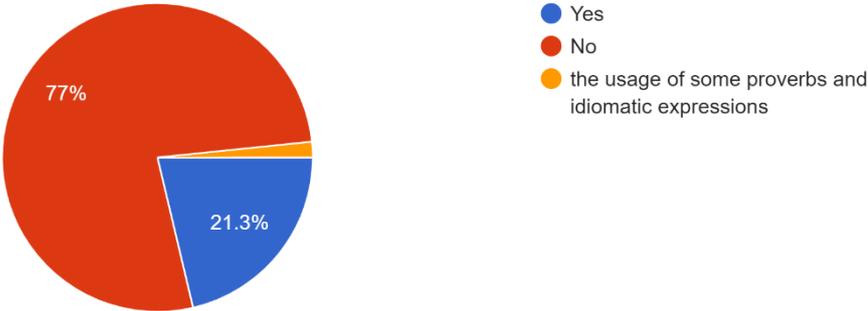
61 responses



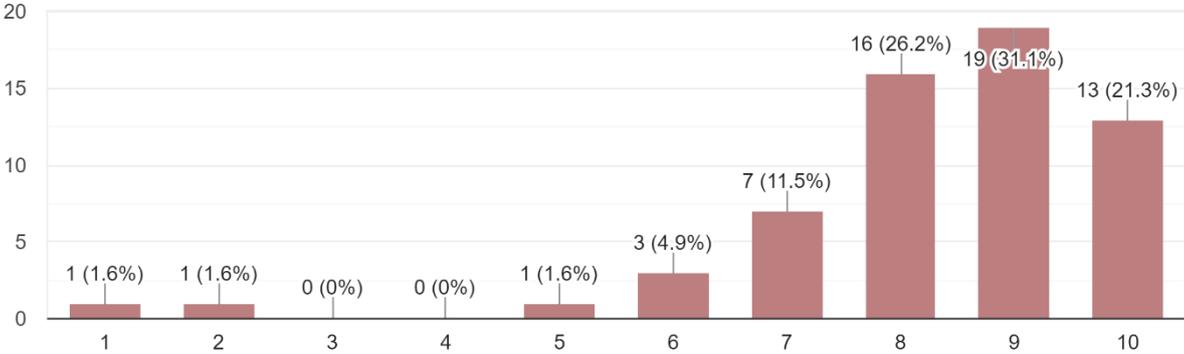
Because  
47 responses



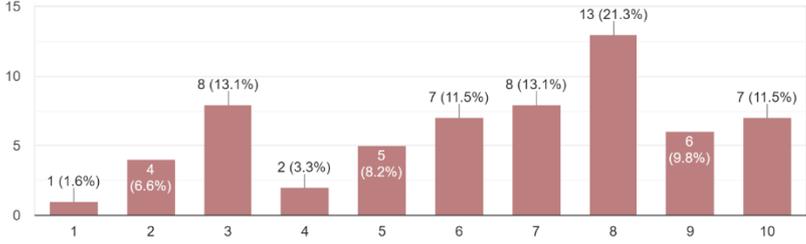
Have you ever had a different interpretation of an English word or sentence (assuming English is the most commonly used communication language in...hat could be attributed to cultural differences?  
61 responses



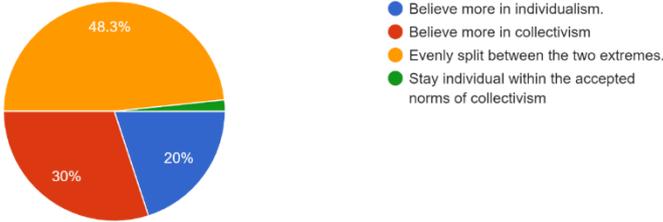
How far is "Cross-Cultural Communication" important as a subject to be included as a training provided by the companies?  
61 responses



(Power distance) How comfortable are you with deferring to higher authority, whether hierarchical or social? Rate yourself between 1 and 10  
 61 responses



(Individualism vs. Collectivism ) Which do you trust more: adhering to group ideals or taking personal responsibility for your own success and achievements?  
 60 responses



(Masculinity/Femininity) Do you prefer working with men or women as supervisors and colleagues, or are you absolutely apathetic?  
 60 responses



(Uncertainty Avoidance) To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "While all cultures must be respected, some cultures are inde...efinition of "racial dominance" has some validity."  
 61 responses



### **Appendix 3. Interview questions**

1. What are the most important things to remember when it comes to cross-cultural communication in your opinion?
2. How do you think what will be the influence of cross-cultural trainings used in the organisations?
3. As a manager, what kind of actions would you take if you will notice cultural misunderstandings in your team?
4. Do you have any cultural groups (nationality, religion, gender, age, profession) with whom you have more trouble collaborating?
5. (Stereotypes) What are the first 3 to 5 words that come to your mind when you think of the Estonia?

## Appendix 4. Interview Transcription

Interviewee 1

Interviewer: I guess we can start. I just want to give you a little bit of background about my topic and its cross-cultural Communications. And the challenges that we are facing at work. So the challenge the chat, the challenges that organizations in Estonia are facing. So basically, what is cross-cultural communication. It's when people from different cultural backgrounds are coming together and communicating with each other.

The first question: What are the most important things to remember when it comes to cross-cultural communication, in your opinion?

Interviewee 1: Can you please repeat the question?

Interviewer: Yes of course. What are the most important things to remember when it comes to cross-cultural communication, in your opinion?

Interviewee 1: When your work with International people in the same organization, many nationalities, then it's essential to set some ground rules, Universal rounding rules and make sure that everybody understands it in the similar way the same way. The grounding rules expectations. It's also obviously crucial to help here expectations. We even call it. The protocol that behavior proper behaviour or portable or code of conduct. Yeah, because they have a different cultural background, and otherwise people can vary. We misunderstand, they can interpret your message in their way based on their own cultural context, and it might even need some induction, some initial training to remind them that we are coming from different cultures and we need to be very cautious, how we interpret the message from other culture of a nationality. Create somehow biased opinion about other people. It might not be even Justified; it might not be that bad. Just we need to give some space for interpretation.

Interviewer: Thank you! I agree with you. Let's move on to the next question. How do you think what will be the influence of cross-cultural trainings used in the organisations?

Interviewee 1: We actually had those kind of trinings before. But we decided to remove them and just add it as a grounded rule in code of conduct. But I have to admit it is really important to have those kind of trainings or programmes in organisations.

As we started having more issues at work due to cultural misunderstandings. Because as I know, there are obvious differences. I can tell you from my own work, that that Russians, they respect for authority, hierarchy. Many

Europeans, especially Nordic countries they want freedom tolerance, liberal Eternal mindset. They want autonomy very much, individual space, and being a little bit, casual in relations.

Interviewer: As a director, what kind of actions would you take if you will notice cultural misunderstandings in your team?

Interviewee 1: We have people in our organization who have made these kind of mistakes time to time and maybe even I myself I can admit that it might have happened as well with me. I think what we have to try to choose what kind of action we have. Always tried to go back. The trace back and understand where the communication went from, where, where did it start. So, we usually we sit down with the people with whom we are struggling the miscommunication.

Interviewer: Do you have any cultural groups (nationality, religion, gender, age, profession) with whom you have more trouble collaborating?

Interviewee 1: Somehow it is, I would say, personally, in my case, I don't think it has been any cultural group? It's rather a kind of character. Because if people, if some people like to work ethics or they are not flexible enough, at least in our school, I can so I can see these, people are struggling. Not flexible enough, not not adjusting to the conditions, but trying to adopt those people might suffer if they have too much to fixed. Like understanding how things should be. And if this the reality is different, then they might be in difficulties.

Interviewer: What are the first 3 to 5 words that come to your mind when you think of the Estonia? For instance, before coming to Estonia I heard that here people are less communicative, not sharing their emotions.

Interviewee 1: I think this is something that should I completely agree with Estonian server. Have. Estonians have no Advanced or no developed a culture of dialogue. They are not related.

They are not very successful in a good dialogue. They'd start to argue and very often. They are like mistake with no, communication somehow passive. Not taking it, not taking active role, not, not taking proactive road to prevent his throat. You know, to avoid communication programs somehow. We Estonians are not very emotional yet quite reserved quite an introvert. Not the opening up very quickly. It takes time to start the trust and people are quite much like, like, closed and passive.

Interviewer: Thank you for participating and taking your time. Do you have any questions to me or concerns?

Interviewee 1: Yes I would like to ask will your work be available somewhere. I would like to read it and see the outcomes.

Interviewer: Yes of course I can send you my work afterwards as well.

Interviewee 1: Thank you Nazrin! With you luck!

Interviewer: Thank you!

Interviewee 2

Interviewer: Good morning! Thank you so much for joining I really appreciate it. Our interview wouldn't be that long maximum 20 minutes. I will give you a little bit of background on my topic. It is cross-cultural communications in the workplace. Cross-cultural communication its when people from different cultural backgrounds are coming together and due to cultural miusnderstandings. Lets start with the first question. Natya please tell me what is your opinion What are the most important things to remember when it comes to cross-cultural communication?

Interviewee 2: In my opinion, it's very important to keep in mind that cultural differences, customs and traditions as well as the backgrounds historical political backgrounds if it is a very diverse workplace.

Interviewer: Well How do you think what will be the influence of cross-cultural trainings used in the organisations?

Interviewee 2: I think that if organization do used cross-cultural trainings, it would actually benefit people and workplace in general because if there is a cross cultural community at work and with a lot of diversity, it is important to build on the strengths of the different cultures and eliminate the weaknesses which would make a better way to work. So important to overcome tense in the workplace, you just to avoid conflict and misunderstanding, which might lead in personal and overall performance of the employees and the organization in general.

Interviewer: And if for example, you will see or notice some cultural misunderstandings in your team or at work or between friends at work, what kind of actions would you take?

Interviewee 2: The times on the situation because cross cultural misunderstanding and come in many forms and between different kind of people. So, I doubt that I would interfere in every situation, just because sometimes the cross cultural misunderstanding, take is between people who I do not understand, just because. Not my background for my experience. So my opinion or my viewing, the situation would be like kind of topic not just to not to fill the continent conflict itself. If I'm not aware about the roots or the causes, but I think that the management should deal with majority of such context, not just to introduce not to interfere with all this kind of stuff.

Interviewer: And you personally, do you have any cultural groups like, based on religion or maybe age profession, or gender that you have more trouble with?

Interviewee 2: I prefer to have a neutral side because it happens like we have, you know, sometimes you do a closed Corporation, is some groups or some firms, but still, you still like kind of competitors, but you still need to do a corporation and I had a lot of like, I would say, lunch talked, then my co-workers like toads.

Cross, cultural communication, barriers, and misunderstandings. And these prior experience has also affected my interactions with, with some of the colleagues from the European politics, not from Estonia. And I mean, it was really uncomfortable the first time. Experience of the colleagues that that I was a new hire and this like first impressions, really affected like my work with them. Not just like the professional manner but like the inner feeling I would rather work in

close collaboration with my co-workers of the same project rather than the colleagues from other countries just because. The Experience overall was that we are the one team. They are the another and irony. Maybe there is something about the cross-cultural aspect as well or maybe some misunderstanding on the professional basis, like, in the past, I don't know, but I had a lot of stories regarding so that some people were part YouTube, cross cultural misunderstandings and major incident. Not like at the moment.

Interviewer: How do you think what are the three to five stereotypes? People think about the Estonians.

Interviewee 2: We're like a bunch of grumpy cats. Just don't get too much into, like, our space. I mean, that the, what you, it's not like, you don't have to be like us.

Interviewee 3

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for participating. I promise you that interview will be short and easy. So let's start with the very first question. What are the most important things to remember? When it comes to cross-cultural Communications and your opinion?

Interviewee 3: The first thing in this is beneficial to let cooperate and kind of have a mutual understanding in professional life. Because without it, its not possible.

Interviewer: Do you have any cross-cultural trainings at work.

Interviewee 3: Unfortunately, no.

Interviewer: How do you think if such training would happen in the company would it have a good influence?

Interviewee 3: I definitely agree that it will have a good influence. Because even if we have a minor knowledge of culture we still don't have a broad knowledge of it. Really like getting to know cultures. So this would be very nice and helpful. With such training we can reduce cultural misunderstandings at work.

Interviewer: If you will notice any cultural misunderstanding in your team. How will you solve it as a team lead. What kind of actions would you take?

Interviewee 3: When I have already identified, I approach each of them individually. When everything already settled, I will organize something and discuss and understand each other for all of us. Maybe there was a, let's say, this information or any type of stereotypes or anything, you know, it might be real. So yeah, this is you have to talk to understand and you have to be equal to everyone.

Interviewer: Do you have any cultural groups that is hard to communicate with.

Interviewee 3: Actually, no. It more depends on a character of a person for me. I do not like accent my communication on exact cultural groups. Because even if some people are from one culture they might be very different.

Interviewer: I agree with you. Lets move to the last question. Can you tell me 3 or 5 Stereotypes about Estonians?

Interviewee 3: Yes, in my opinion, they are not very communicative. But just give them a little bit of time you will see how friendly they are and helpful. They will never reject to help you. This is what i saw at work. Back to the times when I was a newcomer, I was warmly welcomed in the company. Whenever i had any issues then they helped me right at a second.

Interviewer: Thank you so much Tamilla! Do you have any questions to me or any concerns?

Interviewee 3: It was very nice to have an interview with you.Thank you very much! Have a nice day and good luck. No questions and concerns.

[Web link to the transcription](#)

**Appendix 5. Non-exclusive licence / to be added only in graduation thesis as the last appendix /**

**A non-exclusive licence for reproduction and publication of a graduation thesis<sup>11</sup>**

I Nazrin Huseynzade (*author's name*)

1. Grant Tallinn University of Technology free licence (non-exclusive licence) for my thesis  
CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION- THE CHALLENGES FACED BY COMPANIES  
IN ESTONIA \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(title of the graduation thesis)*

supervised by Ricardo Ferraz Raats

*(supervisor's name)*

1.1 to be reproduced for the purposes of preservation and electronic publication of the graduation thesis, incl. to be entered in the digital collection of the library of Tallinn University of Technology until expiry of the term of copyright.

1.2 to be published via the web of Tallinn University of Technology, incl. to be entered in the digital collection of the library of Tallinn University of Technology until expiry of the term of copyright.

2. I am aware that the author also retains the rights specified in clause 1 of the non-exclusive licence.

3. I confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights, the rights arising from the Personal Data Protection Act or rights arising from other legislation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

---

<sup>11</sup> The non-exclusive licence is not valid during the validity of access restriction indicated in the student's application for restriction on access to the graduation thesis that has been signed by the school's dean, except in case of the university's right to reproduce the thesis for preservation purposes only. If a graduation thesis is based on the joint creative activity of two or more persons and the co-author(s) has/have not granted, by the set deadline, the student

*defending his/her graduation thesis consent to reproduce and publish the graduation thesis in compliance with clauses 1.1 and 1.2 of the non-exclusive licence, the non-exclusive license shall not be valid for the period.*