



**VILNIUS UNIVERSITY**  
**BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

*Lala Dashdamirli*

***Projektų vadovų požiūris į tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos sėkmės veiksnius tarptautinėse projektų komandose.***

***Project Managers' Perspectives on Success Factors for Cross-Cultural Communication Within International Project Teams.***

Supervisor Artūras Bučinskas, Associate Professor

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# SUMMARY

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT STUDY PROGRAMME

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PROJECT MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVES ON SUCCESS FACTORS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT TEAMS.

Supervisor – Associate Professor, Artūras Bučinskas

Master's thesis was prepared in Vilnius, in 2025

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The FMTP is described briefly:

This thesis seeks to explore the role of cross-cultural communication within international project teams, as well as to analyze project managers' perceptions of the key factors contributing to project success. Accordingly, the central research question guiding this study is: how do project managers perceive and address cross-cultural communication challenges in international project teams and which factors do they consider essential for achieving effective communication?

Problem, objective, and tasks of the FMTP:

Cross-cultural communication significantly influences the success of international project teams, yet miscommunication remains a major cause of project failure. Although existing research offers theoretical frameworks, there is limited insight into how project managers address these challenges in practice. This thesis aims to examine the role of cross-cultural communication in international project teams by exploring managers' experiences, identifying key communication challenges, and analyzing the factors they perceive as critical for effective communication and successful project outcomes.

Research methods used in the FMTP:

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore project managers' experiences in international teams. Data are collected through purposive sampling and interviews with managers experienced in cross-cultural communication. The findings are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. A modular research approach provides flexibility and supports an in-depth focus on participants' experiences rather than general knowledge.

Research and results obtained:

The findings align closely with established theories of cross-cultural communication and international project management, confirming their practical relevance. The interview data show how these frameworks function in real project settings, thereby linking theoretical models with the real-world experiences of project managers.

Conclusions of the FMTP:

Effective cross-cultural communication goes beyond language skills, requiring cultural awareness and adaptable leadership. This study shows project managers are key mediators, linking theory with practical communication in international projects.

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FMTF aprašymas trumpai:

Šiuo baigiamuoju magistro darbu siekiama išnagrinėti tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos vaidmenį tarptautinėse projektų komandose bei išanalizuoti projektų vadovų požiūrį į pagrindinius veiksnius, lemiančius projekto sėkmę. Atitinkamai pagrindinis tyrimo klausimas yra toks: kaip projektų vadovai suvokia ir sprendžia tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos iššūkius tarptautinėse projektų komandose ir kokius veiksnius jie laiko esminiais veiksmingai komunikacijai užtikrinti?

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Tarpkultūrinė komunikacija daro reikšmingą įtaką tarptautinių projektų komandų sėkmei, tačiau nesusikalbėjimas išlieka viena pagrindinių projektų nesėkmės priežasčių. Nors mokslinėje literatūroje pateikiami teoriniai pagrindai, vis dar trūksta įžvalgų apie tai, kaip projektų vadovai praktiškai sprendžia šiuos iššūkius. Šio darbo tikslas – išnagrinėti tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos vaidmenį tarptautinėse projektų komandose, analizuojant projektų vadovų patirtis, nustatant pagrindinius komunikacijos iššūkius ir veiksnius, kurie, jų nuomone, yra kritiniai veiksmingai komunikacijai ir sėkmingiems projektų rezultatams.

FMTF taikyti tyrimo metodai:

Tyrimo taikomas kokybinis tyrimo dizainas, skirtas projektų vadovų patirtims tarptautinėse komandose analizuoti. Duomenys renkami taikant tikslią atranką ir atliekant interviu su projektų

vadovais, turinčiais tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos patirties. Gauti duomenys analizuojami taikant teminę analizę, siekiant nustatyti pasikartojančius modelius ir temas. Modulinis tyrimo metodas suteikia lankstumo ir leidžia sutelkti dėmesį į išsamias dalyvių patirtis, o ne bendro pobūdžio žinias.

Atliktas tyrimas ir gauti rezultatai:

Tyrimo rezultatai glaudžiai atitinka pagrindines tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos ir tarptautinio projektų valdymo teorijas, patvirtindami jų praktinį pritaikomumą. Interviu duomenys atskleidžia, kaip šios teorinės nuostatos veikia realiose projektų aplinkose, susiejant teorinius modelius su projektų vadovų praktine patirtimi.

FMTTP išvados:

Veiksminga tarpkultūrinė komunikacija neapsiriboja vien kalbiniais gebėjimais – ji reikalauja kultūrinio sąmoningumo ir prisitaikančios lyderystės. Tyrimas parodė, kad projektų vadovai atlieka pagrindinį tarpininkų vaidmenį, jungiant teoriją su praktine komunikacija tarptautiniuose projektuose.

Informacija apie FMTTP rezultatų publikavimą ar pritaikymą publikacijai:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background and Relevance of the Research**

As businesses become more global, project management and delivery are greatly affected. As markets, resources, and talent become more connected, international project teams are now common across a variety of industries. Teams comprise diverse people from different cultures, languages, and professions to achieve common goals. Even though diverse groups can drive innovation, creativity, and problem-solving, they also complicate communication, coordination, and collaboration. Project managers have the difficult job of ensuring projects succeed across different cultures.

As a result, cross-cultural communication has become an essential component of project management. Communication transmits information, builds trust, resolves disputes, and aligns everyone on project team goals. On the contrary, delays, budget overruns, and even project failure can result from a communication breakdown. The relevance of this study is therefore grounded in the growing demand for project managers to navigate these challenges skillfully and to identify practices that enable effective communication in multicultural environments.

The novelty of the research lies in its specific focus on project managers' perspectives. The literature examines intercultural communication in organizations, but not as much from the perspective of project managers, who occupy a unique leadership position regarding success factors and intercultural communication. The study will yield practical insights from exploring the perspectives of people in project management worldwide.

### **1.2 Problem Formulation**

More and more people are realizing how important it is to communicate across cultures. Moreover, project outcomes are severely affected by miscommunication and cultural clashes within international teams. Communication problems accounted for more than 30% of failures in international projects (Zulch, 2016).

However, while scholars have developed models of intercultural communication competence and global leadership, there remains a gap in understanding how project managers themselves perceive and address these challenges in practice.

Thus, the central problem addressed in this thesis is How do project managers perceive and manage cross-cultural communication challenges within international project teams, and what do they identify as critical success factors for effective communication?

This research problem highlights two interconnected dimensions. To begin with, it aims to identify the issues project managers face in multicultural contexts, such as misaligned expectations,

hierarchical differences, and cultural lock-in in decision-making and feedback. Second, it emphasizes identifying strategies and conditions that managers believe contribute most strongly to communication success, such as trust, shared language, training, and leadership adaptability. By focusing on the lived experiences and perspectives of project managers, the study seeks to contribute to both theory and practice in international project management.

### **1.3 Research Aim and Objectives**

This thesis study aims to investigate the role of cross-cultural communication in international project teams. Moreover, to examine what project managers perceive to be the critical success factors.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives have been outlined.

1. To examine the communication challenges project managers face in multicultural project environments.
2. To identify the practices project managers use to manage cross-cultural communication.
3. To analyze which factors are perceived as key to communication success.
4. To offer practical suggestions to improve communication in global project settings

The study aims to ensure theoretical rigor and practical relevance, thereby helping project managers and organizations improve cross-cultural competencies.

### **1.4 Theoretical and Methodological Approach**

The research is conducted through communication studies across cultures. Different cultures offer frameworks that explain their ideas. Hofstede's dimensions (1980), Hall's, and low-high context theory: Project managers believe that communication is essential and that the project will be successful when communication is intense and frequent. The project manager's experiences and ways of knowing are used to produce an empirical typology of ways of learning.

This research uses a qualitative design to gain a detailed understanding of project managers' experiences. Interviews with project managers who can talk about international teams are imperative to this study. By choosing purposive sampling, the experimenter is assured that participants can engage effectively in cross-cultural communication. The researcher will look for patterns and common ideas inside the stories told by their subjects using thematic analysis.

A modular research approach allows flexibility when searching for information online. The method will also help focus on in-depth accounts rather than general knowledge of subjects.

## 1.5 Novelty of the Research

A thesis can show its novelty by investigating insufficiently researched issues, by applying known methods in newly created contexts, or by reframing problems from new perspectives, Kardelis (2017) argues. This study meets these criteria in several ways.

**Addressing a less-researched aspect: Most studies on intercultural communication have been conducted.** However, few studies have so far examined the perspective of project managers working in international project teams.

**Applying methods in a new area:** Semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis are well-established qualitative techniques, but their application to understanding communication success factors in project management provides fresh insights.

**Reframing the problem:** The study does not see cross-cultural communication merely as a barrier and risk. It instead sees it as something one can successfully undertake. It highlights success factors and practical strategies. Thus, rather than looking at the problems, it offers a solution-oriented perspective.

The findings are expected to confirm, deepen, or challenge existing theories by grounding them in real-world project management practice.

## 1.6 Limitations and Difficulties

This study has limitations, as all qualitative studies do. The outcomes of this study cannot apply to all international projects because only 7 project managers were interviewed. They give inspired insights, but not the whole picture. Also, using self-reported experiences may reveal bias. The business settings of both user firms are critical to establishing the trade and business relationships.

Even with such limitations, the depth and detail of qualitative data provide in-depth insights. The study acknowledges the challenges that may be encountered during the research, including recruitment challenges, time constraints, and interpretation issues related to sensitive data from other cultures.

## 1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into five main sections.

**Introduction:** Presents the background, research problem, aim, objectives, methodology, novelty, and structure of the thesis.

**Theoretical Work Section:** A systematic examination of scientific literature regarding cross-cultural communication, project management, and intercultural leadership. This section identifies theoretical frameworks, definitions, and gaps in existing research.

**Methodical Work Section:** Outlines the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategy, and analytical approach.

**Research Work Section:** Presents the results of the thematic analysis of interview data, identifying key challenges, strategies, and success factors.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** Interprets the findings in relation to existing theory, highlights contributions, acknowledges limitations, and offers practical recommendations for project managers and organizations.

Furthermore, this thesis was facilitated to structure using artificial intelligence methods. The creation of subject sections, paragraph structure and linguistic refining of specific textual elements were all supported by ChatGPT (OpenAI). Artificial intelligence was only used to help with text organization and expressiveness. The researcher retains all analytical choices, interpretation of results, conclusions, and accountability for the thesis's content. Examples of created outputs and prompts are provided in Annex 9.

## 1.8 Scientific and Practical Contributions

This study makes several important contributions to the field of cross-cultural communication and international project management. By focusing specifically on the perspectives of project managers, it provides insights into how cultural differences are experienced, interpreted, and managed by those who occupy a central leadership role in multicultural projects. While much of the existing literature emphasizes team members' experiences or theoretical models of culture, this research bridges the gap between theory and practice by demonstrating how project managers apply cultural knowledge and communication strategies in real-world contexts. It highlights the practical challenges that arise in international project environments and identifies the adaptive strategies, leadership approaches, and communication practices that managers employ to overcome these challenges effectively.

One key contribution of this study is its ability to link empirical findings to established theoretical frameworks, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's high- and low-context communication theory, Trompenaars' cultural dimensions, and the GLOBE Project. By connecting project managers' lived experiences to these theories, the research not only validates and extends existing knowledge but also provides practical examples of how theoretical concepts are implemented in diverse organizational settings. This connection enhances understanding of the complex interplay between culture, communication, and leadership, offering valuable insights for

both researchers and practitioners seeking to navigate the challenges of multicultural collaboration.

Based on its findings, the study offers several actionable recommendations aimed at improving communication and overall effectiveness in international projects. These include investing in cultural awareness and sensitivity training for project managers and team members, promoting leadership flexibility that adapts to varying cultural expectations, and implementing structured communication processes and culture-support programs. By adopting these measures, organizations can proactively address potential misunderstandings, reduce conflict, and foster inclusive, high-performing teams. Moreover, these strategies help organizations capitalize on the benefits of cultural diversity, such as creativity, innovation, and broader problem-solving perspectives, while minimizing the risks associated with miscommunication and cultural misalignment.

Finally, the study contributes to organizational practice by providing a roadmap for enhancing project outcomes in multicultural contexts. By emphasizing the importance of culture-aware leadership, structured communication, and ongoing professional development, it demonstrates how organizations can strengthen their international project management capabilities. The findings suggest that project managers who are equipped with both cultural knowledge and adaptive communication skills are better positioned to build trust, facilitate collaboration, and achieve project goals effectively. Overall, this study offers both theoretical and practical value, advancing academic understanding of cross-cultural communication while providing concrete guidance for organizations seeking to maximize the advantages of diversity in international projects.

## THEORETICAL WORK SECTION

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Cross-Cultural Communication

Project communication is the organized and deliberate sharing of information, ideas, and feedback among project stakeholders, aimed at achieving project goals efficiently and effectively. For project communication to be successful, it must be clear, timely, and considerate of differences in expectations, norms, and interpretations across teams. Miscommunication can lead to delays, duplicated efforts, and conflicts, which can negatively affect project outcomes. Culture plays a critical role in shaping communication by influencing how individuals perceive messages, express ideas, interpret feedback, and respond to verbal and nonverbal cues. Understanding cultural differences allows project managers to design communication strategies that are inclusive, effective, and adaptive to the needs of diverse team members. There are many levels at which culture can be studied:

**National culture** – These are the characteristics that differentiate countries, such as Germany and Japan, and influence communication styles, work ethics, and attitudes toward hierarchy and authority. National cultural norms shape how people interpret information, resolve conflicts, and collaborate with others from different backgrounds.

**Organizational culture** – Even within the same industry, businesses can have distinct cultures that affect internal communication, decision-making, and team dynamics. Organizational culture determines formal and informal rules, the preferred communication channels, and the level of openness or hierarchy in interactions.

**Team or social group culture** – Within the same organization, professional or social subgroups, such as IT and construction teams, can develop their own norms, jargon, and ways of working. These subcultures influence how team members interact, share knowledge, and coordinate tasks, which is especially important in multidisciplinary projects.

Project managers need to understand all these levels, particularly when leading projects involving people from multiple countries or cultural backgrounds. Effective communication skills are therefore essential for project success, enabling managers to facilitate collaboration, resolve misunderstandings, and align team members toward shared objectives. Several frameworks provide valuable insights into cultural differences and their implications for project communication. Hofstede's cultural dimensions help identify broad national trends and value orientations. Hall's high- and low-context communication theory explains how implicit versus explicit communication affects understanding. Trompenaars' seven cultural dimensions highlight practical differences that impact everyday managerial decisions. Finally, the GLOBE Project links cultural

characteristics to leadership expectations and communication norms, offering guidance on adapting leadership styles to diverse teams. Together, these frameworks equip project managers with the knowledge and tools to navigate intercultural communication challenges, foster effective collaboration, and enhance overall project performance.

### **Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions**

Hofstede (1980; Hofstede et al., 2010) established six categories that describe broad national cultural tendencies: power distance, individuality vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint. For instance, cultures with high power distance (such as Malaysia and Mexico) tend to have centralized hierarchies and formal communication. On the other hand, cultures with low power distance (such as Denmark and New Zealand) prefer participative communication. Collectivist cultures value collective unity and indirect communication, while individualist cultures value directness and personal success. Some people have said that Hofstede's model is too broad, relies on outdated data, and fails to account for subcultures or globalization (McSweeney, 2002; Tung & Verbeke, 2010; Stahl & Tung, 2015). Still, it is a good place to start when trying to guess how people would communicate on international projects.

### **Hall's High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication**

Hall (1976) distinguished between high-context cultures, which rely heavily on shared understanding, implicit messages, and nonverbal cues (e.g., Japan, China), and low-context cultures, which prioritize explicit verbal communication, directness, and clarity (e.g., Germany, USA). In practice, this distinction has important implications for project teams composed of members from multiple cultural backgrounds. Misunderstandings often occur when individuals assume others share the same contextual knowledge or interpret messages in the same way. For instance, a team member from a high-context culture may imply agreement or understanding nonverbally, whereas a low-context counterpart may expect explicit verbal confirmation, leading to confusion or misalignment. Virtual communication environments, such as video calls or chat platforms, can exacerbate these challenges because nonverbal cues are reduced or absent, allowing low-context participants to dominate conversations or unintentionally marginalize high-context communicators (Gudykunst, 2003). While Hall's binary distinction between high- and low-context communication is relatively fundamental, it effectively highlights the contrast between implicit and explicit expectations and provides project managers with a useful lens to interpret and

mediate cross-cultural interactions, particularly when teams operate remotely or across time zones.

### **Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Dimensions**

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) proposed seven dimensions of culture that are highly relevant to everyday managerial challenges: universalism versus particularism, individualism versus communitarianism, neutrality versus affectivity, specificity versus diffusion, achievement versus ascription, sequential versus synchronic time, and internal versus external control. These dimensions offer project managers a practical toolkit to understand how cultural values influence work habits, decision-making, and communication preferences. For example, cultures that operate with sequential time, such as Germany, tend to adhere strictly to deadlines and prefer tasks to be completed one at a time, while cultures that follow synchronic time, such as Mexico, may be comfortable managing multiple activities simultaneously and viewing deadlines more flexibly. Similarly, individualistic cultures may emphasize personal accountability and recognition, whereas communitarian cultures focus on group harmony and shared outcomes. Understanding these differences enables managers to tailor communication, delegation, and coordination strategies to each team member's cultural orientation, improving efficiency and reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings or conflict. Trompenaars' model emphasizes practical problem-solving, giving managers concrete guidance for handling everyday challenges that arise in multicultural project teams.

### **The GLOBE Project**

The GLOBE Project (House et al., 2004) expanded cross-cultural research by examining 62 societies across nine cultural dimensions, explicitly linking cultural characteristics to leadership expectations. This framework is particularly valuable for project managers, as it identifies how cultural values influence perceptions of effective leadership and communication. For instance, in cultures with low power distance, such as Sweden, participative leadership, inclusive decision-making, and collaborative discussion are well-received, whereas in high power distance cultures, directive leadership and clearly defined hierarchies are expected. Other GLOBE dimensions, such as uncertainty avoidance and performance orientation, provide further guidance for shaping team norms, motivating members, and managing risk in culturally diverse contexts. By understanding these dimensions, project managers can align their leadership style and communication approach with the cultural expectations of their team, thereby enhancing engagement, trust, and overall project performance.

## Summary

Collectively, these frameworks demonstrate the profound influence of culture on communication and collaboration within project teams. Hofstede's model identifies broad national-level trends that help managers anticipate general cultural patterns; Hall's framework provides insights into communication styles and the implicit versus explicit exchange of information; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner offer practical tools to address everyday managerial challenges; and the GLOBE Project links cultural characteristics directly to leadership and communication expectations. Each model has its limitations, yet a multi-theoretical approach equips project managers with a comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity, enabling them to adapt strategies, mitigate misunderstandings, and foster effective collaboration in projects involving participants from multiple cultures. Integrating these perspectives helps managers not only anticipate and prevent communication breakdowns but also leverage cultural differences as a source of innovation, creativity, and improved team performance. Ultimately, these frameworks underscore the need for project managers to develop cultural intelligence and adaptive communication skills as essential components of successful international project management.

## Essential Things to Think About When Working on Projects with People from Other Cultures

1. **Cultural Awareness** – Project managers who are aware of cultural differences at the national, organizational, and team levels are better equipped to anticipate potential communication problems and adjust their approach accordingly (Hofstede, 1980; Hall, 1976). Understanding dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and high- versus low-context communication helps managers interpret team members' behaviors, expectations, and decision-making styles more accurately. This awareness allows managers to design communication strategies that minimize misunderstandings, respect cultural norms, and foster collaboration across diverse teams. Moreover, it enables proactive planning for cultural challenges before they escalate into conflicts or inefficiencies.
2. **Clear Role Definition** – Clearly defining roles and responsibilities is critical in multicultural teams, as ambiguity can easily lead to confusion, duplicated efforts, or overlooked tasks (Turner & Müller, 2005). Explicit role definitions ensure that each team member understands their contributions, reporting lines, and decision-making authority, which reduces uncertainty and helps align expectations across cultural boundaries.

Furthermore, clarity in roles encourages accountability and prevents assumptions based on cultural norms from causing friction, especially in virtual or geographically dispersed teams where informal communication is limited.

3. **Building Trust** – Establishing trust in culturally diverse teams is a foundational factor for effective collaboration (Binder, 2016). Trust allows team members to share ideas, admit mistakes, and discuss sensitive topics without fear of judgment, which is particularly important in conflict resolution and knowledge exchange. In cross-cultural settings, trust-building may require more deliberate efforts, such as acknowledging cultural values, demonstrating reliability over time, and creating inclusive environments where all voices are respected. A strong trust foundation enables teams to overcome differences, enhance cooperation, and maintain motivation even under challenging project conditions.
4. **Communication Style Adaptation** – Adapting both verbal and nonverbal communication to match team members' cultural preferences enhances clarity and reduces the likelihood of misinterpretation (Hall, 1976; Gudykunst, 2003). For instance, high-context cultures rely heavily on implicit communication and nonverbal cues, while low-context cultures value direct, explicit information. Project managers who can adjust tone, level of detail, gestures, and formality can bridge these differences, ensuring that messages are understood as intended and that all team members feel included in discussions. This flexibility also supports the development of shared mental models, which are critical for effective coordination in international projects.
5. **Conflict Management Skills** – Project managers must possess the ability to recognize, mediate, and resolve conflicts arising from cultural misunderstandings (Tenzer et al., 2014). Effective conflict management not only prevents escalation but also transforms divergences into opportunities for learning and innovation. By identifying underlying cultural assumptions, facilitating open dialogue, and guiding teams toward mutually acceptable solutions, project managers can maintain harmony and productivity, even when team members hold opposing perspectives or approaches.
6. **Emotional Intelligence (EI)** – Emotional intelligence enables project managers to perceive, interpret, and respond appropriately to the emotional cues of team members, which is particularly valuable in multicultural settings (Watanabe et al., 2024; Bello et al., 2023). Managers with high EI can regulate their own reactions, empathize with diverse perspectives, and navigate sensitive situations without causing offense. This capability enhances interpersonal relationships, improves conflict resolution, and supports adaptive

leadership, allowing managers to maintain motivation, engagement, and cohesion across the team.

7. **Use of Technology and Virtual Tools** – Leveraging digital platforms such as video conferencing, instant messaging, and collaborative software helps facilitate communication in geographically dispersed teams, while also accommodating different cultural expectations around response times, feedback, and participation (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Purvanova, 2014). Technology enables project managers to maintain visibility, track progress, and create shared spaces for documentation and discussion, which is particularly critical in global projects where face-to-face interactions are limited. Effective use of these tools also requires cultural sensitivity, such as accounting for time zones, local holidays, and communication etiquette.
8. **Feedback and Norm Setting** – Establishing clear communication norms and regular feedback mechanisms promotes alignment, reduces misunderstandings, and fosters continuous improvement within multicultural teams (Tenzer et al., 2014; Kankanhalli et al., 2016). By setting expectations around response times, meeting structures, language use, and decision-making processes, project managers can create predictable and transparent communication patterns. Regular feedback allows team members to clarify uncertainties, address issues early, and adjust behaviors in a culturally sensitive manner, ultimately enhancing collaboration and project performance.

### **Executive Summary of Factors**

Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars, GLOBE, and modern project management research all support these eight elements. They help project managers develop better interview questions and practical tactics, making it easier for them to handle cross-cultural communication and improve project results.

## **2.2 Cross-Cultural Communication in Organizations**

### **Importance of Communication for Multicultural Teams**

Communication is the key to effective teamwork, especially in international organizational contexts. When people talk in such situations, it is not just about telling and exchanging information but about making sense, building trust, and creating relationships. Communication competence can significantly impact team cohesiveness and performance in culturally diverse contexts (Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014). The ability of team members to challenge each other respectfully to make progress drives team activities. Without trust, communication can be

unclear and defensive, resulting in inefficiency and misinterpretation. The capacity for collaboration is also strongly dependent on communication effectiveness. Being from diverse backgrounds means team members often must reconcile differences in norms, values, and work practices to come together on goals and processes (Adair, Hideg, & Spence, 2013). Being able to manage conflict effectively through open, honest, and respectful communication is a critical element in ensuring cultural diversity becomes an asset, not a liability.

### **Common Challenges in Cross-Cultural Communication in Organizations**

Cross-cultural communication in organizations is a significant challenge, despite its importance. One of the most common barriers cited is language. It can create obstacles in understanding, expressing meanings, and feelings. When team members share an English or other lingua franca, differences in fluency and confidence can lead to unequal power and involvement. (Henderson, Stackman, & Lindekilde, 2016) Different cultures have their own system of communication, which adds a layer of complexity beyond language. For example, high-context cultures depend on nonverbal cues, implicit meanings, and relational context, while low-context cultures focus on directness, explicitness, and efficiency. Misunderstandings can arise from such differences. Depending on the culture, it emphasizes time punctuality, flexibility, deadlines, and related factors to varying degrees. It creates tension in scheduling and task handling (Henderson et al., 2016). All in all, these difficulties show that project managers or team leaders need to develop strategies that reduce ambiguity and facilitate mutual understanding across different organizations.

### **Benefits of Diversity in Cross-Cultural Communication**

While communicating with multicultural people might be a challenge. However, managing diversity has excellent benefits. Research indicates that teams with diverse cultural backgrounds can draw in a broader array of perspectives, knowledge, and problem-solving approaches than homogeneous teams (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010). Disagreement is also a good idea because it enables team members to challenge conventions and offer new solutions. And it averts the possibilities of missing opportunities. As team members become introduced to other cultures, they learn to be more malleable and culturally sensitive. These are some of the qualities that are becoming more important in the current world. Organizational outcomes may also improve, as good management of cultural diversity has been associated with enhanced competitiveness, better customer relations, and more sustainable business practices (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). In this context, communication serves not only to reduce cultural differences but also to realize the benefits of diversity.

### **Strategies for Effective Communication**

Organizations have begun implementing strategies to improve cross-cultural communication, overcome communication problems, and reap the benefits of diversity. According to Earley and Peterson (2004) cultural training is the most frequently recommended solution as it teaches employees about cultural differences, communication styles, and conflict resolution techniques. When one relies on training to get to know a person, they are less likely to stereotype. Some measures many companies implement to reduce a potential language barrier include providing language training, hiring a translator, or adhering to a plain-language policy (Harzing & Feely, 2008). Virtual collaboration tools are also gaining significance for communicating with teams in other locations. Video calling tools, chat, document sharing, etc., can be used to prevent misunderstandings, provide opportunities to ask more questions, and improve interpersonal communication (Purvanova, 2014). Most importantly, these strategies are best formulated as a whole with the approval of the leaders and organizational policies that are inclusive and open-minded. The combination of the approaches will help organizations build communication environments in which cultural diversity is a source of team effectiveness rather than an obstacle.

### **2.3 Cross-Cultural Communication in Project Management**

#### **Role of Communication in Project Success**

Consistent feedback from both practitioners and researchers indicates that project success depends significantly on strong communication skills. Effective communication enables project managers to share essential information, coordinate tasks, manage expectations, and foster trust among team members and stakeholders. According to the PMBOK Guide of the Project Management Institute, widely regarded as the authoritative reference in project management, the project manager is responsible for planning, implementing, and monitoring all communication processes throughout the project lifecycle (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2021). This responsibility encompasses not only the technical transmission of information but also the careful consideration of how messages are framed, the timing and frequency of updates, and the choice of communication channels appropriate to different audiences. When communication is clear and consistent, it allows team members to align on objectives, resolve conflicts, make informed decisions, and maintain mutual trust, all of which are critical to achieving project goals.

In the context of international project teams, which often consist of members from diverse cultural backgrounds and with varying levels of language proficiency, communication becomes even more crucial. Cultural differences can affect not only language comprehension but also interpretations of tone, gestures, and implied meanings, increasing the potential for misunderstandings and misalignment. Research indicates that a significant proportion of project failures are linked to poor

or ineffective communication, rather than technical shortcomings or resource constraints. Consequently, communication is not merely a technical function but a core leadership competency that project managers must develop and continuously refine (Binder, 2016; Zulch, 2016). Moreover, in multicultural teams, project managers must exercise heightened sensitivity to cultural norms and communication preferences, adapting their style to ensure inclusivity and mutual understanding. By doing so, they can create an environment where team members feel heard, respected, and motivated, which directly contributes to both performance and satisfaction. Effective communication, therefore, is a multifaceted skill, integrating technical planning, interpersonal sensitivity, and leadership acumen, all of which are indispensable for managing projects successfully in increasingly globalized and diverse organizational settings.

### **Cultural Diversity in International Project Teams**

The cultural diversity present in international project teams represents both a significant opportunity and a potential challenge. On the one hand, team members from different cultural backgrounds can bring a wide array of perspectives, problem-solving approaches, and creative ideas, which can enhance innovation and broaden the team's collective understanding of complex issues (Stahl et al., 2010). These benefits are particularly relevant for projects that demand flexibility, adaptability, and inventive solutions, as culturally diverse teams are often better equipped to generate multiple alternative approaches, evaluate problems from different angles, and anticipate potential risks from a global perspective. In addition, exposure to diverse viewpoints can foster learning and personal development among team members, enhancing intercultural competence and contributing to long-term organizational capability.

On the other hand, if cultural differences are not effectively managed, they can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and inefficiencies that threaten project success. Team members from diverse cultures may hold different assumptions regarding hierarchy, decision-making, communication styles, and conflict resolution (Zulch, 2016). For example, members of cultures with high power distance may expect structured, top-down communication, where instructions and responsibilities are clearly delineated by formal authority. Conversely, individuals from cultures with low power distance may prefer open discussion, participatory decision-making, and the free expression of concerns, seeking collaborative dialogue to arrive at consensus. When project managers fail to recognize or address these differences, conflicts may arise, messages may be misinterpreted, and important information may be overlooked. Furthermore, subtle differences in nonverbal communication, tone, and context can exacerbate misunderstandings in ways that are difficult to detect, especially in virtual or geographically dispersed teams.

As a result, cultural diversity introduces both opportunities and risks into international project management. While it can significantly enhance creativity, innovation, and team adaptability, it requires deliberate and targeted communication management strategies to maximize its advantages. Project managers must be aware of cultural norms and expectations, actively facilitate understanding among team members, and implement adaptive communication approaches that bridge differences while promoting cohesion. By doing so, they can transform potential challenges into sources of strength, leveraging diversity to improve decision-making, performance, and the overall success of international projects. In essence, cultural diversity adds intrinsic value to projects, but realizing this potential depends on the project manager's ability to manage communication, mediate differences, and cultivate an inclusive environment that supports both collaboration and efficiency.

### **Case Studies and Evidence from Global Projects**

Empirical studies across various industries indicate the importance of cross-cultural communication for project outcomes. Communication misalignment within globally distributed software development teams was the primary cause of project delays and low-quality information in the information technology industry, as discovered by Henderson et al. (2016). Chan et al. (2018) indicated that multinational construction industry project teams were often subject to cultural misunderstandings regarding safety, task allocation, and conflict resolution, which hindered productivity and job satisfaction among workers. In the non-profit and NGO industry, Soderberg and Romani (2017) found that whenever cultural considerations were not taken into account, international development projects suffered. This was especially true when Western project managers used communication strategies that did not suit the local context. Tenzer, Pudelko, and Harzing (2014) reported that language problems in multinational teams led to power differentials, with English mother-tongue speakers assuming greater power and speaking more than non-native speakers, who were left out of discussions. The above examples demonstrate that the consequences of poor cross-cultural communication cannot be confined to a particular industry. The results also highlight the need for project managers to develop adaptive communication strategies for culturally diverse environments.

### **Communication Norms and Project Outcomes**

Stakeholders in a project have specific requirements and expectations for a variety of reasons, including organizational objectives, client demands, regulatory compliance, and cultural preferences. These expectations often differ across individuals and groups, making alignment of communication practices a critical factor for project success. Teams that consciously adapt and

standardize their communication processes across cultural divides are significantly more likely to achieve project goals, as consistency in communication reduces confusion and fosters shared understanding. Research indicates that when team members collectively establish shared communication norms—such as agreements on meeting etiquette, feedback frequency and style, the use of a common working language, or procedures for documenting decisions—collaboration improves, misunderstandings are minimized, and the team is better able to coordinate efforts effectively (Tenzer et al., 2014; Kankanhalli, Rosen, & Tan, 2016).

Conversely, in teams where no such norms exist, individuals may continue to behave according to their own cultural habits, which can inadvertently create tension or be perceived as disrespectful by others. For instance, direct, explicit communication—a hallmark of low-context cultures such as Germany or the United States—may be interpreted as blunt, rude, or even aggressive by team members from high-context cultures such as Japan or China, where indirect and nuanced communication is the norm (Hall, 1976). Similarly, variations in expectations around hierarchy, decision-making, punctuality, or turn-taking during meetings can generate confusion if not addressed proactively. Without shared norms, the same message may be understood differently by different cultural groups, leading to misalignment, frustration, or reduced trust among team members and stakeholders.

Project managers play a central role in bridging these gaps and aligning communication practices. They act as mediators who clarify expectations, facilitate dialogue, and ensure that all parties understand each other's cultural values and communication styles. By doing so, project managers bring structure and consistency to the team, helping to translate stakeholder requirements into actionable tasks while maintaining harmony among culturally diverse team members. Moreover, project managers' awareness of cultural nuances allows them to anticipate potential misunderstandings, adapt communication strategies accordingly, and foster an inclusive environment where all team members feel respected and heard. In essence, project managers serve as the linchpins in multicultural projects: they not only enforce shared norms but also educate team members on the importance of cultural sensitivity, guide the team toward mutually acceptable communication practices, and ensure that cultural differences become a source of strength rather than a cause of conflict. Through these efforts, teams are better positioned to achieve alignment, enhance collaboration, and successfully meet the goals set by stakeholders across diverse cultural and organizational contexts.

## **2.4 Project Managers' Perspectives on Communication**

### **Project Managers as Communication Leaders**

International project teams are very demanding, and at their centre are project managers who are central to team communication.

Project managers do far more than simply oversee and coordinate tasks; they also play a critical role in bridging cultural gaps, clarifying expectations, and fostering an environment that encourages open discussion and collaboration. In multicultural project teams, effective communication is widely recognized as one of the most essential skills a project manager must possess (Zulch, 2016). Communication is not merely the exchange of information; it encompasses understanding, interpreting, and responding appropriately to verbal and nonverbal cues, particularly when team members come from diverse cultural backgrounds with varying communication norms, values, and expectations. According to the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2021), communication management is a formalized knowledge area within project management, underscoring its centrality in the discipline. It is estimated that project managers spend 90% or more of their time on communication-related activities, highlighting the magnitude of this responsibility and its direct impact on project outcomes.

When managing international teams, the complexity of communication increases significantly. Project managers must navigate differences in language proficiency, communication styles, hierarchical expectations, approaches to conflict, and culturally influenced attitudes toward deadlines and collaboration. For instance, some team members may prefer direct, explicit communication, while others may rely on indirect, nuanced expressions that require careful interpretation. Misunderstandings can easily arise if these differences are not recognized and addressed, potentially causing delays, conflicts, or reduced team cohesion. Beyond the mechanics of delivering messages, project managers must ensure that their communication fosters trust, promotes engagement, and encourages the free exchange of ideas among culturally diverse team members.

In addition to these responsibilities, project managers are increasingly expected to serve as cultural interpreters within their teams (Müller, Sankaran, & Drouin, 2019). This role involves adapting leadership styles and communication approaches to reconcile the needs, preferences, and expectations of diverse team members while simultaneously ensuring that organizational objectives are met. They must navigate the fine balance between respecting cultural differences and maintaining alignment with project goals, which requires both strategic foresight and

interpersonal sensitivity. Acting as cultural interpreters also entails decoding implicit meanings, managing culturally influenced misunderstandings, and facilitating mutual understanding between team members from different backgrounds.

Project managers' roles as communicators thus extend into the domain of intercultural leadership, which demands the ability to interpret both explicit and implicit messages, adapt behavior, and influence team dynamics positively (Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014). This includes understanding how high- and low-context communication, power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and other cultural dimensions affect interactions, decision-making, and conflict resolution within teams. Effective intercultural communication requires the integration of theory and practice: project managers must draw on knowledge of cultural frameworks while simultaneously applying practical strategies to ensure smooth collaboration and project success.

Furthermore, project managers are responsible for creating conditions that allow diverse teams to perform optimally. This includes establishing communication norms, providing feedback in culturally sensitive ways, promoting psychological safety, and encouraging knowledge sharing. In multicultural projects, a single misinterpreted message or culturally insensitive remark can have amplified consequences, potentially undermining trust, morale, or engagement. Therefore, project managers must be proactive in monitoring interactions, clarifying ambiguities, and ensuring that team members feel understood and valued. In essence, the project manager's role as a communicator and cultural mediator is inseparable from their leadership responsibilities; both are central to navigating the complexities of international project environments successfully.

By embracing these roles, project managers not only facilitate the flow of information but also contribute to building cohesive, high-performing teams capable of leveraging the benefits of cultural diversity. They act as the nexus where communication theory meets practice, applying both conceptual knowledge and experiential judgment to manage interactions, resolve conflicts, and guide their teams toward successful project completion. The combination of communication expertise, cultural intelligence, and adaptive leadership thus becomes a defining feature of project managers working in today's globalized, multicultural project landscape.

### **Success Factors Identified by Project Managers**

According to the project managers, many factors are essential for effective cross-cultural communication. One key aspect is role clarity. It reduces ambiguity by ensuring everyone on the team is clear about their responsibilities and the expectations of their roles. Clear roles and

responsibilities help prevent misunderstandings and overlapping efforts, which are especially common in multicultural settings where communication norms may differ (Turner & Müller, 2005).

It is also clear that establishing trust is a success factor. Trust is the substrate through which team members feel comfortable enough to voice their concerns, share ideas, and resolve conflicts. Studies show trust will not happen by itself. This means a project manager must model transparency, fairness, and reliability across cultures. (Binder, 2016) When people don't trust each other, they might not share information or may misread intentions.

Conflict management also emerges as a critical competence. Conflicts can occur in multicultural teams due to differences in values, decision-making styles, or interpretations of authority. Project managers play a vital role in resolving these conflicts. They can assign personnel with the right skills to resolve these conflicts. When handled properly, conflicts do not escalate. Instead, the differences become a learning opportunity.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is also considered a predictor of communication success. When dealing with international projects, emotionally intelligent people are more effective at identifying cultural nuances, regulating their own emotions, and understanding what others are going through (Mersino, 2013). The emotional intelligence of project managers can enable them to build strong relationships with team members by demonstrating self-awareness, empathy, and flexibility, thereby fostering psychologically safe environments. All of these, such as role clarity, trust, conflict management, and emotional intelligence, are the pillars of successful communication and leadership within an international project environment.

### **Some Underexplored Areas**

Nonetheless, the project manager's perspective remains a relatively understudied area of research within both intercultural communication and project management literature more broadly. While there is substantial work exploring cultural differences and team dynamics, most existing studies focus predominantly on either theoretical cultural frameworks, such as Hofstede's dimensions, or on the experiences of individual team members operating within multicultural environments (Stahl et al., 2010). These contributions offer valuable insights into how cultural values, norms, and expectations shape team interactions and outcomes; however, they generally overlook the critical role that project managers play as mediators, leaders, and decision-makers who actively shape communication processes and team cohesion. Research examining cultural diversity has traditionally emphasized its influence on measurable outcomes, such as team

performance, productivity, and organizational success, yet it rarely considers the nuanced ways in which project managers perceive and respond to these challenges in practice. Only a limited number of studies have explored how project managers actively navigate communication hurdles, adjust leadership styles, or implement culturally sensitive strategies to facilitate collaboration and mitigate misunderstandings (Tenzer et al., 2014). Similarly, research addressing trust-building, conflict resolution, and interpersonal dynamics in multicultural contexts tends to focus on generalized organizational behavior rather than the specific interventions and approaches undertaken by project leaders (Binder, 2016). This lack of attention has created a significant gap in knowledge regarding the concrete strategies and adaptive practices that project managers employ to overcome cultural barriers, foster trust, and maintain effective communication across diverse international teams. By centering the project manager's perspective, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which cross-cultural challenges are navigated, shedding light on practical approaches that are often implicit but critical to the success of multicultural projects. Moreover, capturing the experiences and insights of project managers provides an opportunity to bridge theoretical models with real-world practice, highlighting how leadership, emotional intelligence, and strategic decision-making intersect in complex, culturally diverse work environments. Addressing this gap not only contributes to the academic discourse but also offers tangible implications for training, professional development, and the design of management practices that are responsive to the realities of global project teams. It is essential to research project managers' views and experiences, as existing literature often emphasizes generalized frameworks and best practices without adequately considering the context-specific realities faced by managers in diverse project environments. This research gap highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how project managers perceive challenges, make decisions, and implement strategies within their unique organizational and cultural contexts. By exploring these perspectives, researchers can identify success factors that are not only theoretically grounded but also practically viable, reflecting the nuanced realities of day-to-day project management. Understanding stakeholders' perspectives is particularly important because project outcomes often depend on complex interactions between managers, team members, clients, and other relevant actors, each bringing their own expectations, priorities, and constraints. This study seeks to fill this gap by systematically documenting project managers' narratives, examining how they interpret various challenges, and analyzing the strategies and approaches they employ to address these issues. In doing so, the research provides insight into the practical application of project management principles and offers a more holistic view of effective leadership, communication, and decision-making processes. Furthermore, by capturing the lived

experiences of managers, the study contributes to bridging the divide between theoretical constructs and real-world practice, offering recommendations that can inform both academic discourse and managerial training programs. Ultimately, this research underscores the value of giving voice to project managers themselves, as their firsthand accounts reveal critical success factors and adaptive strategies that might otherwise remain underexplored in the existing body of knowledge.

## **2.5 Emotional Intelligence and Cultural Sensitivity in Project Management**

Today, emotional intelligence (EI) is widely recognized as a leadership capability in project management that can help project managers address interpersonal issues within multicultural project teams. Emotionally intelligent project managers can build stronger teams and work more effectively when the organisational culture supports open communication. As noted by Watanabe, Nawaz, Saleem, and Nazeer (2024), EI (Emotional Intelligence) refers to the ability to manage and influence one's own and others' emotional states. EI also facilitates effective cross-cultural communication. In a related study of international development projects, Muhammada, Alib, and Sorooshian (2024) show that emotional intelligence, along with cultural intelligence, enhances project performance. This effect is mediated by task interdependence. Moreover, it is moderated by the team's psychological contracts.

Over the years, various meanings have been attached to the term 'cultural sensitivity'. It refers to the ability to adapt verbal and nonverbal cues to others' cultural backgrounds. It has emerged as another element along with EI. It plays a huge part in overcoming misunderstandings. When working on a project, it is crucial to consider team members' emotional and cultural intelligence. When coworkers and employees work together, paying attention to their team members' norms of expression, listening types, and behaviours considered 'conflictual' will decrease conflict and enhance collaborative working relationships (Muhammada et al., 2024; Watanabe et al., 2024). Authors Bello et al. (2023) assert a favorable relationship between team EI performance and outcomes, as confirmed by the construction design team study. Researchers indicate that greater use of emotional intelligence (EI) can boost team performance. Teams with high emotional intelligence can self-regulate (Bello et al., 2023).

Project managers often rely on emotional intelligence capacities, such as empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, and emotional management, to navigate cross-cultural communication challenges. These competencies enable managers to not only recognize their own emotional states but also accurately interpret the emotions and reactions of team members

from diverse cultural backgrounds. In the 2024 study by Watanabe et al., managers reported that their ability to sense subtle emotional cues—such as discomfort, hesitation, or misinterpretation—allowed them to adjust their communication strategies, including tone, pace, and level of directness, which in turn helped maintain clarity, trust, and mutual understanding in multicultural teams. Similarly, the study by Muhammada et al. (2024) highlights that empathetic managers who understand the emotional needs of their subordinates can establish psychological contracts—implicit agreements based on trust and respect—which enhance employee engagement, motivation, and overall performance. Beyond these studies, practical observations from project management contexts indicate that emotional intelligence also supports conflict resolution, encourages open dialogue, and facilitates collaboration across cultural boundaries, as managers can anticipate misunderstandings and respond proactively. Therefore, emotional intelligence serves as a critical skill set that bridges cultural differences, fosters team cohesion, and ensures that project objectives are met efficiently, even in highly diverse work environments. However, a critical perspective in the recent literature is that, while EI is promising, empirical evidence is sometimes inconsistent, and it is difficult to measure reliably across cultures. Mohammada et al. (2024) found that, in some international development projects, even though emotional intelligence correlated with better performance, this correlation did not always translate into a significant effect when task interdependence and cultural intelligence were included. Mohammada et al. (2024) found that, in some international development projects, even though emotional intelligence correlated with better performance, this correlation did not always translate into a significant effect when task interdependence and cultural intelligence were included. Bello (2023) further argues that social desirability bias may also affect measures of team EI across cultures, which emphasize socially ideal behavior and avoid 'bad' behavior. Thus, while project managers commonly view EI and cultural sensitivity as success factors, more rigorous studies are needed to document how PMs concretely apply these skills across diverse cultural contexts and to develop measurement tools that accommodate cultural variation in emotional expression.

## **2.6 Technology and Virtual Communication in Cross-Cultural Teams**

As business globalisation became more vigorous, international project management became an integral part of technology-enabled communication. Global teams are increasingly relying on tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Slack to get their work done remotely. Though these tools offer flexibility and lower costs, they also amplify specific problems, including cultural differences, varied communication styles, and the development of trust (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000).

Mediated communication, in particular, restricts non-verbal exchanges, which helps to define which meaning is conveyed and which meaning is understood.

The lack of non-verbal communication in virtual communication is among the most significant challenges in cross-cultural communication. The language of our facial expressions, tone, and body language can sometimes create an implicit meaning for what we are saying. Hall (1976) indicates that high-context societies should rely on cues, whereas low-context societies should rely on direct communication. When team members are from different cultures, they can misunderstand one another because the online platform lacks signals. Project managers can avoid such misinterpretations with intent communication (Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014).

Another important variable, as far as virtual communication within cross-cultural teams is concerned, is trust. It has been found that, in face-to-face contact, early communicative behaviour, such as being responsive, predictable, and reliable, plays a more important role in trust formation (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). Timely email responses or regular attendance at virtual meetings are signs of reliability that ultimately instill trust in members of the setting. However, trust is fragile in virtual environments. It can be easily undermined by communication delays or technical failures, making it essential for project managers to establish explicit norms and reinforce reliable communication practices (Henderson, Stackman, & Lindekilde, 2016).

Project managers also choose and manage communication channels that suit their teams. Maznevski and Chudoba (2000) state that "communication rhythms", meaning the balance of synchronous and asynchronous communications, affect effective global virtual teams. Because of this, project managers must decide when to hold a real-time meeting and when to rely on an asynchronous tool. In a different culture, whether you ought to be more or less responsive is quite likely to differ. Communication plans organize ideas, making them more transparent while reducing friction between cultures.

Familiarity with platforms and digital literacy, moreover, affects how well multicultural virtual teams communicate. Unequal levels of digital proficiency can create hierarchies that marginalise team members with lesser skills, thereby reducing team inclusivity (Garro-Abarca, Palos-Sánchez, and Aguayo-Camacho, 2021). Inequities of this nature may reinforce cultural gaps, especially when certain regions are less exposed to improved collaborative tools. Project managers can address this by offering training, encouraging equitable participation, and ensuring all members are comfortable with the platforms in use.

Not only technical skills but also teams' cultural preferences for communication modes impact virtual interactions. A virtual team often matches or exceeds the productivity of a face-to-face team. However, if not managed properly, the virtual teams are usually less cohesive. Moreover, cultural expectations play a crucial role in managing cohesiveness (Purvanova, 2014). For instance, any member of a collectivist culture might expect relational bonding and informal exchanges to be proper in face-to-face settings, which would be harder to replicate virtually. On the other hand, people from an individualistic culture prefer to do things efficiently and to communicate about a task. It is part of the project manager's job to recognize and balance these cultural expectations.

The project managers enhanced virtual cross-cultural communication through video conferencing, visual aids, and systematic follow-ups. Henderson et al. (2016) state that if team members recognize that communicated norms refer to clearly defined expectations for communication behaviours, trust can be maintained within teams on a global project. By utilizing both technology and culture, managers can turn barriers into bridges for successful collaborations. Technology plays an incredibly effective role as a tool and medium in shaping cross-cultural interaction, provided the management is careful.

## **2.7 Conceptual Framework for the Study**

The conceptual framework for this study links theory and practice by illustrating how communication challenges in international project teams are managed through project manager (PM) strategies, which, in turn, shape critical success factors and influence overall project outcomes. This framework builds on established theories of cross-cultural communication and project management while addressing the specific gap of understanding communication from the perspective of project managers themselves.

Multicultural project teams are an obstacle to cross-cultural understanding between the partners. According to the cultural dimensions theory, workplace interactions may be misunderstood due to differences in values, including individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context model of communication indicates how implicit and explicit communication can conflict. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) point out that differences in culture, e.g., universalism and particularism, cause more problems. According to these theoretical perspectives, cultural diversity can bring benefits but also create hurdles to clear communication within project environments (Tenzer et al., 2014).

To address these challenges, the framework identifies PM strategies as the mediating mechanism. The role of a project manager is to eliminate misconceptions, build confidence, and

foster a collaborative environment. Studies show ways to reduce miscommunication in global virtual teams. These include encouraging shared task team norms, investing in intercultural training, and using technology to cope with problems (Henderson, 2008; Mäkilouko, 2003). The latest research underlines the necessity of emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence (CQ) as managerial capabilities that enable leaders to alter their communication styles as per the cultures they deal with, (2011 Rockstuhl et al; 2017 Presbitero). These strategies are not limited to conflict resolution but extend to proactive measures such as establishing feedback mechanisms and clarifying expectations within global teams (Zakaria, 2017).

Some success factors and intercultural communication exhibit the evidence of these strategies. For PMs, success can mean building mutual trust, clarifying roles, and ensuring knowledge can be shared (Meyer, 2014). Intercultural communication is defined in terms of trust. (Berg 2021). This article explores additional factors that contribute to success, offering a broader view of the topic, including adaptability, transparency, and alignment with other organizational goals. These factors are practical ways to achieve communication effectiveness in international projects.

This structure connects success factors to the project's end goal: that more effective cross-cultural communication helps achieve project success. The results aren't just project deliverables but also improvements in team cohesion, learning, and ongoing cross-border collaboration (Binder, 2016). This study enhances understanding of PM communication strategies and the relation to project performance by focusing on PM lived experiences within its framework.

The conceptual framework illustrates how the project manager's strategies and identified success factors affect the project outcomes resulting from the communication challenges. Based on theories and empirical evidence, it develops a model to explain and manage international project teams. This structure underscores the research's novelty by focusing on the PM perspective, a dimension underexplored in prior studies.

## **METHODICAL WORK SECTION**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study is grounded in a qualitative research design aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of how project managers perceive, interpret, and manage cross-cultural communication within international project teams. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this topic because cross-cultural communication is a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, organizational contexts, and interpersonal relationships. These dimensions are complex and context-dependent, making them difficult to capture through quantitative measurement alone.

The qualitative design enables the researcher to explore communication challenges not merely as isolated events, but as processes that evolve over time within multicultural project environments. By examining how project managers describe their experiences, decision-making processes, and communication strategies, the study provides insight into the underlying meanings, assumptions, and cultural interpretations that influence project interactions. This approach supports a deeper exploration of how communication issues arise and why certain strategies are perceived as effective or ineffective in cross-cultural settings.

In contrast to quantitative research, which often seeks to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships, this study prioritizes depth, richness, and contextual understanding. The emphasis is placed on capturing nuanced perspectives rather than generating statistically generalizable results. This is particularly relevant in international project management, where cultural dynamics vary widely depending on geographic location, organizational structure, and team composition. A qualitative research design allows these contextual variations to be examined in detail, providing a more realistic portrayal of communication practices in global projects.

The qualitative design aligns closely with the study's focus on project managers' perspectives. Project managers occupy a central role in international projects, acting as coordinators, leaders, and cultural intermediaries. Understanding their viewpoints requires access to reflective narratives and experiential knowledge, which are best obtained through qualitative methods. This design facilitates the exploration of managerial sense-making, leadership adaptation, and communication decision-making in multicultural environments.

The study also adopts an interpretivist research orientation, recognizing that reality in cross-cultural communication is not objective or fixed but constructed through social interaction. From this perspective, communication success and failure are understood as subjective experiences influenced by cultural expectations, power relations, and organizational norms. The qualitative

research design supports this epistemological stance by allowing participants to articulate their own interpretations of communication challenges and success factors.

The chosen research design enhances the practical relevance of the study. By focusing on real-life experiences rather than abstract variables, the findings provide insights that can be directly applied by project managers and organizations operating in international contexts. The qualitative design therefore not only contributes to academic knowledge but also supports the development of practice-oriented recommendations aimed at improving cross-cultural communication and project performance.

### **Research Approach**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to generate comprehensive and detailed insights into communication patterns and cultural barriers within international project collaborations. The qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for examining complex human interactions, as it emphasizes understanding meanings, experiences, and interpretations rather than measuring predefined variables. In the context of international project management, communication practices are deeply influenced by cultural norms, organizational environments, and individual leadership styles, all of which require an exploratory and interpretive research approach.

The primary data collection method used in this study was semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to explore key research themes while remaining flexible to follow emerging topics introduced by participants. This approach ensured consistency across interviews by covering the same core questions related to cross-cultural communication, leadership, and project coordination, while also allowing participants to elaborate on issues they perceived as particularly important based on their professional experiences.

Semi-structured interviews are especially suitable for engaging with project managers working in global organizations, as they enable participants to reflect on real-life scenarios, describe challenges in their own words, and provide concrete examples of how communication is managed across cultural boundaries. The open-ended nature of the questions encouraged in-depth discussion, revealing both explicit communication strategies and implicit cultural assumptions that influence project outcomes.

By employing a qualitative research approach supported by semi-structured interviews, the study was able to capture rich, contextual data that directly address the research objectives. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of how project managers interpret communication challenges, adapt their leadership behaviors, and develop practical solutions within multicultural

project environments. As a result, the chosen research approach contributes to both the academic rigor and practical relevance of the study.

### **Justification for Qualitative Research**

A qualitative research approach was selected for this study because it is particularly effective in exploring subjective perceptions, lived experiences, and complex social interactions. Cross-cultural communication in international project management is not a purely technical or measurable phenomenon; rather, it is shaped by cultural norms, personal interpretations, leadership styles, and interpersonal dynamics. These elements are best examined through qualitative methods, which allow participants to express their perspectives in their own words and provide context-rich explanations.

Quantitative research methods often rely on predefined variables and standardized instruments, which may overlook the nuanced ways in which cultural differences influence communication behaviors. In contrast, qualitative research enables the identification of subtle cultural distinctions, such as differences in tone, indirectness, power relationships, and approaches to conflict or feedback. These nuances are particularly important in multicultural project teams, where misinterpretations can arise even when a common working language is used.

The qualitative approach also aligns closely with the exploratory nature of this study. Rather than testing hypotheses or measuring cause-and-effect relationships, the research seeks to understand how project managers interpret communication challenges and how they adapt their leadership and communication strategies in response to cultural diversity. By capturing detailed narratives and examples from practitioners, the study reveals practical factors that influence communication effectiveness in international project settings.

Qualitative research supports the study's focus on contextual understanding. Communication practices in project management are influenced by organizational culture, project type, team composition, and geographic location. A qualitative approach allows these contextual factors to be examined holistically, providing a deeper understanding of how communication strategies are shaped and applied in different cultural environments.

The use of qualitative research is justified by the study's aim to generate in-depth, experience-based insights into cross-cultural communication from the perspective of project managers. This approach enables the research to uncover practical strategies, leadership adaptations, and communication practices that may not be captured through quantitative analysis, thereby enhancing both the academic and practical value of the findings.

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

The data for this study were collected using semi-structured interviews conducted with experienced project managers involved in international and cross-cultural projects. This method was selected because it provides a balance between structure and flexibility, allowing the researcher to explore predefined themes while also giving participants the freedom to elaborate on their individual experiences. Given the exploratory nature of this study, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate data collection method for capturing the depth and complexity of cross-cultural communication practices in real-world project settings.

Semi-structured interviews enable consistency across participants by ensuring that all respondents address the same core research questions related to communication challenges, leadership practices, and cultural dynamics. At the same time, this format allows for follow-up questions and clarification, which is essential when discussing culturally nuanced topics. Participants were encouraged to provide concrete examples from their professional experiences, offering rich qualitative data that reflect how cross-cultural communication is managed in practice rather than in theory.

The interviews were conducted remotely using online video conferencing platform, which facilitated participation from project managers located in different geographic regions. This approach was particularly suitable given the international scope of the research and allowed for efficient data collection without geographical constraints. Prior to each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

With participants' informed consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim, preserving the original wording and meaning of participants' responses. Verbatim transcription was essential for maintaining the integrity of the data and enabling a reliable thematic analysis. To enhance transparency and allow for methodological verification, the full interview responses are included in Annexes.

Overall, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gather detailed, context-rich data that directly address the research objectives. This method ensured that the voices of project managers were central to the analysis, supporting a nuanced understanding of cross-cultural communication challenges and success factors within international project teams.

## **Interview Design**

The interview guide for this study was carefully developed based on the key theoretical frameworks outlined in the Theoretical Work Section, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's high- and low-context communication theory, Trompenaars' cultural dimensions, and findings from the GLOBE Project. These frameworks provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding how culture influences communication, leadership, and team dynamics in international project settings. By grounding the interview questions in well-established theories, the study ensured that data collection would be both conceptually robust and directly relevant to the research objectives. The guide was designed to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of project managers, allowing for an in-depth examination of the ways in which culture shapes project communication and leadership practices.

Six semi-structured questions make up the interview guide, even though the theoretical underpinning of this study is based on eight elements of effective cross-cultural communication found in the literature (Hofstede, GLOBE Project, and related studies). This was a deliberate design decision. One open-ended question might capture several interconnected aspects of a phenomenon in qualitative research, especially in semi-structured interviews.

In actual project environments, the eight elements frequently appear at the same time and overlap conceptually. As a result, broader interview questions were developed to enable respondents to reflect on their lived experiences, allowing multiple aspects to emerge within a single response, rather than one question per factor. This method promotes fuller narratives, lessens respondent fatigue, and is consistent with interpretivist qualitative research principles, which prioritize meaning and depth over category separation.

The questions in the interview guide were primarily structured around three overarching themes. The first theme focused on communication challenges in multicultural teams. Participants were asked to reflect on common problems, misunderstandings, and barriers arising from cultural differences, including variations in language proficiency, communication style, hierarchical expectations, and the interpretation of verbal and nonverbal cues. This line of questioning aimed to identify the specific difficulties that project managers encounter when coordinating teams with diverse cultural backgrounds and how these challenges impact project performance and collaboration.

The second theme explored ways to deal with cultural differences, investigating the methods, tools, and strategies that project managers use to bridge cultural gaps. Questions encouraged participants to discuss practical approaches, such as the use of structured communication protocols, adaptation of leadership and communication styles, team-building exercises, and the application of technology for virtual collaboration. The objective was to uncover the techniques project managers employ to facilitate understanding, reduce misunderstandings, and foster inclusive and effective teamwork across cultural boundaries.

The third theme examined how leadership and decision-making styles are influenced by culture, focusing on the interplay between cultural norms and managerial behavior. Participants were prompted to explain how cultural expectations shape their approach to leadership, delegation, conflict resolution, and decision-making within multicultural teams. This theme also investigated how project managers balance differing expectations regarding hierarchy, participation, and accountability, and how they adapt their leadership strategies to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of team members. By examining this aspect, the study aimed to highlight the critical role of cultural intelligence and adaptive leadership in managing international projects successfully.

Overall, the interview guide was designed to provide a structured yet flexible framework for exploring the complex interactions between culture, communication, and leadership. By linking the questions directly to established theoretical models while remaining open to participants' experiential insights, the guide enabled the collection of rich, detailed qualitative data. This approach ensures that the findings not only reflect the lived experiences of project managers but also contribute meaningfully to the broader academic understanding of cross-cultural communication and leadership in international project management contexts.

### **Interview Procedure**

Participants were identified and contacted through professional networks and direct email invitations, which allowed the researcher to reach project managers with relevant international experience. This recruitment approach ensured access to participants who were actively involved in cross-cultural project environments and capable of providing informed and reflective responses aligned with the research objectives.

All interviews were conducted online using video conferencing platforms, a method chosen to facilitate participation from individuals located in different geographic regions. Conducting interviews virtually was particularly appropriate given the international scope of the study and mirrored the communication environments commonly used by global project teams. This format

also offered flexibility in scheduling, making it easier for participants to take part without disrupting their professional responsibilities.

Prior to each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the interview structure, and ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. With participants' explicit consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. Recording the interviews allowed the researcher to focus fully on the conversation while ensuring that no relevant information was lost.

Following the interviews, all recordings were transcribed verbatim, preserving participants' original wording and meaning. Verbatim transcription was essential for maintaining data integrity and supporting a reliable thematic analysis. The transcripts were reviewed carefully to ensure accuracy and consistency before being included in the analytical process.

Each interview lasted approximately 25 to 30 minutes, providing sufficient time for participants to discuss their experiences in depth while remaining focused on the research topics. This duration allowed for detailed exploration of communication challenges, cultural differences, and management strategies without causing participant fatigue. Overall, the structured yet flexible interview procedure ensured the collection of rich, high-quality qualitative data suitable for addressing the study's research aims.

### **3.3 Sampling Strategy**

This study employed purposive sampling as the primary strategy for selecting research participants. Purposive sampling is particularly appropriate for qualitative research that seeks in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization. The objective of this study was to gain rich, experience-based insights into cross-cultural communication from the perspective of project managers, making it essential to select participants with relevant professional backgrounds and direct exposure to international project environments.

The sampling strategy focused on identifying project managers who possessed substantial practical experience in managing multicultural teams. Participants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of the data collected. These criteria included a minimum of three years of professional experience in project management, active involvement in international or cross-cultural projects, and direct responsibility for coordinating communication among team members from different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, participants were required to demonstrate a willingness to reflect on and share their professional experiences openly and in detail. Some further characteristics of interview participants are showcased in Table 3.3.

| <b>Project Manager ID</b> | <b>Experience as a Project Manager in Years</b> | <b>Region(-s) of Work Experience</b> | <b>Biggest Number of Team Members Directly Managed</b> |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Project Manager A         | 3 years   | Europe, Middle East                  | 3 team members   |
| Project Manager B         | 6 years   | Europe                               | 3 team members   |
| Project Manager C         | 15 years  | Europe, Africa                       | 7 team members   |
| Project Manager D         | 7 years   | Europe                               | 4 team members   |
| Project Manager E         | 5 years   | Europe                               | 6 team members   |
| Project Manager F         | 6 years   | Europe                               | 4 team members   |
| Project Manager G         | 9 years   | Europe                               | 6 team members   |

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to intentionally select individuals who were most capable of addressing the research questions and contributing meaningful insights. Unlike random sampling, which may include participants with limited exposure to cross-cultural challenges, purposive sampling ensured that all respondents had encountered relevant communication issues in practice. This approach strengthened the credibility of the findings by grounding them in informed, experience-based perspectives.

Participants were recruited through professional networks and direct contact, which facilitated access to project managers working in diverse organizational and geographic contexts. While this approach enhanced the depth of the data, it also reflects the exploratory nature of the study, which prioritizes quality of insight over quantity of participants. The selected sample provided sufficient variation in cultural contexts, project types, and organizational structures to allow for meaningful comparison and thematic analysis.

Overall, the sampling strategy supported the study's aim of exploring cross-cultural communication in international project management from an insider perspective. By selecting participants with relevant expertise and firsthand experience, the research ensured that the data collected were both contextually rich and directly aligned with the research objectives.

### **Sample Size**

The study aimed to include between eight and twelve project managers, a sample size considered appropriate for qualitative research that prioritizes depth of understanding over statistical generalization. This range was selected to ensure that sufficient data could be collected to identify recurring patterns and themes while remaining manageable for detailed, in-depth analysis.

In qualitative studies, the adequacy of a sample size is determined not by numerical representation but by the richness and relevance of the data. The selected sample size allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences in detail, capturing diverse perspectives on cross-cultural communication while maintaining analytical feasibility. Including fewer participants could have limited the range of experiences represented, while a significantly larger sample might have reduced the depth of analysis required for a thematic approach.

The chosen sample size also aligns with the concept of data saturation, whereby additional interviews are unlikely to yield substantially new themes or insights. As interviews progressed, recurring communication challenges, strategies, and success factors became evident across participants, indicating that the sample size was sufficient to support meaningful thematic analysis.

The inclusion of project managers from different organizational and cultural contexts enhanced the credibility and robustness of the findings. Although the sample does not allow for broad generalization, it provides adequate variation to identify common patterns and shared experiences relevant to international project management practice.

The selected sample size supported the study's qualitative objectives by enabling a thorough examination of nuanced communication dynamics while ensuring reliable interpretation and coherent analysis of cross-cultural communication issues.

### **3.4 Analytical Approach**

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely recognized qualitative analytical method suitable for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within textual data. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows for a flexible yet systematic examination of participants' narratives, making it particularly appropriate for exploring complex and context-dependent phenomena such as cross-cultural communication in international project management.

The analysis followed a structured, multi-stage process inspired by the guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher engaged in data familiarization, which involved multiple, careful readings of the interview transcripts. This step enabled a thorough understanding of the content, context, and tone of participants' responses and helped the researcher become immersed in the data. Initial notes and observations were recorded during this phase to capture early impressions and potential patterns.

Second, the transcripts were subjected to systematic coding. Coding involved identifying meaningful segments of text related to communication challenges, leadership behaviors, cultural

differences, and management strategies. Both deductive and inductive coding approaches were applied. Deductive codes were derived from the theoretical frameworks discussed in Theoretical Work Section, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's high- and low-context communication theory, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's dimensions, and the GLOBE Project. At the same time, inductive coding allowed new concepts and insights to emerge directly from the data, ensuring that participants' perspectives were not constrained solely by existing theory.

In the next stage, coded data were grouped into themes and sub-themes that reflected recurring patterns across interviews. These themes captured key issues such as communication style differences, power distance awareness, leadership adaptability, conflict management practices, time orientation, trust-building, and the use of technology in multicultural teams. Particular attention was paid to identifying similarities and differences across participants' accounts, enabling comparative analysis among project managers working in varied cultural and organizational contexts.

Following theme development, the analysis moved to the interpretation phase, where themes were examined in relation to the research objectives and theoretical foundations. The identified themes were compared with existing literature to assess alignment, reinforcement, or divergence from established theories. This step ensured coherence between empirical findings and recognized academic frameworks while also highlighting areas where project managers' lived experiences extended or nuanced theoretical assumptions.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, findings were continuously cross-checked against the original transcripts to ensure that interpretations accurately reflected participants' intended meanings. This iterative process reduced the risk of misinterpretation and strengthened the analytical rigor of the study.

Overall, thematic analysis provided a systematic and transparent approach to understanding how project managers perceive and manage cross-cultural communication challenges. By integrating empirical evidence with established theoretical perspectives, the analytical approach enabled the study to generate meaningful insights that are both academically grounded and practically relevant to international project management.

## **Validity and Reliability**

The validity of this research was ensured through multiple complementary strategies designed to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. One key approach was triangulation, which involved systematically comparing the empirical data gathered from interviews with existing literature on cross-cultural communication and international project management. By examining the alignment between participants' experiences and established theoretical frameworks, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's high- and low-context communication theory, Trompenaars' seven cultural dimensions, and the GLOBE Project, the study was able to confirm that the observed patterns and themes were consistent with broader knowledge in the field. Triangulation helped reduce the likelihood of bias or misinterpretation by validating the findings across multiple sources and perspectives.

Another important strategy employed to enhance validity was member checking. Participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and provide feedback on the accuracy of the recorded information. This process allowed interviewees to clarify ambiguous statements, correct potential errors, and ensure that their intended meanings were accurately represented. Member checking not only helped verify the authenticity of the data but also strengthened the researchers' understanding of nuanced cultural and contextual factors that may have otherwise been misinterpreted. By incorporating participants' feedback, the study increased confidence that the findings accurately reflect the real experiences, perspectives, and practices of project managers in multicultural project environments.

Reliability was maintained through the consistent application of a standardized interview technique, which ensured that each participant was asked similar questions in a comparable manner. This uniform approach minimized variations that could arise from differences in questioning style or interaction dynamics, thereby enhancing the consistency of the data collected. Additionally, explicit coding methodologies were employed during the thematic analysis, with detailed documentation of the analytical process, including the development of codes, identification of themes, and interpretation of patterns. This methodical approach allows other researchers to follow the reasoning and procedures used in the study, supporting replicability and transparency. Systematic record-keeping of all stages of data collection and analysis further contributes to the reliability of the study, making it easier to trace findings back to original data and understand how conclusions were derived.

Taken together, these measures—triangulation with literature, member checking, standardized interviews, explicit coding, and rigorous documentation—collectively enhance both the validity and reliability of the research. They provide assurance that the study's results are credible, trustworthy, and accurately reflect the realities of project managers' experiences with cross-cultural communication. By applying these methodological safeguards, the research produces findings that can be confidently used to inform both academic understanding and practical applications in the field of international project management, contributing to evidence-based strategies for effective cross-cultural collaboration.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles governing academic research and adhered to high standards of integrity, transparency, and participant protection throughout all stages of the research process. Ethical considerations were treated as a fundamental component of the study, particularly given the involvement of human participants and the collection of potentially sensitive professional experiences.

Prior to participation, all respondents were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and the intended use of the data. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before conducting the interviews, ensuring that participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences or need for justification. To protect participants' privacy, strict measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Personal identifiers, including names, organizational affiliations, and geographic references, were removed from interview transcripts and replaced with neutral identifiers. This anonymization process ensured that individual participants and their organizations could not be identified in the thesis or any subsequent publications.

All collected data were handled with care and stored securely. Audio recordings and transcripts were kept in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. The data were used exclusively for academic purposes related to this study and were not shared with third parties. These measures were implemented to comply with data protection standards and to safeguard participants' professional reputations.

The researcher remained attentive to potential ethical risks related to power dynamics and professional sensitivity. Participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences freely without pressure, and interview questions were designed to avoid leading or intrusive inquiries. By

maintaining a respectful and neutral stance, the researcher sought to minimize discomfort and ensure that participants felt safe sharing their perspectives.

Overall, the ethical framework applied in this study ensured that participants were treated with respect, dignity, and fairness. These measures not only protected participants but also enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

### **3.6 Summary**

This section has outlined the methodological foundations of the study, providing a clear and systematic explanation of how the research was designed and conducted. The qualitative research approach was selected to enable an in-depth exploration of project managers' experiences and perceptions regarding cross-cultural communication within international project teams. By prioritizing rich, descriptive data over numerical measurement, the methodology supports a nuanced understanding of the complex social and cultural dynamics that influence communication in global project environments.

The section detailed the research design, highlighting the suitability of a qualitative and interpretivist approach for examining culturally embedded communication practices. It also described the data collection process, which relied on semi-structured interviews to ensure both consistency across participants and flexibility to capture individual experiences. The sampling strategy was explained, emphasizing the use of purposive sampling to select project managers with relevant international experience and the ability to provide informed, experience-based insights.

The analytical approach was discussed, outlining the use of thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and relationships within the interview data. By combining deductive coding informed by established theoretical frameworks with inductive insights emerging from the data, the study ensured a balanced and rigorous analysis. Ethical considerations were also addressed, demonstrating the researcher's commitment to protecting participants' rights, confidentiality, and well-being throughout the research process.

Overall, this methodological framework ensures the collection of credible, contextually rich data that directly address the research objectives. The approach adopted in this section provides a solid foundation for the findings presented in Research Work Section, where the empirical results of the thematic analysis are examined and interpreted in relation to cross-cultural communication theory and international project management practice.

## RESEARCH WORK SECTION

This section presents the findings derived from the thematic analysis of the interview data collected from project managers working in international and multicultural project environments. The primary objective of this analysis is to identify and synthesize the key challenges, strategies, and success factors that project managers perceive as critical for achieving effective cross-cultural communication in their projects. By examining the perspectives of experienced practitioners, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how communication dynamics operate in culturally diverse teams and to highlight practical approaches that can be applied in real-world project settings.

The findings are grounded in both the empirical data obtained from the interviews and the theoretical frameworks discussed in the Theoretical Work Section, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's high- and low-context communication theory, Trompenaars' seven cultural dimensions, and the GLOBE Project. Integrating these frameworks with the lived experiences of project managers allows for a richer interpretation of the data, demonstrating how theory and practice intersect in complex project environments. Through this process, the analysis not only identifies recurring patterns and challenges but also uncovers the adaptive strategies and best practices that managers employ to navigate cultural differences, mitigate misunderstandings, and foster collaboration across diverse teams.

Based on the interview responses, eight main factors emerged as particularly significant for effective cross-cultural communication. These factors encompass both practical insights derived from the project managers' own experiences and principles supported by established cross-cultural communication theories. They reflect a combination of interpersonal skills, leadership capabilities, structured communication processes, and cultural awareness that together enable project managers to manage the complexities of international projects successfully. Each factor highlights a different dimension of communication, ranging from individual competencies, such as emotional intelligence and empathy, to organizational practices, such as standardized communication protocols and the use of technology for virtual collaboration. By examining these elements in detail, this study offers a structured framework for understanding the critical components of cross-cultural communication, providing actionable guidance for project managers seeking to improve team performance and achieve project objectives in multicultural environments.

Overall, this section seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by illustrating how project managers apply conceptual frameworks to real-life situations and by demonstrating which strategies are perceived as most effective in overcoming the challenges posed by cultural diversity. The insights gained not only shed light on common obstacles and their solutions but also offer a roadmap for developing managerial competencies that are essential for fostering trust, reducing misunderstandings, and facilitating smooth collaboration in international projects.

#### 4.1 Important Factors That Affect Cross-Cultural Communication

The thematic analysis identified eight characteristics that consistently influence communication efficacy in multicultural project teams. Table 4.1 highlights these elements by providing brief overviews and theoretical rationales for their importance.

| Factor                                      | Description  | Theoretical Basis   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Communication Style</b>                  | The degree to which team members prefer direct versus indirect communication affects clarity, understanding, and conflict resolution.          | Hall (1976), Hofstede (1980)                                    |
| <b>Power Distance Awareness</b>             | Understanding hierarchical expectations helps managers navigate authority, decision-making, and feedback dynamics across cultures.             | Hofstede (1980), GLOBE (House et al., 2004)                     |
| <b>Cultural Awareness &amp; Sensitivity</b> | Recognizing cultural norms, values, and traditions enables managers to anticipate misunderstandings and adapt behavior accordingly.            | Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997)            |
| <b>Leadership Adaptability</b>              | Adapting leadership styles to team cultural expectations (directive, participative, or hybrid) enhances trust, cohesion, and team performance. | GLOBE (House et al., 2004), Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Conflict Management Skills</b>                   | The ability to handle disagreements respectfully while considering cultural differences prevents escalation and supports collaboration.          | Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997)                  |
| <b>Time Orientation Awareness</b>                   | Understanding whether team members follow sequential or flexible approaches to deadlines improves scheduling, coordination, and task completion. | Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997), Hofstede (1980) |
| <b>Team Building &amp; Relationship Development</b> | Establishing trust, shared norms, and strong interpersonal relationships improves communication, engagement, and project outcomes.               | Hall (1976), Hofstede (1980)                         |
| <b>Use of Technology for Communication</b>          | Leveraging collaborative tools, structured documentation, and virtual platforms ensures clarity and reduces misunderstandings in remote teams.   | Gudykunst (2003), Cardon (2008)                      |

#### 4.2 Ways to Deal with Cultural Differences

The interview findings indicate that project managers employ a range of strategies to manage cultural differences and improve communication effectiveness within international project teams. One of the most frequently mentioned approaches was cultural adaptation, which refers to the conscious adjustment of communication style to suit the cultural expectations of team members. Project managers explained that this often involves modifying the level of directness in communication, structuring instructions more clearly, and being attentive to non-verbal cues such as tone, pauses, and body language. For example, managers noted that in some cultural contexts, overly direct communication could be perceived as confrontational, whereas in others,

indirect communication might lead to ambiguity and misunderstandings. As a result, adapting communication style was viewed as a practical and necessary skill rather than a one-size-fits-all solution. Another recurring theme across the interviews was the importance of active listening and empathy. Several project managers emphasized that effective cross-cultural communication requires not only delivering messages clearly but also ensuring that messages are correctly understood. Active listening was described as giving team members the space to express concerns, asking clarifying questions, and confirming mutual understanding. Empathy was highlighted as especially important in situations where cultural norms influence how individuals express disagreement, uncertainty, or hesitation. Managers reported that demonstrating understanding and patience helped reduce defensiveness, encouraged openness, and strengthened interpersonal trust within culturally diverse teams.

Many participants stressed the value of creating a culturally inclusive work environment. This was achieved through deliberate efforts such as team-building activities, cross-cultural awareness training, and the establishment of shared communication norms. Team-building initiatives, both formal and informal, were viewed as effective tools for fostering familiarity and reducing cultural distance among team members. Cross-cultural training was mentioned as a way to raise awareness of cultural differences, challenge stereotypes, and equip team members with strategies to navigate intercultural interactions more effectively. Establishing standard norms, such as agreed meeting etiquette, feedback practices, and documentation standards, was also seen as essential for reducing uncertainty and aligning expectations across cultures.

Technology emerged as another critical mechanism for managing cultural differences, particularly in virtual and geographically dispersed teams. Interviewees noted that structured communication tools, such as shared project platforms, documented action items, and regular check-ins, helped maintain clarity and consistency in communication. These tools were especially useful in minimizing misunderstandings caused by language barriers or time-zone differences. Some project managers reported using collaborative platforms and visual aids, such as shared dashboards or process diagrams, to ensure that information was accessible and understandable to all team members, regardless of cultural or linguistic background. Visual communication, in particular, was considered effective in bridging gaps where verbal explanations alone might be insufficient. Overall, the findings suggest that managing cultural differences in international project teams requires a combination of interpersonal skills, organizational practices, and technological support. Project managers do not rely on a single strategy but instead adopt a flexible and context-sensitive approach that balances cultural adaptation, inclusive leadership, structured communication, and appropriate use of digital tools. These practices enable managers to reduce

miscommunication, enhance collaboration, and support effective teamwork in culturally diverse project environments.

### **4.3 Things That Make Cross-Cultural Communication Work**

The analysis of the interview data revealed several interconnected factors that contribute to effective cross-cultural communication in international project teams. Among these, cultural awareness emerged as one of the most critical success factors. Project managers consistently emphasized that an understanding of cultural values, norms, and communication styles allows them to anticipate potential misunderstandings before they escalate into larger problems. Awareness of differences related to hierarchy, communication directness, time orientation, and decision-making enabled managers to tailor their communication strategies and respond more appropriately to diverse team expectations. Rather than reacting to conflicts after they arise, culturally aware managers were able to prevent issues through proactive communication and informed leadership. Another prominent factor identified was emotional intelligence, particularly the ability to recognize, interpret, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Participants described emotional intelligence as essential for managing sensitive situations in multicultural teams, where emotions may be expressed differently depending on cultural background. Project managers reported that being attentive to signs of discomfort, hesitation, or frustration helped them adjust their communication style and address concerns before trust was damaged. Emotional self-regulation was also considered important, as managers needed to remain calm, respectful, and composed when dealing with misunderstandings or conflict across cultures. This emotional awareness supported healthier interpersonal relationships and contributed to a psychologically safe team environment.

The findings further highlighted the importance of leadership flexibility in facilitating effective communication. Project managers explained that no single leadership style is universally effective in multicultural settings. Instead, successful communication depended on the ability to adapt leadership approaches according to cultural context and project needs. In some situations, a directive style was necessary to provide clarity and structure, particularly in cultures that value hierarchy and authority. In other contexts, participative leadership encouraged engagement, idea-sharing, and collaboration. Many participants described using a hybrid approach, combining clear guidance with opportunities for team input, which helped balance cultural expectations and foster cohesion within the team. Participants also stressed the role of proactive conflict management as a key contributor to communication success. Rather than waiting for conflicts to become visible or disruptive, effective project managers focused on early identification of potential tensions. This included observing changes in team behavior, addressing misunderstandings promptly, and

creating safe spaces for open discussion. Clear communication rules, such as agreed feedback methods and escalation procedures, were viewed as essential tools for managing disagreements constructively. By addressing conflicts early and respectfully, managers were able to prevent escalation and maintain productive working relationships.

Clear expectations and shared goals were identified as foundational elements of effective cross-cultural communication. Project managers emphasized the importance of defining roles, responsibilities, and communication norms at the beginning of a project. When team members shared a clear understanding of project objectives and individual responsibilities, ambiguity was reduced, and collaboration became more efficient. Mutual respect and transparency were also highlighted as necessary conditions for sustained communication effectiveness, particularly in long-term or complex international projects. Continuous monitoring of team dynamics was considered essential for maintaining communication effectiveness over time. Project managers reported regularly assessing team interactions, adjusting communication strategies, and reinforcing norms as the project evolved. This ongoing attention helped managers identify emerging issues related to cultural differences and address them before they negatively impacted project outcomes. By consistently applying these success factors, project managers were able to reduce miscommunication, strengthen trust, and enhance overall project performance in multicultural environments.

#### **4.4 Differences in Project Managers' Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Communication Factors**

Although the interviews showcased eight common factors influencing cross-cultural communication in international project teams and cross-cultural communication, the project managers that participated in the interviews differed in how they perceived these factors and in the practical approaches they applied to manage them. This section compares the perspectives of individual respondents.

##### **Communication Style and Language Use**

Project Manager B underlined that miscommunication can result from language hurdles, particularly when speaking in a language other than one's native tongue. This management used practical tactics based on their experience, like verifying comprehension, utilizing straightforward language, and ensuring clarity by combining written instructions with follow-up calls.

Language barriers, according to Project Manager G, are a relatively small problem in contemporary international projects because most multinational corporations hire employees who speak English well enough. This manager claims that language-related difficulties mostly arise in

the early phases of a project and progressively lessen as common terminology and project objectives become more apparent.

These contrasting viewpoints imply that while some managers concentrate on reducing language barriers through communication strategies, others rely more on time, paperwork, and organizational structures to lessen their effects.

### **Power Distance and Hierarchy**

Additionally, project managers showed different perspectives on power distance and hierarchy. Project Manager C explained the application of a flat organizational structure, stressing equitable participation independent of formal responsibilities and open-door principles. This strategy sought to foster engagement, foster trust, and enable team members to participate in decision-making.

However, Project Manager G emphasized that a well-defined hierarchy is essential, especially for larger projects. This respondent claims that several roles—such as operational decision-makers, top-level oversight, and execution teams—are necessary for successful project execution. In a similar vein, Project Manager E pointed out that senior management is usually in charge of making decisions that have a big impact on operations.

These variations show that managers modify their usage of hierarchy based on organizational culture, project size, and individual leadership philosophies.

### **Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness**

All participants agreed that cultural understanding was crucial, although their practical applications varied. When scheduling meetings and deadlines, Project Manager A emphasized the significance of being aware of local holidays and religious customs, which helped to increase cooperation and lessen irritation. When working across countries with strong hierarchical norms, Project Manager B stressed the importance of understanding how different cultures interpret authority and orders.

Project Manager E, on the other hand, claimed that individual professional profiles are more important than nationality and that cultural background alone does not necessitate distinct management approaches. In contrast to managers who deliberately modify their behavior to fit cultural situations, this viewpoint proposes a more uniform, performance-based approach to team management.

### **Leadership Adaptability**

Leadership adaptability was another area where differences were apparent. A few managers talked about changing their approach to leadership according to the demands of the situation. One respondent described, for instance, the use of a participative style for group projects and a

directive approach for important choices. By highlighting the significance of designating clear decision power when uncertainty or conflict emerges, Project Manager G subtly endorsed this viewpoint.

Some managers, like Project Manager C, continuously supported participatory leadership because they saw shared decision-making as a means of building engagement and trust. These variations show different perspectives on how to strike a balance between autonomy and control in ethnic teams.

### **Conflict Management**

Conflict management strategies differed greatly. Project Manager B stressed the significance of proactive clarification, pointing out that misconceptions or unclear instructions frequently result in confrontations. Project Manager C explained how to resolve disputes by bringing team members together for candid conversation, especially when miscommunication resulted from tone differences.

An instance of disagreement between two team members vying for leadership was given by Project Manager G. In this instance, escalation within the hierarchy, explicit role assignment, and managerial intervention were necessary for resolution. Project Manager E, on the other hand, placed a strong emphasis on formal procedures, saying that managerial and HR procedures address problems and unacceptable behavior.

These disparate methods demonstrate that formal organizational processes and informal mediation are just two examples of conflict management techniques.

### **Time Orientation and Deadlines**

The ways in which project managers handled cultural conceptions of time also varied. Project Manager B emphasized the significance of defining precise timelines as opposed to ambiguous phrases like "ASAP," which might be perceived differently depending on the culture. By creating a single reference time zone for all project activities, Project Manager C concentrated on controlling time zone differences.

Project Manager G highlighted more general cultural variations in deadline attitudes, pointing out that while some cultures are more flexible, others firmly follow deadlines. This respondent claims that these discrepancies frequently cause delays and necessitate more work from project managers in terms of coordination and follow-ups. In order to overcome this difficulty, Project Manager F implemented buffer time while working with teams that typically move more slowly.

### **Team Building and Trust**

All managers recognized the value of trust, but they approached it in different ways. Building trust is a precondition for candid criticism and teamwork, according to Project Manager B. Open communication, casual interactions, and team-building exercises are important strategies for building trust, according to Project Manager C.

However, according to Project Manager G, position clarity and task appropriateness have a greater impact on engagement and trust than cultural background alone. This viewpoint is in opposition to managers who highlighted cultural sensitivity as the main strategy for fostering trust.

### **Use of Technology**

Lastly, the degree to which managers relied on technology varied. Project Managers G and C emphasized the growing significance of digital technologies and online meetings in remote and hybrid work settings. Even if verbal meetings are still difficult, Project Manager F observed that textual communication tools lessen language-related problems.

Overall, the results show that although the same eight elements affect cross-cultural communication, project managers interpret and handle them differently depending on their leadership style, organizational setting, and experience.

## **4.5 Connecting Results to Theory**

The findings of this study demonstrate strong alignment with the major theoretical frameworks of cross-cultural communication and international project management discussed in Theoretical Work Section. The interview data not only confirm the relevance of these theories but also illustrate how they operate in practical project environments. By grounding theoretical concepts in the lived experiences of project managers, this research bridges the gap between abstract models and real-world application. One of the most prominent theoretical connections emerges in relation to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, particularly power distance and individualism versus collectivism. Participants' descriptions of communication and decision-making processes closely reflect Hofstede's assertions that cultures with high power distance tend to favor hierarchical communication structures and centralized authority. Interviewees working with teams from such cultures reported that decisions were typically made by senior leadership and that communication followed formal reporting lines. Conversely, in low power distance cultures, project managers observed more open dialogue, greater participation in discussions, and a preference for collaborative decision-making. These findings reinforce Hofstede's argument that cultural values fundamentally shape how authority and communication are perceived within organizations.

The dimension of individualism versus collectivism was also evident in participants' experiences. Project managers noted that team members from collectivist cultures were more likely to prioritize group harmony, avoid direct confrontation, and communicate indirectly to preserve relationships. In contrast, individuals from individualistic cultures tended to communicate more directly, express personal opinions openly, and focus on task completion and accountability. These contrasting behaviors often required project managers to adapt their communication style to ensure clarity while maintaining trust. The findings thus support Hofstede's framework by demonstrating how cultural orientations influence communication preferences and interpersonal dynamics within project teams. The study's results further align with Hall's high-context and low-context communication theory, which explains differences in how meaning is conveyed and interpreted across cultures. Several interviewees highlighted challenges related to implicit communication, particularly in multicultural and virtual settings. Project managers working with high-context cultures reported that much of the meaning in communication was conveyed through tone, context, and non-verbal cues rather than explicit statements. This often led to misunderstandings when interacting with team members from low-context cultures, who expected clear, direct verbal instructions. The absence of non-verbal cues in virtual communication intensified these challenges, confirming Hall's assertion that context-dependent communication becomes more difficult in mediated environments. The findings illustrate the continued relevance of Hall's framework, especially in globally distributed project teams.

The findings correspond closely with Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's cultural dimensions, particularly those related to time orientation, decision-making, and conflict management. Participants' accounts of differing attitudes toward deadlines reflect Trompenaars' distinction between sequential and synchronic time cultures. Project managers described how teams from sequential time cultures emphasized strict scheduling and punctuality, while teams from synchronic cultures demonstrated greater flexibility and adaptability. These differences often created tension in project planning but could be mitigated through clear expectations and adjusted timelines. Similarly, variations in conflict-handling styles, such as direct confrontation versus avoidance, mirrored Trompenaars' observations about cultural approaches to interpersonal relations and emotional expression. These findings demonstrate how Trompenaars' framework offers practical insight into managing everyday project challenges in multicultural contexts. The GLOBE Project's leadership and cultural expectations were also strongly reflected in the interview data. Participants consistently emphasized the need for leadership adaptability, confirming GLOBE's assertion that leadership effectiveness is culturally contingent. Project managers reported adjusting their leadership style depending on cultural expectations, adopting more

directive approaches in hierarchical cultures and more participative styles in egalitarian ones. This flexibility enhanced communication effectiveness, trust, and team cohesion. The findings support the GLOBE Project's conclusion that leadership and communication practices cannot be universally applied but must be aligned with cultural norms to achieve successful outcomes.

Overall, the integration of empirical findings with established theoretical frameworks demonstrates the practical applicability of cross-cultural communication theories in international project management. While the theories provide broad explanatory models, this study shows how project managers operationalize these concepts in real project settings through adaptive communication strategies, emotional intelligence, and flexible leadership. By connecting theory with practice, the research not only validates existing models but also enriches them with contemporary insights from global project environments. This alignment reinforces the value of cross-cultural communication theories as essential tools for understanding and improving communication effectiveness in international project teams.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This section has presented a detailed analysis of the empirical findings derived from interviews with project managers experienced in leading multicultural and international project teams. Through thematic analysis, the study identified the central challenges, management approaches, and success factors that shape cross-cultural communication in project environments. These findings reveal that communication within international project teams is influenced by a complex interaction of cultural values, leadership styles, organizational structures, and technological contexts. The analysis highlighted several recurring challenges, including differences in communication styles, varying expectations regarding hierarchy and authority, contrasting perceptions of time and deadlines, and culturally shaped approaches to conflict. Project managers emphasized that misunderstandings often arise not from technical incompetence but from divergent cultural norms and implicit assumptions. These challenges were particularly evident in virtual and geographically dispersed teams, where the absence of non-verbal cues further complicates interpretation and meaning-making. In response to these challenges, participants described a range of practical strategies used to enhance communication effectiveness. These included adapting communication styles to cultural expectations, establishing clear roles and responsibilities, setting shared communication norms, and promoting trust through transparency and consistency. Emotional intelligence and cultural sensitivity emerged as essential competencies that enable project managers to interpret subtle cues, manage interpersonal tensions, and foster psychologically safe environments where team members feel confident to participate and provide feedback.

The section also identified key success factors that support effective cross-cultural communication, such as leadership adaptability, proactive conflict management, team-building efforts, and the strategic use of communication technologies. Project managers consistently reported that flexible leadership approaches and early clarification of expectations significantly improved collaboration and reduced misunderstandings. When supported by structured communication tools and regular follow-ups, these practices contributed to stronger team cohesion and improved project performance. By systematically connecting these empirical findings to established theoretical frameworks, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's context theory, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's cultural models, and the GLOBE Project, this section demonstrates the relevance and applicability of cross-cultural communication theory in real-world project management contexts. The findings confirm that theory serves as a valuable guide for understanding cultural differences while emphasizing the need for situational adaptation in practice.

Overall, this section provides a comprehensive foundation for the discussion in Conclusions and Recommendations. It sets the stage for a deeper interpretation of the findings, the identification of theoretical and practical contributions, and the development of actionable recommendations for project managers and organizations operating in international environments. By highlighting both the challenges and the strategies identified by practitioners, the section reinforces the central role of effective cross-cultural communication in achieving project success.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS**

This section analyzes the study's findings in the context of established cross-cultural communication theories, emphasizes the research's merits and limits, and offers pragmatic advice for project managers and organizations overseeing overseas projects. This section provides a thorough understanding of how project managers address communication problems in ethnic teams by combining real-world examples with theoretical ideas.

### **5.1 Discussion of Important Results**

The study found eight essential things that affect how people from different cultures communicate on international project teams: how they communicate, how aware they are of power distance, how sensitive they are to other cultures, how adaptable their leadership is, how good they are at managing conflict, how aware they are of time orientation, how hard they work to build teams, and how they use technology. The theme analysis of the interviews repeatedly revealed these elements, which are corroborated by the theoretical frameworks outlined in Theoretical Work Section.

Participants consistently stressed that the way they communicate is essential for clarity and understanding. Managers noted that some cultures prefer to talk directly, while others rely heavily on context and nonverbal cues. Project manager D, for example, said that working with teams in Japan required paying attention to subtle expressions and implied meanings, which aligns with Hall's high-context communication theory. On the other hand, working with U.S. teams benefited from clear, direct instructions, which align with low-context communication.

Another common element was being cognizant of power distance. Managers said that knowing what was expected of them in the hierarchy affected how they delivered orders, asked for permission, and gave feedback. In societies with high power distance, such as Malaysia and Mexico, it was essential to follow the chain of command to the letter to avoid misunderstandings. In contrast, in low-power-distance cultures such as Denmark, managers may adopt a participative approach, fostering team input and collaboration. These experiences correspond with Hofstede's (1980) and the GLOBE Project's (House et al., 2004) findings about the influence of power distance on communication and leadership.

To avoid fights and misunderstandings, it was imperative to be aware of and sensitive to other cultures. Managers gave examples of how knowledge of local cultures, traditions, and beliefs helped them handle challenging situations effectively. Project manager A mentioned that knowing about religious traditions and local holidays made it easier to set up meetings and meet deadlines

without getting angry. This element bolsters Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) paradigm about the impact of cultural norms and values on workplace conduct.

Adaptability in leadership has become an essential aspect for overseeing heterogeneous teams. Participants stressed that a flexible leadership style, whether it was directive, participative, or a mix of the two, made trust, team cohesiveness, and performance better overall. For example, a project manager in charge of a multicultural software project said that they used a prescriptive style for important technical choices and a participative style for brainstorming sessions to meet cultural expectations.

It was said that being able to handle conflict was essential for keeping the team together. Managers noted that identifying potential misunderstandings early and proactively addressing them helped ease tensions. Mediating disagreements quietly, fostering courteous conversation, and employing culturally appropriate negotiating methods worked well in many situations. Being aware of how time affects planning and coordination. Managers saw that there are contrasts between cultures with sequential time, where deadlines are carefully followed, and cultures with flexible time, where multitasking and changing deadlines are typical. Managers were able to set realistic expectations, avoid frustration, and get team members to work together toward project goals by recognizing these disparities.

It was stressed that building relationships and fostering teamwork are essential for effective communication. Managers said that building trust, shared norms, and personal relationships made it easier to work together and stopped misunderstandings. People said that regular team-building activities, informal check-ins, and open communication spaces were good ways to do this. In virtual, geographically separated teams, using technology to communicate became increasingly vital. Structured tools such as collaborative platforms, shared documents, and visual aids ensured clarity and consistency. Managers said that using these tools helped avoid misunderstandings and made communication easier, both in real time and out of real time, especially in cultures with different communication norms.

## **5.2 Contributions to Theory and Practice**

This study makes meaningful contributions to both academic theory and practical project management by explicitly linking established cross-cultural communication frameworks with the lived experiences of project managers working in international environments. By examining communication challenges and success factors through the perspectives of practitioners, the research strengthens the practical relevance of widely cited theoretical models and demonstrates how they manifest in everyday project work. From a theoretical perspective, the study reinforces

the continued applicability of foundational cross-cultural frameworks such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's high- and low-context communication theory, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's cultural dimensions, and the GLOBE Project. The findings confirm that concepts including power distance, individualism versus collectivism, time orientation, and culturally influenced leadership expectations remain highly relevant in contemporary project management contexts. Importantly, the research moves beyond abstract theory by illustrating how these dimensions directly influence communication behaviors, decision-making processes, conflict resolution styles, and leadership practices within international project teams.

The study contributes to theory by integrating multiple frameworks rather than relying on a single model. This multi-theoretical approach provides a more nuanced understanding of cross-cultural communication, acknowledging that no single framework can fully explain the complexity of multicultural project environments. By synthesizing insights from several theories and validating them through empirical data, the research supports a more holistic and adaptable conceptualization of cross-cultural communication in project management. From a practical perspective, the study offers clear and actionable insights for project managers and organizations operating in global settings. The findings emphasize that effective cross-cultural communication is not achieved through standardized approaches but through adaptability, awareness, and continuous reflection. Project managers can apply these insights by developing cultural awareness, strengthening emotional intelligence, and adopting flexible leadership styles that align with the cultural expectations of their teams. The study highlights the importance of establishing structured communication processes, such as clear documentation, shared communication norms, and regular feedback mechanisms, to reduce ambiguity and misunderstandings.

The research underscores the value of proactive team-building and trust development as essential components of successful international projects. By fostering inclusive environments and encouraging open dialogue, project managers can enhance participation and collaboration among culturally diverse team members. The findings also demonstrate the practical significance of leveraging communication technologies effectively, particularly in virtual teams, while remaining sensitive to cultural differences in communication preferences and digital literacy. Overall, this study contributes a practice-oriented framework that project managers can use to anticipate communication challenges, select appropriate strategies, and improve project outcomes in multicultural environments. By translating theory into concrete managerial actions, the research bridges the gap between academic knowledge and professional practice. These contributions are particularly valuable for organizations seeking to enhance their global project

capabilities and for scholars aiming to better understand how cross-cultural communication theories function in real-world project management settings.

### **5.3 Study Limitations**

Despite its meaningful contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the sample size was relatively small, consisting of 7 project managers. While this number is appropriate for qualitative research aimed at gaining depth and detailed insights, it limits the generalizability of the results. The findings therefore reflect patterns and themes observed within this specific group of participants rather than universally applicable conclusions for all international project teams.

Second, the study relied exclusively on qualitative, self-reported interview data, which introduces the possibility of subjective bias. Participants' responses were shaped by their personal experiences, perceptions, and professional backgrounds, which may have influenced how communication challenges and success factors were described. Additionally, social desirability bias may have led some participants to present their communication practices or leadership behaviors in a more favorable light. Although measures such as thematic analysis and alignment with existing literature were used to strengthen credibility, complete objectivity cannot be guaranteed.

Another limitation of this study relates to the organizational and contextual scope of the research. Most participants were project managers employed in large or globally operating organizations, which tend to have formalized structures, standardized communication processes, and access to significant resources. These characteristics may differ substantially from the realities faced by small or medium-sized enterprises, non-profit organizations, or projects that are primarily regionally focused. In smaller or less formalized settings, project managers may face constraints in terms of staffing, budget, technology, and organizational support, which could affect both the communication challenges encountered and the strategies employed to address them. Consequently, the findings of this study, while insightful, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and practical realities present in projects conducted in less resource-rich, informal, or localized environments.

An additional important limitation concerns the focus of the study on the project managers' perspectives. While project managers occupy a central role in cross-cultural communication and their insights are directly relevant to understanding managerial strategies, this approach excludes the voices of other critical stakeholders. Team members, clients, sponsors, and other participants in the project environment may experience communication dynamics differently and may identify

challenges, expectations, or barriers that are less visible to project managers. For example, team members from high-context cultures might perceive certain managerial communication strategies as overly direct or insensitive, while clients from different cultural backgrounds may interpret communication about timelines or deliverables in ways not anticipated by the manager. Incorporating multiple perspectives would provide a more holistic understanding of cross-cultural communication dynamics, revealing both congruences and discrepancies between managerial intentions and stakeholder perceptions.

Future research could address these limitations in several ways. Expanding the sample size and including participants from a broader range of industries, organizational sizes, and geographic regions would enhance the generalizability of findings. Employing mixed-method approaches, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys, could also provide richer, more nuanced data, enabling researchers to identify patterns and correlations in communication challenges and strategies across diverse contexts. Comparative studies that incorporate multiple stakeholder perspectives—such as interviews with team members, clients, or sponsors—would further deepen understanding of cross-cultural communication within project teams, highlighting areas of alignment and divergence that may influence project success.

Despite these limitations, the present study provides valuable insights into cross-cultural communication from the perspective of project managers. It highlights practical strategies for addressing communication challenges in multicultural projects and emphasizes the critical role of managerial awareness, adaptability, and leadership in fostering collaboration. By identifying key themes and patterns in project managers' experiences, this research lays a strong foundation for further investigation and contributes to the ongoing development of knowledge in international project management, intercultural communication, and global team leadership. It also underscores the importance of considering both context and stakeholder diversity when examining communication practices, suggesting that future research can build upon these findings to create more comprehensive, actionable guidance for projects operating in increasingly globalized and culturally diverse environments.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for the Real World**

A number of useful suggestions for project managers and organizations operating in multicultural and multinational project contexts may be made in light of the findings of the research. These suggestions, which are backed by current theories on cross-cultural communication, are based not just on the interview data but also on the researcher's assessment and comprehension of the

study findings. As a result, the suggestions become more useful and appropriate for use in actual project scenarios. Project managers may enhance team collaboration, decrease miscommunications, and boost the general efficacy of projects with culturally diverse team members if these suggestions are implemented in organizational practice.

#### **Recommendation no.1: Communication Style**

Project managers should be especially aware of how different multicultural project teams communicate. This entails determining if team members are from high-context or low-context cultures and modifying communication as necessary. While straightforward and unambiguous communications are required in some cultural situations, nonverbal clues and indirect communication are crucial in others. Project managers may minimize misconceptions and guarantee that information is perceived uniformly by all team members by being aware of these distinctions and promoting clear clarification when necessary. Effective information exchange may be further supported by creating shared communication standards and promoting open-ended enquiries.

#### **Recommendation no.2: Power Distance Awareness**

Project managers should become conscious of power distance disparities and how they affect expectations regarding hierarchy, authority and decision-making. While more equitable and participatory engagement is frequently sought in low power-distance cultures, team members may anticipate clear guidance and formal leadership in high power-distance cultures. By being aware of these variations, project managers may modify their communication and leadership style to accommodate cultural norms.

#### **Recommendation no.3: Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity**

It is recommended that organizations engage in ongoing cultural sensitivity and awareness training for team members and project managers. The practical aspects of cross-cultural contact, including as values, conventions, behavioral expectations, and culturally impacted work practices, should be the emphasis of this training rather than only imparting superficial cultural information. Project managers may foresee possible misconceptions and react to culturally sensitive circumstances more skillfully when they are more culturally aware. Long-term and continuous training programs are especially beneficial because they enable participants to apply principles they have learnt in actual project scenarios and reflect on their experiences over time.

#### **Recommendation no.4: Leadership Adaptability**

To effectively respond to a variety of cultural situations, project managers need to cultivate leadership flexibility. The study's conclusions show that there is not a single leadership approach

that works in every multicultural project setting. The capacity to switch between different leadership philosophies promotes team performance, responsibility, and motivation. Additionally, emotional intelligence should also be considered as it is necessary for leadership flexibility as managers need to be aware of team member relation dynamics and emotional reactions.

#### **Recommendation no.5: Conflict Management Skills**

Instead of being a reactive duty, conflict prevention and resolution should be viewed as an ongoing responsibility of the project manager. Project managers are urged to foster a psychologically secure atmosphere where team members are at ease early on. When settling disputes, cultural variations in hierarchy, conflict resolution techniques and communication styles should be considered. Project managers can stop disputes from getting worse and turn them into teaching moments by using culturally appropriate conflict management techniques including active listening, empathy, and cooperative problem-solving.

#### **Recommendation no.6: Time Orientation Awareness**

Project managers should be conscious of cultural variations in time orientation, such as perspectives on deadlines, timeliness, and long-term vs short-term planning. Different perspectives on time might cause dissatisfaction or misread commitment and performance in ethnic teams. Project managers should set clear expectations for deadlines, milestones, and timeframes in order to handle this, but they should also be adaptable where it is culturally acceptable.

#### **Recommendation no.7: Team Building and Relationship Development**

In multicultural project teams, project managers should actively encourage the development of relationships and teamwork. Effective cross-cultural communication and cooperation depend heavily on trust. Relationship development may be facilitated by both official and informal activities, such as scheduled seminars, group problem-solving exercises, and casual social contacts.

#### **Recommendation no.8: Use of Technology for Communication**

It is crucial to emphasize the efficient use of communication technologies, especially in remote or geographically scattered project teams. Project managers should choose the right communication technologies, such instant messaging apps, video conferencing platforms and shared document systems, and make sure team members are properly taught to utilize them. Transparency and continuity can be facilitated by technology, but it should be used in conjunction with explicit communication guidelines and expectations. In order to prevent inadvertent exclusion and

guarantee inclusive communication practices, project managers should also take local holidays and time zone variations into account when planning meetings.

Collectively, these recommendations provide a comprehensive roadmap for improving cross-cultural communication and collaboration in international project teams. When implemented consistently, they can enhance trust, reduce misunderstandings, foster inclusive participation, and ultimately improve overall project performance. Moreover, by equipping project managers with the knowledge, skills, and tools to navigate cultural diversity effectively, organizations can not only increase the likelihood of project success but also strengthen their global competence, innovation capacity, and adaptability in increasingly internationalized work environments. These practices demonstrate that effective communication and culturally aware leadership are not optional but essential components of high-performing international projects.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Effective cross-cultural communication in international project teams is a complex and dynamic process that requires more than linguistic competence alone. It demands a combination of cultural awareness, structured communication practices, emotional intelligence, and leadership adaptability. This study has demonstrated that project managers play a central role in shaping communication outcomes by acting as mediators, facilitators, and cultural interpreters within multicultural project environments. By integrating established theoretical frameworks with empirical insights from project managers' interviews, the research has shown how cross-cultural communication theories operate in real-world project contexts. Models such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's high- and low-context communication theory, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's cultural dimensions, and the GLOBE Project were reflected in the participants' experiences and decision-making practices. These findings confirm the continued relevance of these theories while highlighting the importance of applying them flexibly rather than rigidly.

The study identified eight key variables that influence successful cross-cultural communication: communication style, power distance awareness, cultural awareness and sensitivity, leadership adaptability, conflict management skills, time orientation awareness, team building and relationship development, and the effective use of technology. Together, these variables form a practical framework that project managers can use to anticipate challenges, select appropriate strategies, and enhance collaboration within culturally diverse teams. Rather than viewing cultural differences as obstacles, the findings suggest that, when managed effectively, diversity can become a valuable asset that strengthens innovation, trust, and project performance.

This research contributes to academic knowledge by addressing an underexplored perspective in cross-cultural communication studies, namely that of project managers. It also offers practical guidance for organizations seeking to improve the effectiveness of their international projects. By implementing the strategies outlined in this study, organizations can reduce misunderstandings, improve team cohesion, and create inclusive project environments that support sustainable success. Cross-cultural communication competence is no longer an optional skill in project management but a critical requirement in an increasingly globalized world. Project managers who develop cultural awareness, emotional intelligence, and adaptive leadership capabilities are better equipped to lead international teams effectively and deliver successful project outcomes.

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## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1 – Interview Questions

**Question 1:** How do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?

**Question 2:** How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting, and decision-making in your project team?

**Question 3:** How do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict, and what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?

**Question 4:** How do cultural perceptions of time, deadlines, and scheduling impact project planning and progress?

**Question 5:** What approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation, and support effective feedback exchange among culturally diverse team members?

**Question 6:** Can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in a project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?

**ANNEX 2 – Interview Responses of Project Manager A**

2:28

Could be, yes. So yes. So this is how it's going to go. I have six questions and you can reply to them as long or as short as you want.

2:29

Uh huh. OK, OK, cool. Mhm.

Mm-hmm.

Mhm.

2:44

And if there's I see that there is a might be a need for a follow up question, I might ask one or two because this is a semi structured interview.

2:53

Mm-hmm. OK.

Yeah, sure.

3:00

Yes. So we can start unless you have any questions.

3:01

Mhm.

Maybe you can mention the name of your thesis, the full name, just for for just to help me to focus on what you're looking for. Exactly, yeah.

3:10

Yes.

So my thesis title is Project Managers Perspectives on success criteria for cross-cultural communication within international project teams.

3:23

OK.

Mhm.

OK. OK. Thank you so much. OK, we can just start.

3:33

Yes, uh-huh. OK, so how do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?

3:34

Mhm.

Yes, sure. It's a very interesting question. And before even like going to the main part of that question, I will just mention that right now as you know the to globalization, they are like like when organizations hiring people from.

Different points of the world means that they are using non-native language. So basically right now I think it's like more English depending on the country. Example in Lunia if you are working in international company which I am also doing it, so we are using like mostly English.

And it does affect 100 percentage of the communication coordination because you're having different people from different backgrounds and then they they're like native language is different so.

For it, I think the good start will be maybe to get to know the team just to maybe avoid the future miscommunication or I don't know coordination issues. How it affects I will, I will say maybe someone.

Wants more clarification depending on the English level or the like the the use of English in general and it may also depend on the your workflow how much communication you need to do that.

So that's why project managers should be aware the experience that the team owns, plus they need to take some time for adaptation with them. So I hope it helps. Let me know if you have any specific question what I say or in your mind.

5:36

No, I think it's pretty clear. Thank you. How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting and decision making in your project team?

5:42

OK.

OK, sure. Like from my experience, even though you have like cross-cultural teams while you're executing your projects, hierarchy is not becoming much like let's I would say maybe not more. Important stuff because like currently companies as preferring even though they have a different positions, I mean like junior, senior, but it's still they're trying to have a open communication to add more.

I think all the companies have their values and plus the different cultures depending on their established culture and then depending on their also established values, this will impact more or less.

But obviously regarding communication, reporting and decision making, they are again like some some like considerations that the team, both team and the project managers should think of like example communication as we already talked about like this is the language difference and sometimes.

Like even even though like alphabet or like express expression of some action items like some group of people will require more brief information but some of them will require like more longer version of it or also depending on the maybe hierarchy it will change.

Change and reporting and decision making. It's something actually could be managed by project governance that to my knowledge it's like most managed by like let's say project governance what you have decided but what's most important here that.

That your team knows because even though you have like let's say like big project team or small team, there is some people like still more knowledgeable, more aware about like let's say if it's global project.

Or if it's like even local project, more aware of the processes. So it affects, but it doesn't mean that these people's inputs are not used. Of course, again, it depends on the culture and the values that company operates if they are like letting you in.

And obviously in a small teams, it's the the impact like that's effect of these differences may be less visible rather than comparing to a big company or big project teams.

Yep.

8:35

Mhm.

OK. Thank you. How do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict? And what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?

8:45

Uhuh.

OK.

OK. Thank you so much. It's it's so true that they are like some differences the way that the cultural different cultures like trying to like address their issues.

In a project teams if you if you talk in reality and then if you add even like language parameter here. So imagining that you have a like let's say language barrier maybe regardless of your English level you can because as a human we love to.

Communicate. We love to, you know, explain our feelings in our own language. I will say that the maybe same cultures. It is so easy to do so, but there are obviously differences. How are the teams like?

Wants to solve those issues and it may depend even like some like geographies that the people from the exact geographies they they they maybe they will keep it for future or they they will don't even like care depending on again like the maturity of the.

The professionals in your team, again, I think here the project managers is role to see those conflicts or at least provide some tools for the team to manage those disagreements.

But if when you start and when you're letting your team to have that adaptation, just to see that, OK, maybe your team member has never worked with like let's say Azerbaijani or English or Indian person. So you just need to give some point for them to get to know each other, to get to know the culture.

And also it's also important for them to build trust and maybe just sometimes adding like this positive cultural celebrations, small celebrations just to help them.

10:43

Mhm.

10:57

To be part of that system or organization or the TIP project. So Yep.

11:05

Thank you. But now I have this like small question because I really wonder about cultural perspectives, I would say. So for example, if we take.

11:11

Hmm.

Mhm, mhm.

11:21

Say a Lithuanian person and say, for example, an Azerbaijani person, right? How not only like how is conflict handled, but how do you? Think most of these people will process and perceive. Conflict at work like one is was born and raised in Lithuania and another was born and raised in Azerbaijan. So maybe you you have a sense about that so you could discuss it a little.

11:53

Thanks.

Uhhuh.

Yeah, yeah, of course. Again, if I think it really depends on the blood person that if example like like person I have, I worked in Azerbaijan with.

Different nations, so it will be just more much easier for me when I am like starting working in that different country in Lithuania example. But if it will it will depend on the like another person just not to get personal.

Because you you you feel like it's not just a new work for some of people, it's also new environment, new people, new personal life and depending on the that maturity level of the person, it will be a bit hard to understand their self from.

On the first point, but in general like it's like kind of maybe we can call it like stereotype or like they're just a warmness, the openness of the people. I will say that maybe the Azure regions are just more open, open and then maybe just more warm.

But Lithuanians may be like more open in a way that they can talk to you directly and it's just a again way of communication how you're that communicating and how how you are managing the those like the relationships and how how you how how much you are aware of.

The person's culture, like example, if you know, OK, maybe Lithuanians are just trying to have like some boundaries at work, not in Azerbaijan people because they're like more like, like, let's say in a way that when they are talking, they would love to have long conversation.

Maybe those people don't like it. So if you know this fact, you are just trying to adapt each other. So with when I would love OK, ask as a person how was your day and then having a more follow up question and as a person, OK, I understand that maybe they would not like that, so just would finish.

When saying how are you? So like I will just say this this small example. Of course there are there are too many stuff that I need to also learn, but I believe it's really depends on the team, the company, how much they are helping the team to see the.

And accet them.

14:27

Yes, you're totally right. There are a lot of factors. I mean, this is dependent on a lot of factors. You're right. Thank you for a very good explanation. So next question is how do cultural perceptions of time , Deadlines and scheduling impact project planning and progress.

14:51

Sure. So it's actually very good question because I believe like if you go to the north of Europe, I will say that people like more like to have a free time in the weekend, not to have overwork, but if you go to the USA, they would love to have like like.

15:01

Mm.

15:11

More perfect like job even they are taking their personal time for it. So that's why this perception is so important. I believe like it's mostly based on the company culture, what company like aims, but still they are always having.

Cultural differences. There are sometimes some people just they they strictly put some boundaries to their schedule saying that Oh no, five is my family time, so I I will don't do that. But sometimes this some people say, OK, it's just once a week and I can do it. So it really depends on.

Maybe also the position and the geography that you are working and and then considering that even the holidays are so different in the very like range of the like nations while you are working in a project. So it means that even those.

Celebrations. I imagine that they are some holiday in Azerbaijan in March, but not in Lithuania. So just those those things really impacts of the planning or like project execution. So I will say also deadlines and.

That basically like a scheduling scheduling. It depends on that calendar. If you don't know that Azerbaijan people are celebrating their holiday in March, so you will be delayed if you're not considering the same applying for USA example.

16:39

Mhm.

16:48

US is just much different, more different than what we have in Europe or like some other countries. They have less day offs and so when they are working, they just need to consider if they are working with Europe, OK, it's they're not working time.

And obviously the time difference is like imagining that example in Australia right now it should be the evening time and they're sleeping, but it's it's just for us working hours. So those things have like a tremendous impact.

If you are having global project planning and scheduling, so you should really like consider it and even you need to think very ahead if you have a important meetings and if you have a important stakeholders in those places like example if you are doing kick off.

And you have a project like the the the the key stakeholder is living in Australia, you wouldn't put the time as like let's say 2:00 PM because it's evening for them. So maybe they couldn't make it. So just you just need to keep.

This in mind and maybe build the right calendar. I don't know, maybe hire some people that specifically assign it to work with those time zones. So yeah.

18:15

Oh, thank you. Actually, those are very good points about timing and like tradition and the holidays. Yes, thank you. So what approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation and support effective feedback exchange?

18:22

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

:35

Among culturally diverse team members.

18:38

So personally, I believe when when you are starting anywhere, it doesn't matter if it's like small, if you're working just with one person and if you have even like again like various nations and the people involved to that project.

The first important step should be getting to know each other and getting to know what you are doing. So basically awareness. So I I will say that this approach really helps me to like help my team to mostly involve the processes.

And it also build a trust and I will say the second main point is transparency. How much transparency you want from your team. It depends on the confidentiality of the project, the level of project.

And plus the company that you are working. So I will say this stuff first of all helps team to know even though they are from different countries, even though they are from coming from very different cultural background, if they know who they are, so they will know OK.

This person will celebrate something in March, so I will just consider it. Otherwise, I mean and on the other hand, they will know that, OK, this person will have some, you know, some very important values regarding this topic. Maybe I shouldn't discuss.

Discuss it with them and regarding the execution of the project, how you are receiving the feedback exchange. When people know it, they understand that they are working together to achieve the united goal. So they just take it as a team so it helps them to be.

Formalize as a team, share the feedback openly and maybe even finish your project in time and with budget with this classic triangle. And of course they will understand the value that they are taking to the company or even.

So I think it's really helps like transparency, getting to know each other and maybe adaptability and the the rules that all the team members accept. When I'm saying rules, it's not strictly like policy or something, it's something like team charter, project charter that what we can call.

Yep, that's it.

21:19

Thank you. So moving on to our final question, can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in the project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?

21:20

Mhm.

Mhm.

21:37

Now I know that we should not disclose anything related to like work and job like details. So if you could just describe the nature of it, you know that would be not.

21:37

OK.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, sure. Yeah. I had actually one experience that maybe I I just mentioned some part of it when I was in a project and then this project stakeholders were living in really different parts of the world, UK, Australia.

I don't know US and then you know in US there are like also different time zones there. It was most about most about time zones like when you just want to put some time, it's not the that that person's working hours. When you want to switch, it's not someone's working hour, so.

And how, how, how it impacts. So as I mentioned it, if it's really important meeting, so we just need to consider to include everyone in a way I think meeting is a good.

Tool to solve issues to get the the the quick answer for everything. But the reality is that sometimes time zones, sometimes even like the workload of the people doesn't allow you to use the the.

22:54

M.

23:00

This useful tool. So what they be used actually. So we tried like 2 sessions for the same project and it helped us to have everyone the call and at least to collect feedback or to collect.

Questions what they want to receive from other team members which they're working in different time zones. And of course we had a few more meetings, but let's say more for Claude, but more efficient and transparent methods in the beginning of the project helped us to know what.

Our end product will look like and it's also important for the companies to invest in technology like project management software tools and to hire people that they know how to manage this stuff and how to keep the people's personal time.

Personal time this the the time spent in the meetings example like I know we will still their project managers. They are basically joining the calls every day and then then it raises question when project when the project managers has a time to you know to think about the issues.

24:10

Mm-hmm.

24:19

To think about the potential risks because it's just impossible. You are keeping everyone in the call and then your 8 hours work is on the meetings. So these tools is really useful if you understand the logic, if you understand the.

What's the expectation and what is important? What's what are the project drivers? Like let's say information or the data drivers that will help you even without like meeting someone from like Australia because it's you're working hours is totally different.

So I would say this this would be helpful, I think. And again, as I said in the end, it helped us to clearly know what we want and we had it at this documentation to show the.

Different points of the world, what are the expectation? And then then it helped us to coordinate feedbacks, questions and aware the teams.

25:16

Mm-hmm.

Yes, thank you for this example. It's actually a good example, like to have two meetings just for the sake of collecting feedback because it's like necessary and that's the only way out. So yes.

25:29

Yes.

Mm.

Mhm.

Yeah.

25:39

So that was the last question. So thank you so much for all your contribution and for your time. So yes, that's it. And unless you have any questions, we can say goodbyes.

25:42

Mhm.

Mm-hmm. Thank you so much too.

25:56

Yeah. Thank you so much. It was a great questions and wishing you the best in your defence. Let me know if you have anything that I can help. Thank you. Have a great day.

25:57

Hi.

Thank you.

Thank you. Have a good day. Bye, bye.

### **ANNEX 3 – Interview Responses of Project Manager B**

#### **1. How do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?**

Language difference is really important especially when two parties are communicating not in their native language. There might be some perceptions taken or miss understanding due to on how certain words are being used, from the experience i am adapting to other parties and trying to use as simple language as possible and making sure other party understands what is required. Also what i noticed that there is sometimes huge difference how the same words can be taken when you write an email or message, or when taking a call, if you want to make sure your message is taken clearly always have a call and send email with instructions afterwards.

#### **2. How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting and decision making in your project team?**

Hierarchy is always important since the upper ladder you are the more power your words have. From my perspective I am using my influence when I am certain it is necessary to do, if I will always only tell other what to do and how to do it might stop them from taking their own responsibility in making decision and their further development. In general as manager you need to make sure that you stand in your team as manager and final decision maker, but team also should know that they have power to take decisions in certain areas because it is important for them for their further development.

#### **3. How do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict and what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?**

When it comes making certain work across the world I have noticed that in certain regions hierarchy is really taking priority and even you have an agreements sometimes It will not work since the work is being managed by their local manager, therefore I must have an agreement with local managers first, that they would coordinate the tasks. In some cases it is really important to deliver clear instructions that people could follow. General approach when I need to make any work with other cultural people I am first making sure on how they are working and how should I

prepare before hand, my role as manager is to make sure that anyone from anywhere is working as expected to avoid any disagreements.

**4. How do cultural perceptions of time, deadlines and scheduling impact project planning and progress?**

That is actual thing when you think of it, for example ASAP (as soon as possible) in different countries can be taken differently, for some when they will receive a task with ASAP they will drop any work and start doing it, others might wait a day or two. Understanding this that expressing any urgencies with broad words can be interpreted differently I am using more straight words with indication of deadline for example by the end of day today, by the end of this week, putting day or even exact time so I am managing my project and everyone is working on the same deadline.

**5. What approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation and support effective feedback exchange among culturally diverse team members?**

I would say in few words gaining their trust. I believe it does not matter with whom I am working to, if I need to have close collaboration including getting a feedback I must gain the trust that they can talk to me knowing they can trust me as well. Same in a team, build an environment where everyone is working as a team and trust each other.

**6. Can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in a project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?**

As i cannot disclose much details on work, but i can only say that working with a particular group of people from other country where hierarchy is really important and also where you cannot say that you did not understand something or that you need help or you admit making a mistake is hard. We had cases when i am having a call explaining what to do and how to do things and all i hear is "yes", "all clear" and etc. The next day when i am checking what has been done i notice that none was done just because they did not understood one step and thats stopped them from going further and delaying deliverable. We had to put more resources to close the project on that time. For further such task we had to do more close monitoring that everyone is actually on the same page and everyone know what they are doing.

**ANNEX 4 – Interview Responses of Project Manager C**

5:36

OK, so thank you once again for joining in for this interview and helping me out. It's very much appreciated. I would like to introduce you my topic. My topic is project managers perspectives on.

5:55

Successful criteria for cross-cultural communication within international project teams.

6:02

Oh, that's a tracing topic, OK.

6:04

Mm-hmm. OK. And without any further ado, we can start. And our first question is, how do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?

6:19

Interesting. So yeah, basically I work with an international company and definitely I have like cross-functionality from different geo locations, right. One key thing is like, you know, we we kind of have people who have.

Well, basically English is not our primary language and in order for us to like integrate successfully and kind of execute our projects, we needed to like, you know, be subtle in a way that we kind of like, you know, don't expect everyone to have a perfect, you know, language speaking in English. Try to like, you know, get the basic information that is the person is trying to communicate. So I'll say it's it's a challenge initially, you know, for us to like get a server quintet, but then being that we work with a global organization, we we did kind of.

I found a balance by making it a little bit, making the expectation not too high, right? So that at least everyone on the team will have that confidence to be able to communicate and then, you know, understand how people also kind of interact and they kind of use that as leverage to improve their speaking.

7:37

Thank you. How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting and decision making in your project team?

7:47

Oh, hierarchy, interesting. So I would say for for my project team, basically we kind of practice a flat level structure in the sense that we believe that everybody should have like, you know, that competence and that power of opening.

So I would say we the the hierarchy, we do not really employ it because we want everyone to be on the same level and then we have like an open door policy that enables people. You know I'm a project manager doesn't mean like you know I should crown myself as a

Director or like top manager, right? But also like you know, give people that leverage to like have that power to make key decisions and also contribute their value to the projects. So we kind of stripped off ourselves from the hierarchy and then make it very like you know, relaxing for team members to play and participate and participate.

Impactfully to the project.

8:46

Mm-hmm. Amazing. Thank you. How do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict, and what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?

8:57

OK, that's a very good funny question because definitely it has happened and the way I kind of managed it, it was a very funny situation anyways. So the way I kind of managed it was to like, you know, bring the team together, right? To have like a mutual conversation.

It's between themselves is is really, I mean in terms of different culture, it might be that, you know, somebody might be speaking in a tone that you feel might be offensive, but in the person's, in the person's native language is just the way they kind of speak, right. So I brought a team together to like, you know, have a mutual understanding, right.

And let them speak out what basically was the issue and then try to like, you know, resolve that conflict between them. And it turns that out like, you know, it was basically the tone the person used to speak that kind of triggered the other person. But meanwhile, in this native language, it was just.

Saying things that, you know, felt normal to him. So in this instance, it was just more of like, you know, I'll say language misunderstanding. And then the way we kind of resolved them was to just like, you know, discuss, bring everybody together and let's discuss amicably rather than speaking to them individually and then try to resolve that.

10:18

Great. Thank you. How do cultural perceptions of time, deadlines and scheduling impact project planning and progress?

10:30

OK. I didn't see that's coming. So I'll say in terms of our project planning again because we work with different like you know geo locations. So basically my time zone and somebody else time zone.

Practically, you know, we kind of like, you know, live in different time zones. So the way we kind of, the way we kind of implore our approach was to like identify it's about time zone that we should work with, right. So no matter where where your geolocation is situated in, we have like a dedicated timeline or I'll say a time.

That we kind of use to manage and plan our project. So if you're looking at completing a task, let's say for example Thursday by 8:00 AM, we are looking at the US time zone and then everyone is working towards the US time zone, which 8:00 AM is practically like you know.

Afternoon hour of my time and there's some for somebody else it could be like you know the next time, but because we've established that time zone, you'll be able to walk to us like you know, completing the task before the late hours and I also will be able to complete my task before the US time gets to 8 CM.

So the approach we use was to like establish a time zone that we could work with and then everyone kind of works towards completing their tasks before that time zone.

11:50

Great. Thank you. What approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation, and support effective feedback exchange among culturally diverse team members?

12:06

Yeah, I think we already touched base on this earlier. We kind of spoke about hierarchy. So the approach I used to like have this open floor and then open door policies to like, you know, strip ourselves off our hierarchy. We have senior project managers, program managers, directors.

However, we all sit on the same floor, right? Even when we have like, you know, frames that are just blocking each and everyone's office, but the door is always open for anyone to walk in and then we can have like, you know, mutual conversation and we also go to like, you know, lunch and have team bonding so that that kind of enables that blockers.

Or that was that would kind of like you know build and it gives the team like you know that free spirit mind to like communicate because of course during calls he might see someone I'm like this guy, I might not be able to talk to him because he's busy, he's deep. But during the team bonding we get to like you know relax a little bit and everyone is free to speak and that's like a means to like you know.

And have more and more insight on how the team are feeling about the way we kind of manage things. So yeah, stripping out our title and then having an open door policy so that everyone can speak and then enabling the team to like, you know, have that power to like make decisions on your own. That's the way we kind of manage that.

13:22

Thank you. And our last question, can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in a project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?

13:40

Oh, interesting. And I will say this is more of like a challenge that is still ongoing. I think for every project manager will also have to like, you know, work with cross-functional team. In my own case, a case scenario I had was a little bit of misunderstanding, right?

We are talking about a specific requirement that needs to be executed for a project. We're supposed to do ABCD. However, I think based on the communication, my team member kind of understood he went to do EFGH, right?

And by the time he was done with the project and then I mean with the task, we saw he was pretty much aligning with the requirement that was requested by the stakeholder. We needed to like, you know, sit down and then basically get a clarification on what went wrong, right and.

How we kind of identified that it was like, you know, more of a communication, cultural intonation challenge, I would say is when he explains what he understands and then I kind of reiterate back

to him what I was trying to like, you know, communicate. Then we kind of figure out the gaps. So going forward what we kind of like.

You know employees when there's a requirements and there's a statement that is made, we just kind of do like a recap to make sure like you know everyone is on is on the same page like they physically understand and then there are no gaps between ourselves.

15:13

OK, great. Thank you for an extensive explanation and all your answers. That's the end. It took even faster, quicker than I thought. So thank you once again. And if unless you have any questions, we can say goodbye and.

15:15

Awesome.

Whoop.

Mhm.

Oh.

All right. Thank you so much, and then wishing you all the best with your thesis.

15:39

Thank you so much. Have a nice day. Bye.

## **ANNEX 5 – Interview Responses of Project Manager D**

1:29

1 minute 29 seconds

OK, so the first question is how do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?

1 minute 41 seconds1:41

1 minute 41 seconds

Hard to answer. In my company, we only invite people into the company that know English well. Like this is one of the criteria that we.

2 minutes 1 second

Base our searches on and base our hiring process. So if a person is bad in English, we don't accept them as an employee.

2 minutes 17 seconds

So generally speaking, everybody knows English pretty well, so we communicate only in English within our company.

2 minutes 27 seconds

Like the bar is really high for English within our company. So I think that's how it's kind of it is mitigated. The the barrier between languages is a little bit mitigated when you search for people who.

OK, great. So your company beforehand took like control of this situation and decided to always.

3 minutes 7 seconds

Hire people who have proficient English, right? OK, thank you. How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting and decision making in your project team?

3 minutes 13 seconds

Yeah.

3 minutes 27 seconds

OK. Also, it's very interesting. Our company is kind of small to some degree. It's still a startup. It's only live for nine years as of as of, I don't know, 2016 I believe so.

3 minutes 45 seconds

It was started by millennials who might have a little bit of a different outlook on the hierarchy itself. So we have a reporting structure, let's say, and still an official hierarchy is present, like we have the sea level.

4 minutes 5 seconds

Managers, we have top level managers below the sea, we have team leads and so on and the communication flows from bottom to top or from top to bottom or on a.

4 minutes 20 seconds4:20

4 minutes 20 seconds

Similar plane, like let's say managers talk directly to each other, but we don't really.

4 minutes 33 seconds

I don't know, ban people from talking directly. If you you're a simple worker, an operations worker, you can go up to the CEO and the CEO himself has said multiple times, like if you have really important questions, if you have anything, please come up to me and I'll answer them.

4 minutes 53 seconds4:53

4 minutes 53 seconds

And it's really the fact that people sometimes do in their minds, they they themselves.

5 minutes 2 seconds5:02

5 minutes 2 seconds

Don't don't want to bother hire executives for simple problems. So it's kind of left in the hands of anybody to decide whether or not how to whom they want to communicate and whom they want to escalate an issue.

5 minutes 2 seconds

Don't don't want to bother hire executives for simple problems. So it's kind of left in the hands of anybody to decide whether or not how to whom they want to communicate and whom they want to escalate an issue.

5 minutes 36 seconds

Does that make sense?

5 minutes 37 seconds

Yeah.

minutes 39 seconds

It does. Thank you. Next question is how do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict and what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?

5 minutes 59 seconds

Hmm.

6 minutes 4 seconds

Also hard to answer because in our company we rarely do have conflicts and if there are conflicts, they are more present between the same culture people than different cultures. I'm just guessing that.

6 minutes 21 seconds

people from the same culture are more open towards other people from well the same culture. That's why they get into more heated arguments probably. Um So arguments between different cultures are really rare because there's some kind of

Underline the respect for a different culture. Like maybe, I don't know, I disagree with a person and I mull it over in my head. Well, wait a minute, maybe it's like a culture thing. And then

I don't know. You just step back and take a deep breath and think it out and think about it from a different perspective.

7 minutes 1 second

OK.

7 minutes 5 seconds

So yeah, so between that it's like.

7 minutes 11 seconds

Yeah, hard to say. But if some trouble arises, it's usually like what I mentioned. The the main thing is take a breather, you know, like think about what you're saying or what you're arguing about.

7 minutes 15 seconds

OK.

7 minutes 28 seconds

Is this really coming from a standpoint of?

7 minutes 35 seconds

Are you are you disagreeing with the information or are you disagreeing with the person and why? Rarely it is that we disagree with each other. It's more about arguments. Still we are a.

7 minutes 52 seconds

Scientific based company, let's say. So arguments speak volumes.

8 minutes

And a little bit of a step back and a breather helps to realign those arguments, really realign your thoughts. So that's I think the main thing we do. There were some cultural issues like two years ago, I believe.

8 minutes 16 seconds

When we had a few salespeople join from the USA and USA in general is a pot of different people. So we not only we had people from the USA, but.

8 minutes 33 seconds

They were culturally diverse within the USA team as well.

8 minutes 40 seconds

People from, you know, Asia cultures, from Mexican, Hispanic, you know, cultures. So it was there was tension between them. So their manager basically tried to circumvent those tensions.

8 minutes 58 seconds

While.

Kinda not giving them projects or.

9 minutes 11 seconds

Not projects, but in general work together. Like each of them had their own separate field and the manager didn't want them to meddle between each other, basically.

9 minutes 25 seconds

So that's also, I think, uh.

9 minutes 29 seconds

An approach, I guess, just to try and give a person his own space and not meddle with others. If you see that, it's problematic.

9 minutes 40 seconds

OK. And that's a good example. Thank you. How do you cultural perceptions of time, deadlines and scheduling impact project planning and progress?

9 minutes 54 seconds

OK, this is this is a thing I'm a little bit passionate about because I myself am a little bit more of a, let's say, Nordic country's mentality. And if there is a timestamp, it's a limit. If it's a point that I need to do something or be somewhere.

10 minutes 14 seconds

I'm gonna be 5 minutes early. I'm gonna be 5 minutes early. I'm gonna be preparing. I'm gonna be thinking about it. And we had some troubles with different cultures, Southerners or Easterners who are more relaxed on that term to some degree.

10 minutes 33 seconds

So.

10 minutes 36 seconds

It usually the mismatch usually creates tension and that tension drives into stagnation or I don't know the team.

10 minutes 50 seconds

The team doesn't perform as well as expected because, you know, a manager might have expectations of everybody meeting up on five and some person might be OK, it's it's five, I'm going to be 3 minutes late. And then there's a whole discussion for the 1st 5 minutes. Why are you?

11 minutes 9 seconds

Late. Why aren't you respecting my time and so on. So it's like usually it sets.

11 minutes 16 seconds

A bad vibe in general in the team. It wastes time, so.

11 minutes 23 seconds

Yeah, we gotta be mindful about those time boundaries or ideas to to be more effective in project management. Because yeah, it's some people take deadlines not as deadlines, but as suggestions. And it's usually if you do that, it's.

11 minutes 42 seconds

It's complicated.

11 minutes 44 seconds

Yeah, I see your point. So what approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation and support effective feedback exchange among among culturally diverse team members?

12 minutes 2 seconds

I myself, I'm a fan of emotional intelligence in general. I'm not saying I'm practicing it a lot, but I'm thinking about it sometimes, you know, because practicing knowing is one thing, practicing is another.

12 minutes 18 seconds

Um.

12 minutes 21 seconds

I tend to speak openly with people. I tend to be transparent. I tend to give people a lot of space when they are working. I put a lot of trust in that in them.

12 minutes 37 seconds

So and I just keep like short tabs on them, not like when is it gonna be done, but hey, how is it going? Is everything OK? Do you need any help? So also I'm offering help.

12 minutes 53 seconds

Eliminating road roadblocks or anything like that. So I think that basically gives not like for any culture. If you're multicultural cultures organization or a project team or if you're the same culture, it's.

13 minutes 9 seconds

In general, it helps to.

13 minutes 14 seconds

Mhm.

13 minutes 15 seconds

To build towards a goal and it helps for people to feel good and relate themselves for a project and also work more efficiently.

OK.

13 minutes 31 seconds

So you mentioned emotional intelligence, right? Did I hear it? OK. And do you feel like It's something that not every culture, cultures or regions representative might not have.

13 minutes 52 seconds

I feel that emotional intelligence might be a bit differently understood in different cultures. Um.

14 minutes 3 seconds

And misinterpreted. A lot of emotional intelligence studies were were done in the western part of the world, so the westerners are like more.

14 minutes 19 seconds

Probably more advanced. I'm not sure if I'm I'm doing the correct assumptions, but maybe not advanced, but I I would say less rigid than probably other countries.

14 minutes 34 seconds

You wouldn't have.

14 minutes 38 seconds

A Japan manager? Well, in my opinion, they wouldn't have a Japan manager thinking about his workers, work life balance or his emotional state today.

14 minutes 55 seconds

Because a Japan manager probably thinks about the workplace environment as a separate place where you have to perform well and you have to do your job, just suck it up. And then after the clock runs out, you just go home and then you deal with all of your \*\*\*\*\*.

15 minutes 12 seconds

But let's be honest, people are complex. You just can't shut off a part of your brain. So that rigid thinking might be.

15 minutes 27 seconds

Might be a little bit bad and some.

15 minutes 32 seconds

In some other countries, cultures. So even even here I primarily work on Lithuania and we have, I would say, a more rigid, rigid view on a person, a person's psychology.

15 minutes 50 seconds

In the workspace environment than some other countries in Europe. So we are behind as well and it sometimes creates unwanted tensions or festers problems that might not be present if you would just. Give a person space-time and support.

16 minutes 12 seconds

OK. Thank you. That's a good answer. So and we have our last question. Can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in the project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?

16 minutes 34 seconds

OK, let me think a bit. When was the last time I had a project that was affected by a cult cross cultural?

16 minutes 46 seconds

Instance.

16 minutes 49 seconds

Mm.

16 minutes 52 seconds

I think I could give an example from my previous workplace because there I had a bigger project that was a launch of a new product and it was.

17 minutes 8 seconds

A global launch. So we wanted to launch in three main markets. It was North America, Europe and Asia. North America and Europe were kind of intact to some degree. So there was not a lot of.

17 minutes 26 seconds

Challenge there. A bigger challenge was Asia, because people there have, as I mentioned, different perspectives on the emotional intelligence part on the rigidity on.

17 minutes 43 seconds

They even had like a take on how a product has to be marketed within Asia or within China so that it would be successful.

minutes 54 seconds

And there was really a clash between higher executives on whether it's true or if we really need like two or three different marketing approaches depending on the region.

18 minutes 11 seconds

So those heated arguments were without really benefiting the company or the launch. We decided to respect each other's opinion on the matter.

18 minutes 29 seconds

Because a person from North America, probably the marketing specialist in North America, probably doesn't really know the best way it should be marketed in Asia. And you have to trust the person who is head of marketing within the Asia region.

18 minutes 47 seconds

That he knows the best approaches and if he's saying that something that we are trying to do is not going to work, you just have to leave him space to give a secondary, secondary alternative pitch. So that's what we did.

19 minutes 5 seconds

Just respecting, giving a little bit more time, investing a little bit more, let's say, money into creating a secondary approach, which was well defined ultimately.

19 minutes 21 seconds

When alternatives are presented, the management doesn't really say no to those alternatives when they are soundly structured. So we launched and we listened to a person we launched to in different markets with different.

19 minutes 41 seconds

Marketing strategies was which is not so uncommon in a global, in a global company.

19 minutes 49 seconds

OK. That's a great answer. Thank you. And it's a good example. And it was our last question. So thank you once again for allocating some time for this project and helping me out. And unless you have any other questions, we can say goodbye and.

20 minutes 8 seconds

I wish you all a good rest of the day.

## **ANNEX 6 – Interview Responses of Project Manager E**

### **1. How do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?**

English is the established working language across all project communications, the English vocabulary is being used to communicate all projects related matters, however main difference comes not from language itself, it is mostly related to the communication in-person and ability to clarify all questions.

### **2. How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting and decision make in your project team?**

The teams are structured in a specific way, and naturally, decisions with significant operational impact are made by the most senior people in the organization. Communication consistently follows this established hierarchy.

### **3. How do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict and what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?**

Any actions against another person are immediately investigated by the team manager and HR according to company policies. Any form of discrimination is strictly prohibited.

### **4. How do cultural perceptions of time, deadlines and scheduling impact project planning and progress?**

Understanding cultural differences helps navigate project planning and implementation more effectively. Some team members require closer monitoring of detailed elements, while others can be trusted to complete tasks on time and proactively address any deviations from the plan.

**5. What approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation, and support effective feedback exchange among culturally diverse team members?**

There are no notable differences between people from different cultures that would require separate management approaches, there might be different profiles within the same culture. All team members are treated and evaluated based on their professional performance.

**6. Can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in a project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?**

Some cultures have difficulty acknowledging when something isn't clear or understood, often attempting to deflect responsibility or making promises without following through. Successfully managing this requires expertise in working with people, identifying when topics aren't fully understood, and documenting commitments for proper tracking.

## **ANNEX 7 – Interview Responses of Project Manager F**

### **1. How do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?**

Even though this significantly shortens meeting time (people have a language barrier and are sometimes afraid to speak), it still has a very negative impact. People don't express their concerns, problems, and suggestions to the entire team. In written form, due to the new technologies, this problem is less noticeable. But verbal meetings can be disastrous.

### **2. How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting and decision make in your project team?**

It depends on individual cases. However, given that the company is fairly mature and the processes are fairly stable, the impact is usually minimal.

### **3. How do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict and what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?**

Conflicts rarely arise from different cultures. Rather, they stem from different attitudes toward work. Mitigation = preparing for a "cultural mix." For example, we never create a 50/50 team from different cultures. Most often, cultural blending occurs gradually. We also often introduce people to each other in advance through business trips.

### **4. How do cultural perceptions of time, deadlines and scheduling impact project planning and progress?**

Negatively for some (more relaxed) cultures. They prefer to work slowly, and this can affect plans. Accordingly, for such teams, an additional buffer is created.

### **5. What approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation, and support effective feedback exchange among culturally diverse team members?**

As mentioned earlier, business trips, team building activities, and joint activities.

**6. Can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in a project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?**

The example described in point 4. Some teams work more slowly. Consequently, this can greatly offend teams that perform better and believe they are more responsible in their work. The best solution is scouting or a gradual team transition. When one or two people from the "slow" teams move to the fast team and begin performing better. I can't recall any direct conflicts with accusations or arguments.

## **ANNEX 8 – Interview Responses of Project Manager G**

Have finding allocating time for me for my thesis. It's gonna help me a lot. Um, so just to tell you shortly, my topic is project manager's perspective.

On success criteria for cross-cultural communication within international project teams.

So the first question is we have just six questions and the first one is how do language differences affect communication and coordination within your project team?

0:42

So when you say project team, do you refer to the team that handles or the whole company and all the stakeholders around it?

0:52

No, your team, the team that handles the people that you manage. More like that.

0:55

Just just steam the handles.

Well, I'd say the language barrier is not that big of a complex thing nowadays simply because the organisations and that run the projects now they're global and which means the the employee selection model is to everybody have.

At least certain degree of language barrier covered, which means the basics are always there. I don't think there's any employees now in the international setting that would know English at least. So the language barrier itself is not a big deal, I would say, especially on a day-to-day.

Now for project management itself, there can be certain things. However, the gap I think is covered usually by having documentation, right? So when you have a documentation and everything is written, the language barrier gets that much.

Lower, you know all the project plans, the day-to-day catch ups and everything. However, still day-to-day catch ups you know can possess a bit of a problem sometimes only because you have to make sure you know who you are working with. So I think in the.

If if your team or the project is new, I think the first couple of months usually are a bit more complex and language barrier can take effect later. After that I think the just the you know the terms that you use, the idea of the project itself, it gets clearer, the goal gets clearer.

All the all the things you have to do gets clearer and I think at that time the language battery is almost done. That's my opinion.

2:44

Great. Thank you. How does hierarchy or power distance influence communication, reporting and decision making in your project team?

2:57

The hierarchy. So assuming there's a good hierarchy in the company or in the team, because that's always a challenge as well, especially if if there's a lot of projects or there's a lot of different teams and depending on the goal.

Well, hierarchy is very important, I'd say, first and foremost, because somebody has to make certain decisions and then there's also should be very clear.

Order of things or at least tasks to do and that's that's a challenge in itself as well. So hierarchy, I I don't think it's it's a challenge usually depending on the team, but I think it's very important to have a bit of a hierarchy, so depending on.

The size of the project, right? The project team can be what, 10 people and it can be just one or two. So if it's one or two, it's a bit easier because somebody might be doing certain day-to-day operational things and the other person is more of a stakeholder, a person who's an oversight.

Who takes decisions or gives a report? So that's kind of clear. When you have 10 people, I think then you as a project manager, you probably have to spend a little more time in devising how the smooth operation has to happen. So you have to have somebody on a day-to-day operation.

Things that know the business or the project itself, what it's about. They have to have somebody who communicates with stakeholders, right? Somebody who will make decisions obviously as well. So a lot of times the hierarchy has to have a project sponsor, a project oversight, somebody who.

Who as the top level has the budget handled because again it has to be budgeted, all the projects has to be budgeted and the budget usually has dates and has goals and and just an overall completion has to be followed. So that is important, right? And from there I think it just goes.

Lower and lower. So at least three to four people or roles has to happen in my opinion. A good project hierarchy where they have the top oversight, then the project manager who takes day-to-day operational decisions and then you can have your operational teams.

Who you know does a standardization on whatever work is necessary in the project?

5:27

Thank you for such an extensive answer. Next question is how do team members from different cultures typically handle conflict and what strategies do you use to manage cross-cultural disagreements?

5:31

Singing.

This is a big, big question actually. So disagreements and certain cultural, different cultural settings do come into play. I I've, I've noticed that in my own experience.

So you know, the way it happens, there's two things, how it happens and how to solve it, right? So the way it happens, it's usually very simple. If you have a team, again, let's say five people in a project team and it's global. So somebody in England, somebody in India, maybe somebody in US and somebody.

Somebody in Eastern Europe, everybody has such a big different cultural way of approaching certain decisions or certain things that you have to be flexible. And so everybody wants to be flexible. Usually everybody's open.

To be flexible and to take different approaches to a certain decisions, but it's inevitable that everybody will have their own opinions. And so depending on how a in a culture you respect that opinion, how to voice that opinion.

Certain disagreements can happen and they do happen. And so usually usually if you have a project team that you know gets together in a catch up every day or every week, at least you have a setting where you can communicate. I think one of the worst things is where those disagreements happen.

Between two people and it stays between those two people because then the work is is affected and nobody else is aware and then nobody else can can solve the problem. Usually the problem solving again goes up in the hierarchy a little bit.

So a project manager or an oversight person has to make certain decisions. So I've I've I can share one example where this disagreement happened when two similar level employees were assigned.

Right. The the the project team was whatever the project needed to to to to to to do. However, they had different opinions and then one person had to take the lead. They both thought that they should be able to do the lead, to be the lead person and somebody to make a decision and then one person just made a bit.

More, he was a bit more voiced how he approaches these things and he he delegated things, right? And then obviously another person on the same level of of expertise, even maybe even higher expertise we can discuss, he he thought, hey, that's a bit of an overkill. We don't need to do all of these things and so the.

The solution was very simple. The project manager had to sit those two people down and talk to them, understand the problem and then make certain decisions. And so the decision was, again, somebody has to make the day-to-day operational decisions to delegate work, to lead, let's say, meetings, etc.

So one person did have to be a bit more flexible than the other. So I don't know all the details what happened between those two people, but basically the communication and so and and voicing that issue is very, very important. I think in the team keeping it closed unless it's very small thing.

But if it's a bit bigger, I think it's it's gonna lead to bigger problems, you know?

9:08

Thank you and thank you for the example that you provided. So the next question is how do cultural perceptions of time, deadlines and scheduling impact project planning and progress?

9:21

Oh, that's a biggie. So that's one of, I think it comes back to the same thing that we just discussed. It's it's cultural. So timing and work ethic towards your deadlines.

Is very, very different. So Eastern European people are a bit more strict. I'd say even Asia and Asia Pacific region, those that culture is also a bit more strict. They like to be on time, they they stretch over back.

Stretch over backwards to to fit into the deadlines that they were given. They don't question those deadlines all that much, only if it's very, very necessary, obviously. However, the western part of

the world, I think has a bit more flexible view on deadlines and they they have a bit of a different approach to it. So again, when the project teams are global.

It's a challenge and that challenge, unfortunately that's my experience is that those deadlines gets pushed a lot because a lot of stakeholders, they have to be on the same page. And if those stakeholders are again scattered throughout the world, so let's say out of five, four are on time and one.

Is delayed. You still need all of them to sign off on something and that ultimate, that ultimate end gets pushed and pushed and pushed. And that's one of the things that one of the bad things that still needs to be handled very, very delicately, I'd say.

Because if you bring it to a stakeholder who's late, obviously everybody has reasons. There's I I haven't seen a single person saying, oh, I I I have no reason to be late. So you know, it's just about taking responsibility. So as I mentioned, that's cultural thing.

I think maybe that the western part of the world takes a bit less responsibility, but that's my opinion. Obviously it's you know and and as a project manager you just have to juggle, so you have to juggle. So the and the question was about impact. I think the impact really is of delay.

Most of the time, and you just have to be flexible here as well. If you're leading a global team with global stakeholders and global project, there's no other way just to be flexible. Spend a bit extra time in follow-up meetings, getting that questions out, trying to fix, trying to.

Be flexible for that person who maybe is delaying something and trying to understand why as much as possible. Maybe do some help if if if at all possible.

12:02

Thank you. What approaches do you use to build trust, encourage participation, and support effective feedback exchange among culturally diverse team members?

12:18

So I think that's a straightforward one, especially now after the COVID as many meetings. So you know, from my experience, I I don't like a lot of meetings. I I do like to do something productively and then a meeting only when it's absolutely necessary.

However, with COVID, the whole online activity has broadened, especially for global teams and and everybody in the in the office, let's say even if in a local office, right, a lot of online meetings has happened. So I think the the the the shift from having only a certain amount of meetings now has shifted to.

Let's have as many meetings as possible just to keep up the communication because you're not seeing eye to eye a lot of times with the whole hybrid model of work and that's that's that's OK, that's that's good. So one way to and and and that's absolutely true for the engagement part.

So as a project management project manager, you absolutely have to understand or at least gauge or gauge out how much of an engagement your team has. It's absolutely natural that out of five or ten people in the project, some will be more engaged than others.

And so the constant catch-ups, the constant communications I think is one of the best ways to at least have a pulse. Not necessarily increase the engagement, but at least to have a pulse and understand where people are. To increase the engagement, usually you have to look at different people and their roles.

So I think if you understand the role, if you can work with that person on his role and understand if the role is fitting for that person, then the engagement is going to be big and and and good. If if if a person is doing something he doesn't understand or doesn't want to understand, obviously the engagement is not going to be very high.

So it's understanding your team and it's understanding the role. Maybe working or coaching would also help a lot. I'd say to increase the engagement, the cultural part of having engagement I.

Can say a lot about it. I I I don't know if it has a big impact. I haven't seen it on. I haven't seen it myself. If if you know specifically for the cultural part, if one person is more engaged in certain things or not, I don't think it's.

That important, I think it's more of a role assigned to a person and that's again that that comes back to the project itself, our project team oversight, how that being handled and you know mistakes can be taken there.

14:54

OK, so our last question, can you describe a significant cross-cultural communication challenge you experienced in a project and explain how you handled it and how it affected the project's results?

And I know that you can't share anything you know about work and like the tasks that you have, the projects itself, just like no need to describe it in any detail, yes.

15:21

Mhm.

So there's a couple of examples. I mentioned one before where just different approaches to team set up and somebody has to take the leadership role and if there's two level, two similar level people, I mean somebody has to be, someone has to take the lead, right? So somebody has to bow down to that person.

I'd say so that can happen. Um. One other example I've I've noticed to work in another company with different teams and different projects. Um.

It it was, it was a cultural thing. I'd say it was mostly in the Eastern European culture setting. And what I felt is that again, it it came down a bit to deadlines and clear communication.

So one of the things as as as we discussed is understanding or or having a clear documentation as well. It's not just verbal communication, it also has to be clear written down and so when you if if a written down project plan or certain KPI description.

Or whatever that might be is not that clear. Obviously questions will arise. So I faced one issue when somebody again from Eastern European setting, they question every single word of a.

Of a description. And so that's OK, that's that's how it should be. But by the time you do a project plan, by the time you do a KPI and you're just trying to model things, you take a very broad sense. You you try to fill out, you try to make a to hit a target.

Right. But the target might be very small, but at the very beginning you're not skilled, right. So you don't know exactly what you're trying to do. So you're trying to do a bit broader target for you. And so same with KPI, let's say you're trying to define a KPI and the description can be quite broad, it can be misinterpreted and so from the stakeholder that I that I was.

Was a part of. Obviously the person was very, very detailed. He was new to the company by the way and he he he took pride of on on being very, you know, proactive to be very clear on what he wants to see. It was a management position and so he he really wanted way more.

That I was prepared to give him at that time. And so that was a bit of a disagreement. We had a lot of meetings together and obviously it that those things were questioned in the broader sense of of stakeholder meetings as well, which is not comfortable. However, the goal itself was clear. I mean, the person wanted more dedication. He wanted more.

Leer description, let's say on a KPI. And so you know, as a project, I wasn't a project manager at the time, but I was a part of that project and took lead. So I had to be more specific. But that was only one part. There's only certain things that you can do.

Another part, technical wise, another part was really to talk to that person. So I had to schedule a separate meeting with them just to understand. So where this frustration coming from? Is there

anything I can do and to give him a bit of a clear understanding why the description is not as clear as it should?

Be at the stage because again that was the beginning of a certain certain project and and and and collaboration. And after I gotta say after two or three meetings with him personally and then obviously reworking the description a little bit, we got on the same page. He he understood that OK, fine, for now it should be fine, you know.

I.

I addressed his concerns, certain concerns and I changed the wording and then he he said OK that's fine and then we can move on with different things. So I think again the the the with project management obviously documentation is very important but then just addressing face to face and having the conversation and trying to understand the frustrations from your stakeholders.

I think that's that's one solution method that you that that project management has to do. I don't, I don't think there's a lot of other solutions here. It's just trying to understand and communicating and then you know trying to find the silver lining in between well most of the time.

19:43

Great. Thank you. Yes, thank you for your example. And that was our last question. So yes, once again, I know how busy you are. So thank you so much for by allocating some time for me and for giving me so much insight.

Yeah. Thank you, for inviting me then. Best of luck. I hope this was helpful. As you know, I'm not the top project management manager in the world, but you know, I have some experience with it. So hopefully that that will go a long way, yeah.

Nice to see you.

## **ANNEX 9 – Examples of Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT) Use**

### **Example 1**

**Prompt:** *Create a more well-structured and academically fluent paragraph in comparison to the one I created.*

**Output:** *Communication Style and Language Use*

*Project managers expressed different views on the importance of language differences in project communication. Project Manager B emphasized that language barriers can lead to misunderstandings, especially when communication takes place in a non-native language. Based on their experience, this manager adopted practical strategies such as using simple language, confirming understanding, and combining written instructions with follow-up calls to ensure clarity. In contrast, Project Manager G considered language barriers to be a relatively minor issue in modern international projects, arguing that global organizations typically employ staff with sufficient English proficiency. According to this manager, language-related challenges mainly occur during the early stages of a project and gradually decrease as shared terminology and project goals become clearer. This view differs from Project Manager F's perspective, who highlighted that language barriers significantly reduce participation in verbal meetings, as team members may hesitate to speak, resulting in unexpressed concerns and reduced idea-sharing. These differing perspectives suggest that while some managers focus on mitigating language issues through communication techniques, others rely more on documentation, time, and organizational structures to reduce their impact.*

**Researcher's contribution:** This generated text was revised, edited, shortened and integrated into the thesis by the researcher. Examples from interviewees and analytical interpretations were added independently by the researcher.

### **Example 2**

**Prompt:** *Can you paraphrase this text (from a source) and mention if 'et al' should be added in this case?*

**Output:** *Recent studies emphasize that emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence (CQ) are essential managerial skills, as they allow leaders to adapt their communication styles to the cultural contexts in which they operate (Rockstuhl et al., 2011; Presbitero, 2017)*

**Researcher's contribution:** The paraphrased text was revised and reformulated to sound more humane by the researcher.

**Example 3**

**Prompt:** *How do I correctly name the sections and subsections of the Methodical Work Section?*

**Output:** METHODICAL WORK SECTION.....

3.1 Research Design .....

3.2 Analytical Approach .....

3.3 Data Collection Methods.....

3.4 Sampling Strategy.....

3.5 Ethical Considerations .....

3.6 Summary .....

**Researcher's contribution:** The order was edited and integrated into the thesis by the researcher.