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Masters Thesis

Challenges of Interpersonal Communication and Intercultural differences in a Multicultural Organization *- The case of Lyreco Sweden*



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‘Working Together for Tomorrow’

Slogan of case company Lyreco Sweden

(Lyreco.com)



Abstract

In this era of globalization and internationalization of business, effective interpersonal communication and intercultural relationship among co-workers still poses challenges and differences in an organization.

This thesis aims to research and analyse challenges of interpersonal communication and intercultural differences in a multicultural organization and the way it can be solved using a qualitative method and an inductive approach on a single case study of a Swedish based multicultural company, Lyreco. The empirical data consist of ten semi- structured interview with addition of secondary data.

Former research has focused on differences of individual's ways of communication based on their cultural background. On a comprehensive analysis and the usage of existing theories, the findings of this research pinpointed ineffective usage of communication context as one of the challenges of curtailing interpersonal communication in a multicultural organization.

Cultural differences like individualism, ethnocentrism, and ambient cultural disharmony are identified as challenges experienced in a multicultural organization. But with the intervention of organizational culture it can be managed. Individual team member's attitude are curtailed under the rules of the organization.

From findings, it is established that to abridge the friction within multicultural teams, the role of an organization is very important. There is need to institute structural intervention which encourages team members to



adapt to each other's culture by acknowledging cultural gaps and working around the differences.



Key words

Globalization, internationalization, interpersonal communication, communication context, culture, organizational culture, multicultural organizations, multicultural team



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Kalmar, 2020-05-22

Aderanti Ruth Alaka



Table of Content

1. Introduction	1
1.1 <i>Background</i>	1
1.1.1 Globalization and Internationalization	1
1.1.2 Multicultural Organization	3
1.1.3 Culture	3
1.1.4 Communication	5
1.1.5 Cases of Intercultural Communication Dilemmas	6
1.2 <i>Problem Discussion</i>	8
1.3 <i>Research Gap</i>	13
1.4 <i>Research Questions</i>	14
1.5 <i>Research Purpose</i>	14
1.6 <i>Delimitation</i>	15
2 Methodology	16
2.1 <i>Research Perspective</i>	16
2.2 <i>Research Approach</i>	16
2.3 <i>Research Methods</i>	17
2.4 <i>Research Design</i>	18
2.5 <i>Sampling Process</i>	19
2.6 <i>Data Collection</i>	21
2.7 <i>Operationalization</i>	22
2.7.1 Interviews	24
2.8 <i>Method of Analysis</i>	26
2.9 <i>Research Quality</i>	27
2.9.1 Credibility	28
2.9.2 Transferability	28
2.9.3 Dependability	29
2.9.4 Conformability	29
2.10 <i>Research Ethics</i>	30
3 Theoretical Framework	30
3.1 <i>Berlo's SMCR Model</i>	31
3.1.1 Source	31
3.1.2 Message	32
3.1.3 Channel	33
3.1.4 Receiver	34
3.2 <i>Hall & Hall Cultural Value Orientation</i>	35
3.2.1 Communication Context	35
3.2.2 Time perception	36
3.3 <i>Hofstede Dimensions</i>	37
3.3.1 Power Distance	37
3.3.2 Masculinity/femininity	37
3.3.3 Uncertainty Avoidance	38
3.3.4 Individualism/Collectivism	38
3.3.5 Long-Term Orientation versus short-term orientation	39



3.4	<i>Trompenaars Cultural Dimensions</i>	39
3.4.1	Individualism versus Communitarianism.....	39
3.4.2	Universalism versus Particularism.....	40
3.4.3	Neutral versus emotional.....	40
3.4.4	Specific versus Diffuse.....	41
3.4.5	Achievement versus Ascription.....	41
3.4.6	Sequential versus synchronous time.....	42
3.4.7	Internal direction versus external direction	42
3.5	<i>Multiculturalism</i>	42
3.6	<i>Ethnocentrism</i>	43
3.7	<i>Cultural fluency</i>	43
3.8	<i>Cultural intelligence</i>	44
3.9	<i>Ambient Disharmony</i>	44
3.10	<i>Conceptual Framework</i>	45
4	Empirical Findings	48
4.1	<i>Lyreco Sweden</i>	48
4.1.1	Lyreco Group Culture	48
4.2	<i>Interpersonal communication</i>	49
4.3	<i>Communication context</i>	51
4.4	<i>Individualism vs. Communitarianism</i>	54
4.5	<i>Specific versus Diffuse</i>	56
4.6	<i>Multiculturalism</i>	58
5	Analysis	61
5.1	<i>Interpersonal communication</i>	61
5.2	<i>Communication context</i>	63
5.3	<i>Individualism vs. Communitarianism</i>	65
5.4	<i>Specific versus Diffuse</i>	66
5.5	<i>Multiculturalism</i>	67
6	Conclusion	69
6.1	<i>Answers to the Research Questions</i>	69
6.1.1	Research Question One	69
	<i>What are the challenges of interpersonal communication and cultural differences in a multicultural organization?</i>	69
6.1.2	Research Question Two	70
6.2	<i>Managerial Implication</i>	71
6.3	<i>Theoretical Implication</i>	72
6.4	<i>Societal Implication</i>	72
6.5	<i>Limitation</i>	73
6.6	<i>Suggestion for future Research</i>	74
	Reference List	75



Figures and Tables Index

Figure 1: Conceptual

Model.....48

Table 1: Operationalization.....25

Table 2: Interviewee Information.....27

Table 3: Berlo's SMCR Table.....36



1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the subject of the challenges caused by interpersonal communication and intercultural differences encountered in a multicultural organization. The background gives definitions and expatiates more on the understanding of the key concepts of this thesis. The problem discussion presents what has been done before on this subject by communication and culture scholars and the vacuum yet uncovered. From this, the research gap and questions, as well as the purpose, were derived.

1.1 Background

Interpersonal communication and culture are two interrelated common factors in everyday human life with so much influence on human behaviour and relationships (Kim and Sharkey, 1995). Both are diverse and complex most especially in a multicultural environment where people of diverse ethnic groups with different beliefs and values on virtually everything come together to work to achieve an organizational goal (Oliveira, 2013).

1.1.1 Globalization and Internationalization

Hirst, Thompson and Bromley (2015) stated that globalization had made the world a global village, thereby spurring many organizations to exploit developing and developed international markets and encouraging cross-border businesses interaction, most especially between countries with diverse nationalities and cultures. Asatiani (2017) also stated that mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and globalization of business in the twenty-first century are ushering in an era of universal connection amongst corporate staff, managers and workers.

Calof and Beamish (1995) define internationalization as a method of acclimatizing organizations' operations (strategy, structure, resources, etc.) to international environments. These are ways organizations intensify their



responsiveness of the influence of international activities on their future, and establish and conduct transactions with organization from other foreign countries.

Internationalization process based on fundamental model admitted that when an organization attains multinational position, there are tendencies it experiences practically new strategic glitches (Roque, Alves and Raposo , 2019; Santos 1997), thereby made the world closer than expected by enabling organizations to upturn its level of activities outside the country of origin where they exist by trying a new international market (Roque et al. 2019; Meyer, 1996) and familiarizing its operations to these international environments (Calof and Beamish, 1995).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011) reiterated that internalization of business life needs additional understanding of cultural outline. The authors are also of the opinion that international managers do have it tough because they contend with several principles which rises from culture of origin, culture of the country where they work and also organizational culture. Every part of the world, phenomena as authority, bureaucracy, creativity, good fellowship, verification and accountability are not the same though the names are the same all over the world the functionality differs due to cultural biases (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2011).

Knight (2007) opined that most organizations who exploited foreign markets or employed expatriates most times forget the effect of communication and culture on the development and success of the company. Kvantaliani and Klimina (2011) reiterates that in the period of hasty economic development and internationalization of business, operative cross-cultural communication between managers remain a challenge.



In addition, knowledge sharing tends to be complex by accumulative cultural multiplicity; hitherto the challenges occur basically due to non-balance of interpersonal communication among team members due to their differences in their cultural beliefs; which lead to a negative repercussion on the business directly and indirectly (Lauring and Selmer, 2013).

1.1.2 Multicultural Organization

Internationalized business organization entails the coming together of different individuals from different cultural belief, perception, exposure, norms, background, experience, education, value etc. who are of like minds coming together to strategize and create a competitive edge for the organization in a competing market (Chiva, Ghauri and Alegre, 2014). But as the business operation strives to adapt to its new environment, individuals (team members) in it too must attain coherency through communication with each other (Calof and Beamish, 1995).

Fitzgerald (2015) stated that a multinational company is a business that functions in several different countries at the same time; that is, it is operational in more than one country. It is mostly large in size and its activities are centrally controlled from the parent company. Despite the numerous advantages berth from globalization to business and the world economic, most companies that delved into internationalization still forget the basic needs of the success of their organization (Sethi, 2002).

1.1.3 Culture

House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) defined culture as mutual intentions, morals, philosophies, identities and interpretations of important happenings that result from mutual experiences of members of a group and are transferred across generations. Also, Zaainuddin, Yasin, Arif



and Hamid (2018) postulate that culture is a mutual occurrence which is so comprehensive. That is, culture is a communal agreement that differentiates the members of one group or class of people from the others. Culture is said to be like a perception that relay vital parts within a typical world thus that is how a man should educate himself to be successful and be respected in the society (Eliot, 2010).

It should be noted that cultural mutual agreement tends to be distorted by individuals that believed their culture is better. Perreault and Bourhis, (1999) explained that ethnocentrism is believing that one's culture is better than others. This made them invariably look down on others from across the border. Chua (2013) further identified ambient cultural disharmony as a shortcomings to cultural mutual agreement. He stated it is an indirect experience of inter- cultural pressures visible in a persons' social environment.

For the purpose of this thesis, culture will be viewed from the perspective of an organizational culture, which defined it as a method of shared norms, values, and beliefs that oversees people behaviour in an organization (Eisenberg and Riley, 2001) These shared values have an influence on the people in the organization and control how they dress, act, and perform their jobs. Every organization cultivates and sustains a unique culture, which provides procedures and limits for the behaviour of the members of the organization (Alvesson, 2012).

From the definitions of culture above, the relevance of culture to a group is indicated; overlooking culture can be dangerous because it tends to lead to bad strategy, and culturally-based analyses significantly enhance the understanding of economic behaviour (Zaainuddin, et al., 2018).



1.1.4 Communication

Defining interpersonal communication, Asatiani (2017) opined that it is proficient if it achieves the intents in a manner that is suitable to the context and relationship. Interpersonal communication therefore needs to bridge relevance and effectiveness in a manner that is also related to the context in which the situation occurs. Therefore conceding to the importance of interpersonal communication among multicultural teams (Ramaraju, 2012).

Asatiani (2017) further stated that in as much as communication is a two-way process which involves more than one speaker, the skill of the speaker likewise the listener is mandatory and in the case of communication challenges, individuals need to ask for more clarification. Kutz (2011) reiterated that communication should always be reconfirmed just to be sure both the speaker and receiver understood each other appropriately. To have an effective interpersonal communication, it must be well received and decoded appropriately without sentiments (Guang and Trotter, 2012). Challenges erupt when individual cultural backgrounds influenced the state of mind and level of reasoning (Bilets and Serdyuk 2016).

To this end, Würtz(2005) described high-context culture as a culture that depend on implied communication and non-verbal cues. Avoiding miscommunication, it is essential that both verbal and non-verbal communication is put into cognizance while communicating, they must be clearly understood (Maraun, Wetterhall, Ireson, Chandler, Kendon, Widmann, Brienen, Rust, Sauter, Themeßl, and Venema, 2010) . In high-context communication, a message cannot be understood without a great deal of related information. Asian, African, Arab, central European and Latin American cultures are considered to be high-context cultures.



In low-context communication, more details in a message is spelled out and defined therefore; western European culture is seen as low context communication, as well as in the United States and Australia (Würtlz, 2005).

1.1.5 Cases of Intercultural Communication Dilemmas

For the purpose of this thesis, the thesis author will take you through some examples of Master of advanced studies in Intercultural Communication (MIC) case studies that examine the challenges of intercultural communication in a multicultural organization. MIC (2016) exhibits the challenges created by communication and how individual cultural background influences reasoning of people and how they interpret messages and therefore respond to such messages:

Study Example 1:

Sandeep is out of the office: A case study on miscommunication in multicultural teams.

“Sandeep has just joined the Bangalore office of a New York based MNC. As part of his training he will be spending 3 months in the US, but has already been assigned to a team with members in New York, Tokyo and Bangalore. Sarah, the New York based project manager, has scheduled a teleconference meeting for Tuesday. Sandeep will be traveling to Delhi to get his US visa over the meeting time. Here’s their conversation...

Sarah: Can we do the teleconference tomorrow, 7 pm for you, or should we wait until you get back?

Sandeep: Better if we can wait, but I can do it if you like – if it’s necessary.

Sarah: Do you want to postpone it? Tell me, yes or no?”



Study Example 2:

And also meet with others: A case study on cross-cultural partnerships, intercultural communication and high-context versus low-context communication.

“Mark is an American living in Delhi and is meeting with Ajay, who is a government official that frequently deals with the public. Mark is interested in forming a partnership with Suresh, a local businessman with whom Ajay has worked in the past. Mark wants to know if Ajay thinks partnering with Suresh is a good idea.

Mark: Do you happen to know Suresh?

Ajay: Of course, I have worked closely with him on a number of projects over the past 10 years. I know him very well.

Mark: I was thinking about meeting him and seeing if there might be a possibility for collaboration.

What do you think?

Ajay: Yes, you should meet with him, and you should also meet with others.

Mark: Thanks. Who else should I meet with?

Ajay: You know there are some girls who fall in love with a boy who is very popular, well dressed, and good looking. After they get married, they realize that they made a mistake because the boy has no substance. Other girls will look for a guy with good character checking out his family situation and talking with his friends about him. When she gets married, she is much happier than the girl who married the popular guy”.

The study examples clearly indicates that interpretation of communication is influenced based on cultural background. That is high context communication, where messages sent are implicit and indirect thereby



creating need to interpret it while in a low communication context, messages are explicit, direct and easy to understand (Würtz, 2005).

There is need to understand communication context in other to communicate appropriately otherwise reaching a consensus might become a task in terms of inter-personal communication process. This simply means that if communication is not appropriately channelled, there is tendencies that the intent of the information might be misinterpreted. Business activities are transacted daily verbally and non-verbally but communication messages are interpreted and influenced by individual's cultural differences (Graham, 1985).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Functioning in a multicultural organization, culture and communication need to be addressed. Martin and Nakayama (2013) opined that culture and communication are intertwined and neither could they work in isolation; scholars from diverse fields also had observed and researched on this phenomenon just to understand the major stances.

As globalization is influencing businesses all over the globe, organizations are internationalizing into developed and emerging markets where they can favourably compete and gain a competitive advantage in their chosen industry (Mueller, 1994). This invariably created a vacuum to be filled by employing experts both from the host country and internationally, the process therefore berths the emergence of multicultural teams (Stephen, 1993). Researchers also attributed this challenge to more concentration on entry issues than post entry performance (O'Farrell, Wood and Zheng, 1998). That is more emphasis were given to strategies to capture the new market rather than the intricacies like cultural differences and its management that surrounds the new market.



Addressing the need to employ different nationalities into an internationalized organization, Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) stated that international business managers assumed the capability to work with individuals of other cultures as the utmost important quality of success, particularly in overseas assignments. Hence the importance of multiculturalism to business because of its dimension to productivity (Doğan, 2017).

The concept of multiculturalism stated that it is a way to approach cultural diversity within the society. It further explained that multiculturalism helps the integration of diverse cultures and the sharing of one's ideas and viewpoints. Liberalism and communication are main benefits of multiculturalism that can help the workplace (Heyman, 2017). This encourages open dialogue which generates understanding and teamwork among staff.

In their research, Brousseau, Driver, Hourihan, and Larsson (2006) identified four barriers eminent in a multicultural team. Firstly, direct versus indirect communication signals the use of words within colleagues. Using direct and comprehensive form of communication varies regarding different culture. Secondly, accents and fluency difficulties brews challenges when someone does not have a vast knowledge of the host country language in terms of speaking or pronunciation. When words are wrongly pronounced, there is tendencies it depicts a different meaning from the intent of the speaker; this creates a gap of expertise and knowledge sharing which might be frustrating.

Thirdly, differing attitudes toward hierarchy is a result of cultural differences where individual of high position believed they deserved to be treated specially from the subordinates. And lastly, conflicting decision-making



norms in handling task are different from each other as individuals culture dictate. Decision making is also influenced depending on cultural differences. In some culture, decisions are meant to be taken unilaterally while other cultured depicts it must be taken by the entire team. Somebody who desires making decisions swiftly may be discouraged with those who need to take their time.

Culture is multifaceted. Therefore creating a challenge on where to position an argument. Culture has been defined by different scholars from different perspectives (Slipenchuk, Vorobyevskaya, Kirillov and Telelekova, 2016). Spencer-Oatey (2008) theorize culture as an uncertain set of basic norms and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural agreements that are shared by a group of people, and that impact each member's attitude and interpretations of others behaviour. Matsumoto (1996) conceptualize culture to be communicated to generations.

For precision to be toiled on the thesis, culture will be observed from the perspective of an organizational culture, which defined it as a method of shared norms, values, and beliefs that oversees people behaviour in an organization (Eisenberg and Riley, 2001) These shared values have an influence on the people in the organization and control how they dress, act, and perform their jobs. Every organization cultivates and sustains a unique culture, which provides procedures and limits for the behaviour of the members of the organization (Alvesson, 2012).

Scott (1999) further acknowledged the contribution of cultural fluency to increment globalization of business. This indicated that cultural fluency gives employers and employees of internationalized businesses ample opportunity to experience diverse cultural differences for effective communication abilities that are dominant and not peripheral in international business



environment. Researchers believed that the more organizations internationalized with different cultural background and value as team members, the more are tendencies to experience challenges in the team.

Cushman and Cahn (1985) conceptualized that for a communication to be effective it must be between at least two individuals, that is the sender of a message and the receiver. To have an effective communication, the intent of the message must be well interpreted. It is very important to choose rightly the channel of sending the message which might either be verbal and non-verbal means.

Joshi and Callaghan (2016) stated also that it is expedient to always consider the cultural background of the receiver when sending a message, because communication context must be considered before a message is sent to avoid misinterpretation.

Behfar, Kern and Brett (2006) in their research stated that if a company does business internationally, there will leading teams with members from diverse cultural backgrounds with differences presenting serious obstacles. One of the emerging obstacles from research is lack of fluency in the team's dominant language which can lead to underestimating others competence

The concept of ambient cultural disharmony is another factor that truncate the effectiveness of functionality of communication and culture in a multicultural organization (Paulus, van der Zee and Kenworthy, 2016). Chua (2013) stated that disharmony is relational pressures and battle that exist within co-workers in an organization which requires acquiring knowledge resources from different culture.

This invariably will demoralize and discourages the functionality of individual's capacity and innovation at work and within one another (Lokkesmoe, Kuchinke and Ardichvili, 2016). Furthermore, the ambient



cultural disharmony concept highlighted this as an adverse effect on multicultural creativity which diminish individual's productivity and as a team or organization will dump creative thoughts in tasks from disparate cultures

Ethnocentrism is one of the frustrating factors of a multicultural organization. Examining the influence of ethnocentrism in a multicultural environment, Michailova, Piekkari, Storgaard and Tienari (2017) emphasized it believed his own culture is superior to others, thereby disrespect and devalued other cultures. The act is described as destructive feature in a multicultural organization team and its negative significances is eminent. Thomas (1996) revealed that ethnocentric usually make expatriate executives experience difficulties in adjusting to foreign locations. Asatiani (2017) described the concept of ethnocentrism as the inclination to view one's own group as the best and preferred culture compared to others thereby making other culture feel complex and inferior.

Further research to abridge friction within multicultural teams, Behfar, Kern and Brett (2006) pinpointed to structural intervention which encourages team members to adapt to each other's culture by acknowledging cultural gaps and working around the differences.

And if the team could not solve their difference, that is reassigning members to reduce interpersonal friction, managerial intervention which is a final straw should be introduced (Elangovan, 1998). With this, the management takes a final decisions without team input or call for exit of the team member either voluntary or involuntarily in a situation where team members could not agree on the way forward of their issues (Fos and Kahn, 2015).

Team members can further strengthen their adaptation skills by developing their cultural intelligence (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004). Ott and Michailova, (2018) opined that cultural intelligence is the ability of



individuals to be active in an intercultural interface; that is enlightening team mates about different cultures by educating and helping to build interpersonal relationship between one another. Triandis, (2006) stated it is an effective interaction across cultures.

Another way out of these challenges, Earley and Mosakowski (2004) depicts is for team members to tolerate each other if they choose to adopt the culture of others in order to appreciate and tolerate their culture and also believed in one's self to conquer multicultural challenges.

On the other hand, Thomas and Ely (1996) posit that in the face of some solution to the lingering challenges faced by multicultural teams, there is need to encourage an open dialogue of cultural backgrounds, remove any forms of supremacy caused by hierarchy or gender and quickly resolve the inevitable tensions that might come up when employees from different cultural backgrounds brainstorm.

Also, the need to imbibe the concept of cultural fluency which creates avenue to recognize, comprehend and relate to cultural variables that impact the communicative activities of members of diverse groups so both the receivers' and senders' message interpretations will correspond without any misinterpretation is important (Scott, 1999). A person who understands others cultural beliefs will function well like a native member of that foreign cultural group without hitch (Inoue, 2007).

1.3 Research Gap

Extant literature on intercultural relations has paid more attention on the many causes of intercultural diversity in a multicultural organization, but in as much as many scholars have expatiated more on their findings, creating



similar dimensions, not so much has been said about the way out of this dilemma (Deresky and Christopher, 2015). The emphasis on the ambient aspect of intercultural disharmony calls for need for a way out because the world is evolving calling up for new lines of inquiry in research on intercultural relations and multicultural teams (Day, 2007).

Scott (1996), indicated that the international business communication field have put in place cultural understanding to business-related problems through various types of communicative approaches and behaviours. An important concept that is hardly mention and will be a great value is the improvement of cultural fluency and attainment of culture-sensitive communication tools that enables an individual to function well in an alien cultural environment.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the main challenges of interpersonal communication and cultural differences in a multicultural organization?
- ii. In what way can the challenges in communication and cultural differences be resolved?

1.5 Research Purpose

By conducting an in-depth single case study, the main purpose of the study is to gain further knowledge of the numerous challenges of interpersonal communication and intercultural differences posed into a multicultural organization and approaches to curtail its occurrences.



1.6 Delimitation

Internationalization had increased the number of multicultural organizations in the world. For this study, the author will streamline the findings to a multicultural organization in Sweden which will act as a case study to analyse the challenges of interpersonal communication and cultural differences in a multicultural organization. Therefore, this study will be delimited to a single case study in Sweden with a more concentration into the logistic department of the organization.

The single case study is a Swedish based company with multinationals employees from different parts of the world, therefore, for an in-depth understanding of the research study, I chose Lyreco Sweden because it will give an ample opportunity to understand in details the challenges within cultural groups in organizations.



2 Methodology

This chapter will take the readers through the techniques to be used in gathering data for the thesis. Thereby the research method, design and approach will be defined. It also presents a description of the research process, including data sample and collection, interpretation and analysis. In addition, research quality and ethics will be reflected upon.

2.1 Research Perspective

For the thesis, the author will utilize the Hermeneutic Research perspective in order to gain an in depth understanding and a subjective interpretation of the chosen research phenomenon (Yang, 2011). Hermeneutics is a technique of interpretation that is appropriate mostly when the purpose of the study is to understand the interviewee's individual experiences of a phenomenon. (Fejes and Thornberg, 2015). On the other hand, Noy (2008) postulate that hermeneutics research perspective is to understand and connotes information given by the interviewee during the interview session.

In as much as it is important to have a preunderstanding during interpretation which enables in-depth analysis, Fejes and Thornberg (2015) warns against bias that preunderstanding might cause during the interpretation of the data.

2.2 Research Approach

For a detailed understanding of research, there are three main research approaches available, Induction, deduction and abduction research approaches respectively (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009).

Bryman and Bell (2015) posit that inductive research approach lays more emphasis on empirical data which directs and shapes the theoretical materials where conclusions were finally derived. It is mainly used in qualitative research with the main aim to derive a theoretical framework founded on empirical data and analysis. Deductive research approach helps explain



causal relationships between variables and text theory using quantitative research methods mainly to explicate on the casual and effect relationships. (Alvesson and Sköoldberg, 2009). Abductive research approach is a blend of both inductive and deductive research approach mainly to create new theory. The process includes alteration of empirical data and theory as the research progresses (Tavory and Timmermans 2014.).

For the purpose of this thesis and to answer the research questions poised earlier, the thesis author chooses to work with an inductive approach. The inductive approach uses thorough interpretations of data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by the researcher. The main purpose of the inductive approach is to let research findings to develop from the regular, dominant, or important themes essential in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006).

2.3 Research Methods

Research method is a technique used to create either a better understanding on a phenomenon or used to collect data to get more information. It includes qualitative and quantitative research method. Bryman and Bell (2015) stipulated that qualitative research method enables a detailed and more in-depth approach compared to quantitative research method, which is grounded on large volumes of numeric data.

For this thesis, a qualitative research method is a preferred and appropriate. Qualitative research method enables empirical data to be collected from fewer sources mainly through interviews and other sources like observation or focus groups (Merriam, 1998). It should be noted that the important reason of a qualitative research method is to comprehend and interpret a phenomenon from the respondents' perceptions and understandings with a personalized interpretation (Alvesson and Sköoldberg, 2008).



Qualitative research method will enable the gathering of further information on the research topic from other researchers and scholars. This research method will be achieved using face-to face interviews, analyzing documents and sourcing into archives (Astalin, 2013). Andersen (1994) suggests that the underlying assumption of qualitative studies stipulate that every phenomenon entails an exclusive combination of attributes and qualities, which makes them difficult to measure.

2.4 Research Design

There are four types of research design, they are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study.

(1) Phenomenology is the uninterrupted study and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free from unexamined biases and assumptions (Moran, 2002). (2) In ethnography, researchers perceive and relate with a study's participants in their real-life environment (Brewer, 2000). (3) Grounded theory includes the collection and analysis of data (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2007) while (4) case study is centred on a thorough investigation of a single individual, group, or event (Gerring, 2006) respectively.

For this study, a case study research design is appropriate. Thomas (2011) posit that case study examine situations or issues holistically using either a method or multiple methods. According to Yin (1989) there are different types of case study design; a single case study concentrates on one case while a multiple case study pay attention on different cases. For an explicit understanding of what case study research depicts, Olsson and Sörenson (2011) postulate that case study as a research design directed on studying either an individual, organization or group.

Yin (1989) stated that case study is an empirical inquiry that examines a current phenomenon in its actual life setting by sources of evidence. Also,



Noor (2008) stated that for a detailed understanding of a phenomenon, case study is the most appropriate. To respond or follow-up on research questions, how it functions or been perceived, a case study is the appropriate tool for the researcher to comprehend the fundamental dynamics of a social phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

Despite the fact that the case study research post appropriate for this study, it is not without criticism; George and Bennett (2005) stipulated that case study tends to diminish the capability to identify inaccuracies visible in the data collection process but with the usage of multiple interview sessions and observations it will surely be reduced.

Therefore, investigating the challenges posed by interpersonal communication and cultural differences in an internationalized organization with a mix of nationalities in the workforce will give a clearer view on the research despite the differences of cultural background and values, the author of the thesis requires to know how and why communication and cultural differences occurs; by presenting a real-life multicultural organization.

2.5 Sampling Process

According to Merriam (2009), the sample is chosen by observing occasions, visitation to places, reading through documents to exploit pertinent empirical data; thereafter, the researcher is obliged to choose where or who to observe for the study. Merriam further stated that sampling comes in two forms: probability and non-probability. Probability sampling method is used for quantitative research mainly to generalize result of the study from the sample to the population of which it was drawn while the non-probability sampling is used for qualitative research.

Beyond probability and non-probability sampling, Mitchell (2014) mentioned another form of sampling which is theoretical sampling, which is associated to the data collection. The main reason of theoretical sampling is



to gather data from places, people, events that will maximize chances to create concepts and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts (Corbin and Straus, 2002).

Therefore, Butina, Campbell and Miller(2015) argues that primary sample is created according to the relevance of the main research problem of a study based on this, the researcher is led to the next questions to be asked as well as documents, sites, people, and events to be studied. Gray (2014) and Patton (2002) described strategic sample as when the researcher assesses likely interviewees based on their relevance and knowledge in the research subject. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, it was mandatory to put some criteria before having the interview session to avoid deviation from the proposed research questions:

- Multicultural organization.
- Accessible through located in Sweden
- Size enough for access to multiple nationalities

The selected case company is Lyreco Sweden located in Bankeryd. It is a multicultural organization, it was founded in 1926 in France and over the period of its existence, the company has internationalized to over 40 countries with employment of expatriates all over the globe. For the purpose of this study, the author believed it is applicable to interview some of the employees of Lyreco Sweden, most especially the logistics department where most of these nationalities operates. When choosing the interviewees, the following criteria were used and the selection was made to secure as much of a mix as possible concerning:

- Working years of experience
- Positions in the department
- Nationalities



- Gender

All interviewees were duly informed of the intention of the research and were tape-recorded upon consent.

2.6 Data Collection

For the thesis, the author utilized both primary and secondary data. The secondary data is gathered from researched documents which includes previous studies and official website of the case company. The primary data is gathered from face-to-face interview sessions; Taylor (2005) posit that interview is a more popular method of data collection. Interview can either be structured or semi structured. Where a structured interview format asks same set of questions for every interviewee while semi structured interview is flexible with open ended questions (Patton 1990).

Galletta (2013) opined that a semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange where an individual, the interviewer, tries to get information from another individual by asking questions. Although the interviewer prepares a list of prearranged questions, semi-structured interviews describe in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are imperative (Longhurst, 2003). The plan is to garner the information for this thesis by utilizing interviews with team head of various departments; both genders are considered.

A number of ten interviews were conducted by interviewing selected logistics department personnel of the case company on the issue of differences and communication challenges among different nationalities in their organization. The interview started with some general questions for a clearer understanding of the organization and its operation followed by open ended questions. Upon consent, a tape recorder was used to record the interviews and its contents, which will be transcribed and analysed (Bucher,



Fritz and Quarantelli, 1956). This will enable the interviewer the opportunity to listen and re-listen to the interview several time (Opdenakker, 2006).

Opdenakker (2006) pinpointed that face to face interview helps to more accurate screening of the interviewees facial and body language. Face to face interview allows for more in-depth data collection and comprehensive understanding of body language and facial expressions which can be clearly identified and understood. This thereby allows the interviewer to probe for explanations of responses (Marshall, 2016).

2.7 Operationalization

To be focused while doing the interviews, it is very important to operationalize the research questions before conducting the interviews. It should be noted that the interview guide was influenced by the theoretical dimensions with open ended question giving room for interviewees' candid opinions in due to the multicultural nature of Lyreco Sweden. The author also inquired on each employees' years of working at the organization, mode of communication with other nationalities when at work, relationship with one another, power distribution and perception about each other.

Since there were differences between the interviewee's perceptions and viewpoints about each question, the interview guide (Appendix 1) was prepared to guide the interview session.

Concept	Sub-concept	Questions
Interpersonal communication	Source Message Channel Receiver	Lyreco is a multicultural organization, how do you cope with other nationalities with different cultural status in terms of: a. interpersonal communication



<p>Communication Context</p>	<p>Low versus High context communication</p>	<p>b. time spent on each task, how fast or slow are they compare to yourself</p> <p>c. cultural differences</p> <p>How do you communicate with each other within the team, especially with other nationalities? Can you share your experience with me most especially challenges faced.</p> <p>From experience, what do you think are the challenges caused by interpersonal communication and what will you say is the best approach of interpersonal communication within team member that can spur effective team spirit</p> <p>Do all nationals in your team understand or assimilate instructions and orders quickly? Will you say the level of understand varies? How do you avoid communication misunderstanding in your team? If any, tell us about a time when your communication was misinterpreted, and how it resolved was.</p> <p>Is there any differences in the allocation of responsibilities most especially in terms of hierarchy within the nationalities here? What about between genders?</p>
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Culture	Individualism versus communitarianism Specific versus Diffuse	Will you say all nationalities are treated equally and fairly in all situation? Are task handled individually or as a group Beyond work environment, do you still relate with colleagues mostly from other countries after work. If yes or no why Will you say the working environment is conducive for all nationalities?
Multiculturalism	Structural Intervention	Lyreco Sweden is a multinational company that has so many nationalities working here, is this a management style of the company? How does it feel like working with people from different part of the world in your team? Any experience you wish to share with me in term of relating with other nationalities at work? Do you feel inferior to Swedish born staffs?

Table 1 Operationalization (own table)

2.7.1 Interviews

As this study is grounded on a single case with the objectives to explore deeper the challenges of interpersonal communication and intercultural differences in a multicultural organization, it is important to comprehend the individuals' insight of the subject mainly to have a vivid understanding of subject (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015).



A conducive and relaxed environment will be created to make the interviewees relax and have an exclusive interview session. This prompts an avenue to be explicit on the subject without holding back the honest thoughts (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson and Kangasniemi, 2016).

For the study, the perfect interview choice is the semi-structured interview guide which enables interviewees to answer the questions exclusively. Interviews were conducted during the months of April and May, 2020, spending approximately between sixty to ninety minutes with each interviewees during each session.

Despite the outbreak of the Covid 19 epidemic, the interview was conducted by face-to-face interviews in the organization's premises by abiding strictly to the stipulated rules given to the interviewer by the organization. For the interview proceeding to take place, the interviewer was given outline dates to have access to the any of the interviewees. The interview was conducted in English language.

Below are the details of the interviewees interviewed:

<i>Names</i>	<i>Job Title</i>	<i>Years of Experience at Lyreco</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Date of Interview</i>
Peter Maltell	NDC Manager/Site.	22 years	Swedish	2020-04-14
Yaw Opoku Gyamfi	Senior Warehouse Assistant	10 years	Ghanaian & Swedish	2020-04-16



	(Team Leader).			
Hugh Robinson	Warehouse Group Leader.	5 years	Jamaican	2020-04-16
Ben Wilson	Warehouse Team Leader	8years	Ghanian	2020-04-20
Vivian Onyeukwu	Warehouse Team Leader	4 years	Nigerian	2020-04-20
Leo Asmah	DC Picker	2 years	Ghanian	2020-04-22
Syed Mujtaba Ali	DC Picker	2years	Bangladeshi	2020-04-27
Nicola Gaddis	Warehouse Team Leader	5years	Serbian	2020-04-27
Josef Lindroth	Senior Warehouse Assistant (Team Leader).	5years	Swedish	2020-05-01
Oscar Flores	Warehouse Team Leader	6 years	Spanish	2020-05-01

Table 2 Interviewee Information (own table)

2.8 Method of Analysis

Immediately after data is collected, the next step is for the data to be analysed in order to make it sensible and meaningful to understand. Data analysis has two prominent methods: qualitative research and quantitative research. Interviews and observations are forms of qualitative research, while experiments and surveys are quantitative research (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).



Grbich (2012) opined that Qualitative data needs to be analysed appropriately because it comes in words in order to answer the research questions appropriately.

For this thesis, the method utilized is the thematic data analysis technique. Thematic Analysis is a kind of qualitative analysis used to scrutinize classifications and patterns that exemplifies the data vividly (Boyatzis 1998). Immediately after the interview session, the recorded interview was transcribed, read through, reviewed and analysed using preferred coding (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016). Halcomb and Davidson (2006) posit that data engagement entails understanding interview transcription mainly to get familiar with the contents. Data will be categorized based on themes used in the interview guide (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

2.9 Research Quality

Bryman and Bell (2007) posit that, if a research study is not reliable, it cannot be valid, therefore, measures used to evaluate the quality of the research are validity and reliability. Bryman and Bell (2015) defines validity as an extent of the quality and the precision of what is measured in the study, and reliability as a measure of replicability. This means that if the study is conducted several times, the study results still arrive at the similar results (Yin 2009).

The concept of validity and reliability is very key for this research. Validity reveals the level at which we arrive at the intended results to attain, whereby reliability, proves how dependable the measurement of research is (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Kvale (2007) stipulated that the usage of interview is a dependable method for collecting primary data which invariably increase the reliability of the study. Explaining further, the author stated that if an interview is done appropriately following the stipulated interview guide, such



can be considered high quality interviews thereby raising the validity of the research.

2.9.1 Credibility

Bryman and Bell (2015) opined that credibility is how authentic the findings of a research is especially between empirical information and theoretical idea. It is related to internal validity. In this study, the credibility concerns if interpersonal communication and intercultural difference is really a challenge in a multicultural organization.

Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) opine the use of member check, triangulation, and peer debriefing to guard against researcher bias. Explaining further, Schwandt et al. (2007) believed that in gaining credibility, member checks will create an avenue for an in-depth look during the process of collecting and analysing data.

Bryman (2004) stated that triangulation will enable a researcher use numerous sources of data to comprehend a phenomenon from many perspectives and to further increase the credibility of this study, peer reviews were constantly conducted on this paper during the thesis seminars and oppositions, and proof-reading from other people that were not involved in this study. Merriam (1998) stated that allowing an external person read to through and critique your research is a way of gaining credibility.

2.9.2 Transferability

Slevin and Sines (1999) stated that transferability is the ability to generalize the outcomes of a research with other research contexts. This according to Schwandt et al. (2007) is linked to external validity. In as much as it is believed that transferability is difficult to achieve; a vivid explanation that



offers an in-depth information about the research and its process will help (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

The main objective of transferability is to reduce biases and error in the research and transparent for external researchers to study (Yin, 2009).

2.9.3 Dependability

Dependability establishes the research study's findings as reliable and repeatable. The objective of dependability is for the consistency of the study to be proved between the raw data and the findings (Schwandt et al. 2007). To establish dependability, Schwandt et al. (2007) suggest that external audit must have access to the research, which means that one or more external researchers should have access to the research process in order to confirm the accuracy of the results.

This research study has continually been supervised and challenged by my supervisor, examiner and classmates.

2.9.4 Conformability

Schwandt et al. (2007) stated that conformability focuses more on the data collected mainly to be sure if the data is conformable. It is the objectivity of research throughout data collection and data analysis. Therefore, the need for independent persons to crosscheck the accuracy, relevance, or meaning of the data (Polit and Beck, 2012) or use the audit trail technique. Triangulation and external audit, are also applicable to guarantee conformability (Schwandt et al. 2007). Morrow (2005), reiterated that direct quote also strengthens conformability, since it provides the reader with a more objective view of the data.

The interpretations of this research can be the subject to integrity confirmation because the qualitative data was derived from interviews of Lyreco employees. Thus, the responses might be limited by the subjectivity



of respondents. Beyond now, this case study can still be used and relevant for a future study.

2.10 Research Ethics

The thesis was in accordance to article 5 of the European Union Data Protection Ordinance (GDPR). Kvale (2007) stated that research should be conducted within the interest of both, science and humans. This thesis was written in accordance to the research ethics. The research was conducted with the permission of all the interviewees and all necessary information that needed to be known were discussed before the commencement of the interview sessions most especially the purpose of the study.

Regarding key ideologies of ethical research, Denscombe (2014) pinpointed four key standard which stated that firstly, the participants identity will be hidden, secondly, data gathered from the interview will be handled with utmost confidentiality, thirdly, participants must be aware of the nature of the research and their contribution and lastly, participants must willingly consent to be involved.

Participants were informed about the intent of the research study with the assurance that the study is mainly for academic usage. Interviewees were also informed that no monetary reward is attached to their participation in the study (Oliver, 2010).

3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the theories relevant for the purpose of this study are presented. The chapter showcased five prominent communication and cultural dimensions; Berlos SMCR model, Hall value orientation, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Trompenaars's cultural dimension, Concept



of Multiculturalism, Ethnocentrism, Cultural Fluency, Cultural Intelligence, Ambient Cultural Disharmony

These concepts were selected to justify or answer the research questions stated for the thesis.

3.1 Berlo's SMCR Model

Berlo's SMCR Model defined elements impelling the individual components in the communication making for an effective communication. The model depicts process of communication in its easiest way by defining the different components that institute the basic process of communication. This interpersonal communication model looks through the process of communication and the functions of SMCR pattern; that is S - Source; M - Message; C - Channel; R - Receiver (Berlo, 1977). This model is old yet it is still in use within communication science (Flensburg, 2009).

3.1.1 Source

This concept talks about where an information springs up from, that is where a message is created or originated from which is the sender. Sender sends the information to the receiver using preferred words. The source is the beginning of the communication process that is the person that encodes the message. Stamp and Knapp (1990) depicts that before an information or message is put together and sent by a source, there must be an intent either negative or positive; define whom the message needs to get to and through what channel.

A perfect communication happens when both sender and receiver have the common knowledge in communication skills, same attitude, knowledge, social system and culture respectively (Berlo, 1977).

The sender sends the message to receiver who receives the message. It is imperative to note that for the occurrence of interpersonal communication



there should be at least two individuals, one to send the message and other to receive the message.

Berlo's SMCR Model of Communication recognizes certain issues as an influence on the source. The model identified communication skills which states that a sender's skill in communication is very apt when disseminating an information to a receiver that is the sender must be able to read, write, speak or listen. None of these must be missing in order to communicate effectively.

Also, the model identified intent in communication. The sender must be able to define the main reason for the message, this will influence the manner at which the message will be packaged to the sender either subtly, mildly or harshly. Knowledge is stated to be important before a sender sends out any message, it is very important to be vast or knowledgeable in that subject. Understanding the subject of the message makes communication more effective (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2002).

Lastly is the social system. Before a message is sent, it is imperative to consider the social system and culture of the receiver to avoid misinterpretation of the message. This comprises values, beliefs, culture, religion and a general understanding of society.

3.1.2 Message

This idea occurs when a sender put his thought and intent together and conveyed it using either verbal and non-verbal means of communication (Buck and VanLear, 2002). Message can be conveyed verbally by spoken words or non-verbally using facial expressions, body language, tone of voice or gestures. The non-verbal communication does add more meaning or



understanding to a message sent such as the person's attitude and interests (Burgoon and Bacue, 2003).

Ribbens(2007) stated that message sometimes tend to be misinterpreted due different distortion ranging from cultural differences, use of complex words, unsuitable body language, distraction, indifference and language difference. All these will cause misinterpretation of the intent of message sent by the receiver.

This model also highlights issues that influence message like content. This is all the details that a sender wants the receiver to get or know in the message from the beginning to the end. Also, elements of a message which includes things like language used, gestures, body language, and tone. Lastly is the structure of the message. This is the way the message is arranged; putting different meaning to message occurs sometimes by the way people structure the message into various parts. It should be noted that message is the same, but if the structure is not properly arranged then the receiver will not understand the message.

3.1.3 Channel

Channel is the way through which communication is sent. The message is sent and received through a medium that is way a message is transmitted (Spaur, Kennedy, Braitberg and Klingenstein, 2003). Both the verbal and nonverbal ways of the communication are the channels in a face to face communication whereas the cable or electromagnetic waves in a communication through telephone (Berlo, 1977).

Non-verbal communication channel might refer to the five sense organs: Hearing, Seeing, Touching, Smelling, Tasting. Communication happens through one or more of these channels. The following are the emphasized issues that might affect the channel through which a message is sent:



(1)Hearing is a channel that uses the ears to receive the message, it is imperative when a message is sent orally by talking or using of sounds. (2)Seeing is another channel used to send message through visual channels or pictorial representation or sign language. (3)Touching channel involves using an individual sensory organ of touching to pass a message. It is easy to feel something and understand the sender is saying without talking. (4)Smelling uses the nose to smell and understand what the sender of the message is saying. For example, charred smell communicates something is burning. (5)Tasting uses the tongue which is the muscular organ in the act of eat and tasting food, communication can happen regarding its taste.

3.1.4 Receiver

How a message is being received and interpreted is influenced by the context the message is received. This method of communication is influenced by the context it occurs either the emotional climate or the expectations of the people, place of occurrence, and social, political cultural and environmental conditions comprise context (Yager, 1980).

Berlo's model opined that for an effective communication to occur, the sender and the receiver must to be on the same level to spur effective communication (Berlo, 1977). If the communication skill of the sender is good, the receiver on the other hand should have equally good listening skills. The receiver needs to consider all the contents and elements of the source, so as to communicate/responds to sender effectively without bias (Roberts and Vinson, 1998).

Berlos's SMCR Model of communication

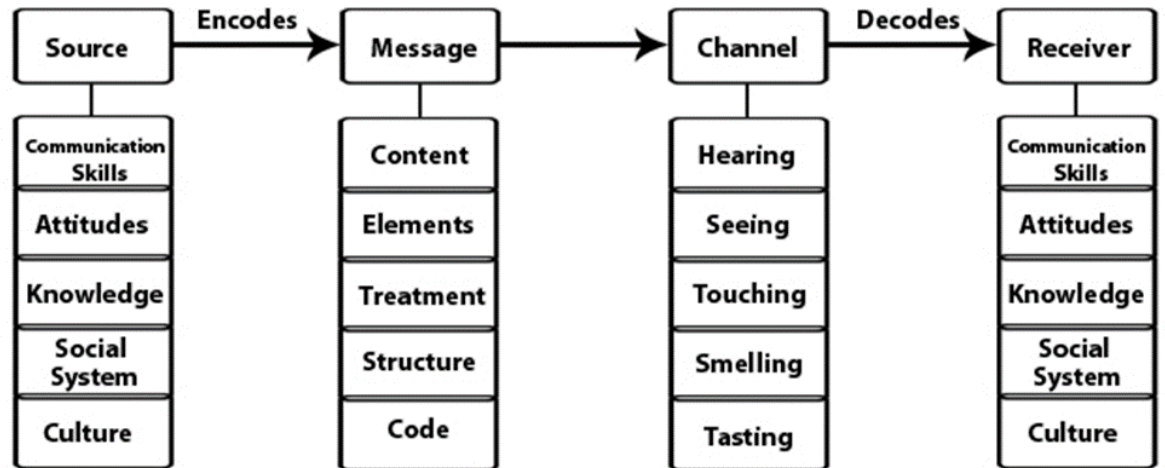


Table 3 Berlos's SMCR Table (Berlo, 1977)

3.2 Hall Cultural Value Orientation

This concept looks through culture in two different dimensions; mainly the manner at which a message is received, processed, assimilated and how time is perceived. In as much as communication dissemination and reception is crucial, so also is timing (Hall and Hall, 1990).

3.2.1 Communication Context

Hall and Hall (1990) posit that culture is relative to communication; individual culture receives and interpret communication differently that is high-context and low-context communication. Highlighting how culture and communication must be x-rayed, LeBaron (2003) exploited two main concepts of high-context and low-context communication and Individualism and communitarian respectively. The author in his findings, spotted high-context and low-context communication as another viable distraction that causes differences in terms of relations in a multicultural team.



Korac-Kakabadse and Kouzmin (2001) described high-context and low-context communication as a level to which a speaker trust on dynamics other than unambiguous communication to express their messages to others. In high-context settings, the screens are designed to let in implied meanings arising from the physical setting, relational cues, or shared understandings (Dahl, 2004).

In low-context settings, the screens direct attention more to the literal meanings of words and less to the context surrounding the words (Dahl, 2004). When there is a challenge of interpersonal communication and cultural differences among work teams, the host organization will surely suffer in so many ways too. Effective interpersonal communication therefore is an ongoing learning process; it is not spontaneous, rather, it is a gradual process (LeBaron, 2003).

3.2.2 Time perception

Time signifies different things to different people depending on each culture that is monochronic and polychronic (Hall and Hall 1990). Polychronicity depicts ability of an individual to multitask while monochronicity engages in a task one after the other (Angrilli, Cherubini, Pavese, and Manfredini 1997). Dahl, (2004) believed that time is secondary to interpersonal relations.

Handling more than one task is a normal work routine in some people; they are trained to do more than one chore at the same time. On the other hand, it is the opposite to some most especially in the western society which believed that handling more than one task at time will cause distraction and might not achieve an expected objective on any of the task. Usunier (1991) stated that time perception is intensely influenced by cultural patterns which in most times causes misunderstanding within cultures.



3.3 Hofstede Dimensions

This study highlighted five dimensions studies that described differences in national cultures. Hofstede dimension is used to comprehend the differences in culture across countries and to discern the ways that business is done across different cultures (Hofstede, 1980).

3.3.1 Power Distance

This dimension talked about disparity in power allocation between cadres; that is how power is distributed between superiors and his subordinates. It expatiated on how members of a cultural group accept inequality of distribution of power within members of the group. Hofstede (1980) highlighted further on the existence of high-power distance culture and low power distance culture. In a high-power distance culture, there is hierarchy within the members of the team and subordinates are deprived of decision- making process rather in a low-power distance culture, power is evenly distributed; subordinates are not looked down on, everyone in the team has the same operational power to operate. Yang (2019) posit that power distance is simply the level of human submissiveness (inequality) in relations of social power. That is readiness to admit unequal sharing of power in an organization or institution. Yang stated that in an environment with high –power distance culture, hierarchy is recognized and no one query such authority. The author indicated that the index scores for power distance is lower for English-speaking western countries and higher for Asian, African, Latin and East European countries.

3.3.2 Masculinity/femininity

This dimension talks about the comparison between the masculine society and the feminine society. It is believed that masculine societies have penchant for assertiveness and competitiveness compared to feminine societies which have preference for diffidence and caring. Zainuddin et al. (2018) stated that both men and women share diffident and caring tenets



equally in feminine countries while it is contrary in masculine countries that are assertive and competitive in nature. Masculinity, the authors claimed is high in Germany, Japan, Mexico and Italy; moderately high in Western countries; moderately low in countries like Portugal, Spain, France, Thailand and Korea; and low in the Netherlands and Nordic countries.

3.3.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

It deals with society's acceptance for uncertainty. The concept relays the scope to which a society is tolerant towards uncertainty and ambiguity. Societies that possess a solid uncertainty avoidance have tough behavioural codes, rules and laws, whereas uncertainty accepting cultures impose fewer regulations and have more acceptance of different opinions. Index scores for this dimension tend to be lower in Nordic and English-speaking countries and higher in Japan, Germany, and Latin, East and Central European countries. Merkin (2006) stated that Uncertainty Avoidance Index marks are listed for 76 countries; they are greater in East, Central European countries, Latin countries, Japan and German speaking countries while it is lower in English speaking, Nordic and Chinese culture countries.

3.3.4 Individualism/Collectivism

According to Yang (2019), Individualism and collectivism are two beliefs that impact the persona of culture. The author explained that individualism is a concept that believed in an individual ideologies, interest and initiatives and looked down on others; it also ascribes more significance to privacy doing thing for his or her personal interest with no consideration for others. He believed the concept is selfish with so much loose ties. Hofstede (1980) observed collectivism as 'we' culture, that is everything that is helpful to society is promoted. Whatever the interests of individual must be in agreement with the society. The individuals here have a very strong attachment. Individualism is eminent in the Western and developed countries



while collectivism can be experienced in Africa, Asia and other less developed countries.

3.3.5 Long-Term Orientation versus short-term orientation

The fifth Hofstede dimension expatiates on virtue meaning values linked with long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; whereby values linked with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social responsibilities, and protecting one's 'face'. Long-term orientation depicts development of virtues focused on imminent rewards, most especially perseverance and thrift while Short-Term Orientation depicts development of virtues related to the past and the present like respect for tradition, protection of face and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede, 2001).

3.4 Trompenaars Cultural Dimensions

This is another scholar that acknowledged the influence of culture on organizational behaviour. Trompenaars showcased this in his seven cultural dimensions created by himself and Charles Hampden-Turner; these authors also shared some of Hofstede cultural dimension (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

3.4.1 Individualism versus Communitarianism

Just like Hofstede dimension stated, this dimension x-rayed the differences in culture that a being as a person or an individual while communitarianism is the act of belonging to a group with mutual and communal agreement. Trompenaars attributed that individualist culture is synonymous to the western world, while communitarian culture is likened to non-western countries. It further stated that Cultures have the tendency to change than people realized (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

Lehrer (2001) further stated that there is a current conflict between individualistic and communitarian conceptions of rationality. Organization



with combination of these dimension will surely thrive for balance in order to avoid friction among the workers.

3.4.2 Universalism versus Particularism

Universalist culture is distinct because it can be applied everywhere and also can be used to regulate the difference between right and wrong. While in a particularistic culture, members understood that it is the situations that determine how philosophies can be useful in practice. Individual relationships and responsibilities play a significant role when making ethical choices (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

3.4.3 Neutral versus emotional

This dimension depicts the display of feeling and emotions. In a neutral culture, emotions are not openly displayed; it is neutral and controlled while in an emotional culture, emotion are displayed explicitly and freely. Example of a neural emotional culture include Japan and Great Britain while an example of an emotional culture include Spain, Africa, Mexico where talking or greeting loudly is allowed (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner,1997). This dimension tends to be met with mixed feeling because emotions are displayed by individuals differently due to how each person are raised culturally.

Explaining further on this dimension, Marsh, Elfenbein and Ambady (2003) reiterate that an individual could easily be identified by the way they respond to things or displayed their emotions. Marsh et al. (2003) stated that emotions are shown in numerous ways; either verbal, nonverbal, subtle, facial or body expressions. Emotions can be intensified by cultural differences.



3.4.4 Specific versus Diffuse

These dimensions depict the way individuals communicate and relate with each other in the society (Smith, 1990). Trompenaars specific culture indicate space of individual shared with others both in public and privately and can also approach one another casually while diffuse culture have preference for their private space; and they make their space formal (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

Specific cultures are straight forward in their communication by using perfect descriptive words, truthfulness and proofs to deliver what they want. This approach permits informal relationship between people without hitch

Diffuse culture is a way of communication and interaction whereby indirect communication with relative signs is used to pass message (Straub, Loch, Evaristo, Karahanna and Srite, 2002).

3.4.5 Achievement versus Ascription

Achievement culture is determined by individuals fit, achievement, and success of their task. In the case of ascription, an individual status is the determinant factor, that is, place of origin, sex/gender, qualification, job, position among others (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). This stance is another differential experience within cultures whereby years of experience, wealth, or achievements is used as a criteria to judge an individual; while on the other it is your gender, educational qualification. This strongly show that what each culture value and see as imperative differs to one another. Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars(1996) stated that this Trompenaars cultural dimension can simply be described as a varying orientation to the requirements of social relationship.



3.4.6 Sequential versus synchronous time

Sequential time is simply the measuring of time that is the usage of year, month, days, weeks and hours to measure past, present and future; on the other hand, synchronous time rather than using time, it looks at the ability to be able to multi-task (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). This dimension addresses individual culture towards time value and how it is controlled. Time in a sequential culture dedicates time-frame to a single task with a full dedication to an assignment till it ends before proceeding into another task. This is an opposite of a synchronic culture where two or more tasks are done at the same time-frame.

3.4.7 Internal direction versus external direction

This dimension focus on how individuals predict their culture which differs from each other. They should be able to predict how tolerable their environment can be (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). This cultural difference talks about influence on the environment. An internal direction culture has influence on nature for a selfish interest by enabling people to control their environment to achieve their goals.

External direction culture work with the environment to achieve their goals. In an external direction culture, winning is not as important as maintaining a strong relationship (Arogyaswamy and Byles, 1987).

3.5 Multiculturalism

Due to international migration, multiculturalism has become the dominant theory for almost thirty years (Berkes, 2010) with the acceptance that the practice of multiculturalism will make different cultures live peacefully. Yet, the theory that has been in use since seventies is still experiencing criticism; pondering its ability to solve cultural problems (Berkes, 2010).

Kymlicka (2012) stressed that multiculturalism consequently acknowledges the presence of cultural diversity and guaranteed the rights of each persons to



preserve their culture while also appreciate whole access to legal values importantly collective values central in the society or organization. Cox Jr. (2001) summed up multicultural organizations as a precise type of gathering that is formed within a community or organization and it encompasses of diversified cultural value structure. In a multicultural cluster, there is need to have respect and understanding among the people representing cultural diversity. Therefore, for making an organization resilient and successful in achieving its goal, it is paramount to imbibe team work and collective activities through an active interpersonal communication relationship and socialization.

3.6 Ethnocentrism

Culture is faced with differences in individual's mind-set of the importance of their culture to others. Booth (2014) described the concept of ethnocentrism as a cultural distortion that has the tendency of affecting the theory and execution of strategy. It is the tendency to view one's cultural group as superior to the other groups. This invariably generates intergroup bias and creates prejudice and violence.

Hammond and Axelrod (2006) on the other hand referred to ethnocentrism as a universal syndrome of attitudes and behaviour of in-group favourism most especially in language, behaviour, customs, and religion.

3.7 Cultural fluency

This simply means understanding other cultures in terms of their natures, how they work, and manner they relate in times of conflict and harmony. Cultural fluency means consciousness of several dimensions of culture, including communication.

Inoue (2007) stated that cultural fluency is the ability to live, work, and thrive in non-native cultures.



Explaining further, Scott (1999) stated that developing cultural fluency foster the ability to cross cultural boundaries and function much like a native by matching the receiver's decoded and the sender's encoded communication meanings, is the goal of international business communication instruction.

3.8 Cultural intelligence

This model of intelligence can be used to assist leaders create understanding and awareness across and between cultures. If an Employee of an organization possess cultural intelligence, he will play a prominent role in bridging divides and knowledge gaps in an organization: educating their peers about different cultures; transferring knowledge between otherwise disparate groups; helping to build interpersonal connections and smooth the interpersonal (Triandis, 2006).

Earley and Ang (2003) described cultural intelligence as a successful interface across cultures requires cultural intelligence most especially in a global market where international teams, initiatives, and joint ventures are increasingly common, it is extremely important for people to relate with themselves quickly in new cultures.

When there is cultural intelligence viable in an organization, it will be easy for every member of the team to communicate to culturally diverse situations and work effectively in them without friction or hitch (Thomas, 2015).

3.9 Ambient Disharmony

This model addresses the indirect knowledge of intercultural tensions and conflicts in individuals' immediate social environment. It reveals how it undermines creative thinking in tasks that draw on knowledge from multiple cultures. It is established that ambient cultural disharmony declines individuals' effectiveness at connecting ideas from different cultures. Beliefs that philosophies from different cultures are incompatible mediate the



relationship between ambient cultural disharmony and creativity (Chua, 2013).

3.10 Conceptual Framework

By assimilating the parts of the theoretical review, a conceptual model that recaps important literature into major concepts and sub-concepts is developed. The components include interpersonal communication, communication context, specific versus diffuse dimension, individualism and communitarianism dimension and multiculturalism.

For an effective interpersonal communication, message must transpire between a sender and a receiver. Message is sent using an appropriate language and channel to arrive at the receiver end who invariably interprets to understand the intent of the message without misinterpreting either. That is contextual information is presumed significant for vivid description of communication proceedings (Geertz, 1973).

Interpersonal communication stressed on the point that it creates social connections between at least two individuals (Fisher and Adams, 1994). In reference to the conceptual model of figure 1, to have an effective interpersonal communication, the identified influencing factors that is the sender, message, channel and receiver must be appropriately addressed.

Communication researchers recognized the importance of intent in communication, because intentionality is vital for defining any type of communication (Bowers and Bradac, 1984). Interpersonal communication function in the day-to-day social world and away from communicating between individuals, it includes sharing ideas and willingness to participate (Ting-Toomey and Dorjees, 2018).



Beyond the intent of a communication, the presentation of the message is a vital part of the dissemination process which might be low or high depending on the message context received. To avoid misinterpretation; the context of the communication must be well chosen to fit the receiver. Without context, words and actions may be meaningless (Bateson, 1978). It is imperative to note that the basis of non-effective communication springs up from the imbalance that occurs in communication context (Lunenburg, 2010).

The concept individualism and communitarianism showcased the understanding and ability acquired to understand diverse cultures (Wagner and Moch, 1986). The analysis will concern how these diverse types of communication context influence culture and communication vis-à-vis communication effectiveness and cultural tolerance (Bhawuk and Brislin 1992).

Specific versus Diffuse dimension analysed how individuals connect and relate with each other in their society and work places. This cultural dimension believed there is a total separation between work life and personal life and both should be handled differently. Diffuse dimension concept rather believed that relationships cannot affect work objectives rather it helps (Adler and Gundersen, 2007).

Multiculturalism depicts a society where several different cultures live or work together (Arasaratnam, 2013). This happens often when people from many diverse countries migrate to one place (Bayramov, Volkov, Lyausheva, Posukhova and Samygin, 2015). Multiculturalism invariably boost innovation, creativity and prosperity in an organization (Grishaeva, 2012); because individuals will introduce their intellectuals which when put together will be unique. Immigrants are a source of diverse knowledge and experience (Vassilopoulou, Jonsen, Tatli and Ozbilgin, 2013).



Conspicuous challenges in a multicultural organizations in terms of interpersonal communication, cultural differences and multiculturalism and its influencing factors indicated in Figure 1 below.

Challenges	Influencing factors	Solution to Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpersonal communication• Cultural differences• Multiculturalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SMCR• Communication context• Ethnocentrism• Ambient cultural harmony• Structural intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective Communication• Cultural Fluency• cultural Intelligence

Figure 1: Conceptual Model-(Own figure)



4 Empirical Findings

This chapter takes us through the case study organization and presentation of the author's empirical findings conducted through face-to-face interview sessions. For the empirical findings, the author interviewed ten (10) employees of Lyreco Sweden, most especially the logistics department where most active activities of the company takes place. The chapter follows the structure of the interview guide.

4.1 Lyreco Sweden

Lyreco Group is a multicultural organization which was founded in 1926 by Georges-Gaston Gaspard in the Valenciennes area of France. It is an international distributor of office supplies and workplace products. The organization focused its development on the French territory during the 1970s. Due to internationalization, the company extended its operation beyond France and now the Lyreco Group structure is active in 42 countries on four continents. Lyreco Sweden is located at Bankeryd Jönköping, the southern part of Sweden. The company is into the sales of office accessories, cleaning and hygiene products, catering and safety and packing respectively. Lyreco Sverige AB has 100 employees at this location (www.lyreco.com).

4.1.1 Lyreco Group Culture

Lyreco Sweden operations are divided into three distinct departments. The marketing and sales department, administrative and account department and the logistics department which is the soul of the company. The three departments work as a team, this invariably inform the company slogan which states that “*Working Together For Tomorrow*”.

For every online orders made, the logistic department is responsible to fix these orders by picking the right etiquette orders number and packaged it for urgent delivery within 24hours. This brings customers satisfaction thereby



facilitating more orders. Due to the tenancy of the orders of over 10,000 customers to be picked and packaged for delivery every day, the logistic department is the largest in Lyreco group with over fifty percent multinationals working actively. The official language in Lyreco Sweden is English, while individual chooses to communicate with their colleagues using convenient languages.

4.2 Interpersonal communication

Speaking to the interviewees on how they relate and communicate within themselves while at work, Josef Lindroth, from Sweden stated that officially at Lyreco, the main language is Swedish and English but basically staff use English more since other nationalities that they work with do not understand Swedish. Reiterating his point, he stated that *“Communication within each other is not stressful because the official language is Swedish and English. At every meeting, there are always two sessions for both the Swedish speaking and English-speaking staff. Beyond this, every staff speaks English, so no difficulties to communicate at all* (Lindroth, 2020-05-01). He also pinpointed that beyond the basic Swedish and English language, people from same country most times speak their local languages within themselves while working, *“I hear people speaking to themselves in strange languages, at times I admire it by repeating what they say, I notice this mostly within my African colleagues , I work with so many of them from Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Uganda; though I can’t recognize the differences in the language but it’s fun listening to them”* (Lindroth, 2020-05-01).

Nicola Gaddis, a Serbian also stated that he preferred to communicate in English though he understands Swedish but he believed it’s better for him to speak English. *“I am comfortable speaking English with everyone, it saves me the stress of interpreting all I’ve said to those who doesn’t understand what I said earlier. I just save myself the stress”* (Gaddis, 2020-04-27). For Vivian Onyeukwu, a Nigerian it was totally a different ball game. She stated



that despite the fact that her Swedish was not that good she just love to keep trying her best by communicating in Swedish. *“My friend Maria had really helped me a lot with my Swedish at work, even if I speak English to her, she replies me in Swedish and we are in the same team so I have no choice. Even at lunch time, we sit together. She doesn’t laugh at me rather she helps me pick the right words”* (Onyeukwu, 2020-04-20).

Peter Maltell, a Swedish believed it is a means of learning because it had created an avenue to relate very well within one another in respective of where the person came from. “Education comes in different forms, communication within each other has been a great lesson for me, I am exposed to so many other languages now and it is fun to learn from others; at least I can speak some basic words in Spanish now, I can say I am multi-lingual” (Maltell, 2020-04-14). Ben Wilson, a Ghanaian applauded the management of Lyreco for making lives of foreigners at work much easier and comfortable. He explained further that this singular stride had attracted more foreigners to work at Lyreco without fear of communication challenges.

Yaw Opoku Gyamfi, a Ghanaian and Swedish stated that he is comfortable with both languages because he speaks the two languages fluently but he was able to learn other languages. He said that he enjoys listening to some of his colleagues speak their local languages and also picks some words like greetings from them. This he reiterated created a bond with every one of them. Oscar Flores, a Spanish and Syed Mujtaba Ali, a Bangladesh said the use of English as the official language is a sign of relieve for them at work and it made them accomplished their task much easier at work because language would have been a barrier due to their inability to speak Swedish.



Hugh Robinson, a Jamaican acknowledged that there would have been a catastrophe if there was no common language within all staffs. This he highlighted as a major challenge affecting so many companies here in Sweden because they only employ Swedish speaking staffs. Leo Asmah, a Ghanaian buttressed Hugh Robinson's claim that Lyreco's ability to create a mutual relationship at work is helpful to both the employees and the employer too because it makes the company progress.

4.3 Communication context

All interviewees spoken to acknowledged that communication in Lyreco Sweden is very informal and open and this indirectly boosted the level of cordial relationships between everyone at work irrespective of where you come from or your designation. There is no barrier in terms of relationship and protocol. You can walk to anyone for clarification on things you don't understand without hitch or being bossy. All workers relate freely with each other.

During the author's interview session with Hugh Robinson, a Jamaican, he explained that:

"Despite the fact that Lyreco runs in a low-context communication culture, the organization has always balanced this just to avoid communication barriers. There is an open policy in terms of communication, and one of the training we had is to always communicate clearly which we do always when having meetings. At meetings, it is mandatory to use meeting board in case other individuals need to read more for clearer understanding. Also, we encourage people to ask question and we see no question as stupid. So far, so good, this style had been helping out in bridging the gap of low and high context communication in Lyreco" (Robinson, 2020-04-16). This approach of communication, the respondent acclaimed is one of the strengths in the company.



Buttressing the claim of Hugh Robinson on the communication style of Lyreco, Peter Maltel, a Swedish employee, believed communication is all about follow up.

“I admitted that language can be a big major challenge at times but the most important thing in Lyreco is that everyone should understand your message; normally you can give information in English or Swedish, the most important thing to look out for is the body language, written numbers, words and further more. Here, we encourage everyone to be their brother’s keeper. At every meeting, we encourage the staff to see as many possibilities and open their minds. The most important thing I see in avoiding the challenges of low and high context communication is for all staff to have a common goal, follow up, and let people be involved in actions, togetherness” (Maltel, 2020-04-14).

According to Syed Mujtoba Ali, a Bangladesh said that initially understanding directive was very difficult for him but because both his Swedish and English were bad but he explained that he was quick to adjust by picking some words from his supportive colleagues and getting support from his team leader who did explain every information till he understood it.

“When I joined Lyreco initially, I find it so difficult to even interpret my schedule but gradually things was getting better. I got help from my team leader and colleagues. There was a time that even the company organized a Swedish class for interested staff to learn basic Swedish language and it was fun. At times my pronunciation was bad but it is getting better now. At Lyreco it is advised to learn Swedish but not mandatory. It's not so difficult to communicate to each other now” (Ali, 2020-04-27).

Open and informal communication approach poised has a greater advantage on the organization as a whole. Communication is explicit enough to be understood. Syed Mujtaba Ali further stated the approach helped him a great deal to deliver his task perfectly well. *“From my previous experiences in*



some Swedish companies where I have worked before, functioning at work is a very difficult task for people like me from another country and poor understanding of Swedish language and understanding instructions and information. But at Lyreco, it is so easy, we speak English language officially and instructions and communication are broken down for easy understanding and we are allowed to always ask questions if there is need for better clarification. This has really been helping me deliver my task” (Ali, 2020-04.27).

Yaw Opoku Gyamfi, a Ghanaian and Swedish, in his own word explained that every means of making information simplified are put into use here.

“Beyond taking our daily meetings in two languages, we use pictorial representation too and also use colorful notepads to write short information to attract people to read. Be free to also ask for help” (Gyamfi, 2020-04-16).

Nicolas Gaddis, a Serbian stated that the organization communication style is applaudable because all instructions are easy to understand without stress.

Oscar Flores, a Spanish is of the opinion that making communication explicit enough to all employees will always save time for all, it makes the job get done on time.

Vivian Onyeukwu, a Nigerian expatiated on the benefit of an unambiguous way of communicating information at Lyreco as a good thing and beyond that the ability to walk up to anyone for a clearer understanding also I very good. Ben Wilson and Leo Asmah both Ghanaian are of the opinion that the use of a simple and direct form of disseminating information is a smart move to avoid misinformation among the workers. As a Swedish, Josef Lindroth stated he is more familiar to a simplified form of passing information across to others.



4.4 Individualism vs. Communitarianism

Peter Maltell who joined Lyreco 22years ago reiterated that in as much as Sweden is individualistic in nature, Lyreco is not and it is forbidden here.

“As an organization, we do things together. We celebrate together, work as a team and also share responsibilities too. We see things at Lyreco as a collective responsibility and not as an individual and this has helped the company a great deal. You know this department is a combination of so many nationals. I have in my team people from Ghana, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Jamaica, Sweden ,Spain and many more; having all these nationals in your team give fun. We make it deliberate though to just make the warehouse a fun place to be always. Sincerely if you ask me, I can see big benefits with a mix of nationalities; same as that we want a mixed of men and women and ages as well. Total, it normally creates good energy and atmosphere. It is just fantastic! It gives energy, new ways to see things at work, good ideas and happiness/gratitude for having a job, all this infect you somehow and create a better output. As a team, this is really helping us in achieving the objective and vision of the company” (Maltel, 2020-04-14).

Speaking with Oscar Flores, a Spanish employee, he talked about his fear on his first day at work. *“From my previous experience of Sweden cultural custom, I had prepared to be by myself when I resumed at work but I was dazed the first day of resumption when I see my colleagues working as a team and at every time they come to me to ask if I need help. Also at lunch time the company bought food for everyone and people eat, chatted, laughed and this immediately gave me strength and a sense of belonging, I always look forward for Fika. I am loving Lyreco. Sincerely this sense of togetherness is greatly impacting our output. People work more as a team to meet with deadline everyday”* (Flores, 2020-05-01). Leo Asmah found home at Lyreco and look forward to meet his colleagues’ everyday due to the way they work together as a team. In his words, Leo stated that *“as an African, I*



did not expect so much relationship at work because I felt I might be isolated. My mindset is to come, work for my money and go home. I believe Lyreco is special the team spirit here helped me to learn the intrinsic of the job so fast. My team lead and other superiors were so wonderful, they relate with everyone so easily. I tell you when we are working, you cannot differentiate between a boss and a subordinate. As soon as you receive your schedule for the day, work starts and if there is need to help each other if someone finishes his task earlier, it helps others without been compelled to help out”(Asmah,2020-04-22).

Josef Lindroth specified that it is so easy to share responsibilities within each other team leaders without stress because all my team will make sure we accomplish our task. It is not about who did what or did not. All we do is do thing collectively as a team. Also Hugh Robinson believed that it is eminent the organization had learnt the secret of togetherness and that is why they strive on using it and they are serious about it too. At Lyreco, we take care of over a thousand online customers every day, the only way to meet up demand is to work together as a team.

Syed Mujtaba Ali has a reservation in this aspect. Recounting an experience he once had years ago at work to the interviewer, whereby he was recounting his prayers by soliloquizing to himself and his other colleagues took it as a psychological problem. *“It was not a palatable experience at all. As a Muslim, I always recite my morning prayers while I’m working and unknown to me, some of my colleagues thought I was insane because they saw me talking to myself and called the attention of the team leader to me. I was really annoyed and it caused a great argument between me and the guys but after the issue was resolved, we now good friends” (Ali, 2020-04-27).* He further reiterated that in as much as the organization is encouraging togetherness within the team, some still don’t respect others feelings, mutual respect is very important.



Hugh Robinson believed that in as much as the organization strived to encourage togetherness at work, there is still some little discrepancies here and there but overall, the team spirit still supersede. He stated that they work collectively for a mutual benefit. In their opinion Yaw Opoku Gyamfi and Ben Wilson hinted that some of the Swedish they work with mostly prefer to be on their own if they are permitted by the organization, but such is not allowed at Lyreco, rather each team formed is a combination of all the nationalities mainly to encouraged togetherness.

Vivian Onyeukwu believed the togetherness encouraged by Lyreco had helped her to learn so fast at work. Beyond her daily task, she stated that she had inculcated the act of responsibility more. She explained that achieving a task alone is not that easy except a person works with a team. Nicola Gaddis also supported the claim that one of the ways to succeed at Lyreco is to inculcate the ability to work with others, it is mandatory.

4.5 Specific versus Diffuse

Speaking to Vivian Onyeukwu on if she takes her relationship beyond work, she said that there is a cordial relationship within most of them here. Beyond work most time, the guys go to the gym together and even at weekends they visit each other and party together if any of us is celebrating. Vivian Onyeukwu said *“sincerely here, we are one big family and we cherish relationships, though I avoid some people due to my personal reasons by making the relationship strictly official. My best friend here is Swedish. I learn to eat Swedish food and culture from her. I call her my Lärare”* (Onyeukwu, 2020-04-20).

Nicola Gaddis stated he always enjoyed the company his other colleagues especially the once that he shares common things with *“sometimes I visit my friend at home for lunch or dinner so they can cook their country dish for me.*



I crack a lot of jokes with them and I learn only greeting in their language” (Gaddis, 2020-04-27). He also stated that even at work, they work as a team “we work and we play; we all work as a team, that is the way we roll at Lyreco” (Gaddis, 2020-04-27).

Josef Lindroth stated that relationship shared within themselves is very special. *“I am a shy person, I am Swedish and I love my space but I have my friends within my colleagues, we smoke and drink together. On Fridays we give ourselves a special treat at our lunch hours. We take turn to order sharwama and drinks just to ease stress and talk over duty stress and laugh together”* (Lindroth, 2020-01-05).

Peter Maltell *admitted* he loves his privacy but the culture of Lyreco do not encourage it. *“Sincerely I wish I have my privacy attimes but on the other hand it is beautiful when we go through task together and we meet out deadlines together, it brings so much fulfillment”* (Maltel, 2020-04-14).

Oscar Flores stated that it is not possible to separate his work life from his social life with all these wonderful colleagues *“I think you need to visit during our lunch hour and see the way we relate. Last year I and some of my friends at work travelled on vacation to Denmark and we are planning to travel to Ghana soon maybe after the Covid 19 epidemic and I can’t wait to be in Africa for the first time”* (Flores, 2020-05-01).

In addition, Ben Wilson admitted it was easy for him to acclimatize with others because of his African communal upbringing and also the good atmosphere at work *“it is so easy to relate well at work because here at Lyreco we relate like a family. We always work as a team and beyond that we take it beyond work although some Swedish among us still wish to be treated specially but the company relate with everyone equally”* (Wilson, 2020-04-20).

Yaw Opoku Gyamfi stated that the bond shared within each other at work is very strong. He described it as a family bond which made them mingled



beyond work and expand to their immediate family members too. Hugh Robison admitted that relationship in Lyreco has become a family thing because beyond working together, people relate well outside the four walls of the organization. People wine and dine together mostly at weekend. Syed Mujtaba Ali said the way relationship evolves at Lyreco made him love his job the more. He said the company encourages relationship within and outside the organization which he said was well appreciated. Leo Asmah explained that he spent his weekends mostly with his colleagues either drinking out or at the gymnasium.

4.6 Multiculturalism

Due to the nature of a multicultural organization with diverse nationalities, there is always tendencies of cultural and communication diversity raising its head. Yaw Opoku Gyamfi, takes the interviewer through generally the organization's structure and culture. In his words, Yaw Opoku Gyamfi expatiated that: *"Lyreco has always believed in the strength and what you've got to offer and not your colour or what part of the world you are from. If you check our slogan on my T shirt, you can see it stated clearly 'Working Together for Tomorrow'; this is our watchword (Gyamfi, 2020-04-16).*

Explaining further, Yaw Opoku Gyamfi stated that with his ten years' experience at Lyreco, there have hardly been any case of sidelining people or intimidating other nationalities at work because people are promoted due to hard work. *"If you are hardworking, this is the place to be I tell you because it will be so easy for you to rise to the peak of your career. And that is why people working for the past twenty years are not leaving, even new people that felt they will leave soon never did. I remember my experience too when I joined the company ten years ago, I thought I will leave within six months because I had applied somewhere else, it is ten years now, I am not tired. You can see by yourself different people working here"* (Gyamfi, 2020-04-16).



Experience are shared to improve our tasks, no intimidation from any boss and tasks are collectively done to achieve result he stated.

Lyreco is a company that encourages having so many nationalities working together as a team. Ben Wilson, a Ghanaian stated he is appreciative of a company like Lyreco because it created a survival for so many immigrants in Sweden, *“you hardly hear any case of racism within us because it is never encouraged rather they encourage hard work and it is the only criteria to be promoted without sentiments. The experience gave me avenue to learn about others’ culture, and most importantly we brainstorm together at meetings by contributing individual’s expertise. The culture work towards the success of the teams. It was a deliberate act by the company to focus on output. Lyreco encouraged working together as a team and be more productive”* (Wilson, 2020-04-20).

Josef Lindroth stated that he had gathered new experience working with so many nationalities. I am a Swedish and my perception had really changed about others. *“As Swedish we love our space but I’ve learnt to readjust that about myself. I’ve never been to some countries but with my relationship with them at work I can tell you something now”* (Lindroth, 2020-01-05).

Vivian Onyeukwu and Hugh Robinson explained that the organization is fair enough in making everyone at work feel the same without sentiments but it is obvious to everyone that some Swedish colleagues wished the organization treat them specially than others. They do not want to be in the same team with others. But Lyreco always disregard this because they want everybody to work as a team without sentiments. Peter Maltell said his working in a company like Lyreco has opened his eyes to so many things about other people’s culture which made him understand and respect them. As a Swedish, peter stated he now understand that there a lot of differences in culture and there is need to respect each other.



Syed Mujtaba Ali, in his opinion admitted working with different nationalities at work had made him a better person. He stated that this opened his horizon about each individual, culture, behavior, reaction to things, food. Oscar Flores also stated his exposure to work with colleagues from other part of the world is a lesson of life to him. He said he is opportune to even understand the way others think, comprehend and analyzed issues. Nicola Gaddis and Leo Asmah both pinpointed that the major thing they could say is that working with other nationalities had thought them tolerance in every aspect of life.



5 Analysis

In this chapter, the empirical findings are analysed using the previously presented conceptual model. It is analyzed in order to gain an understanding of the challenges of interpersonal communication and intercultural differences in a multicultural organization.

5.1 Interpersonal communication

Berlo's SMCR Model (1977) of interpersonal communication stipulated that for an effective interpersonal communication to occur, the message must be between two or more people. The concept also highlighted the importance of its four elements that is Sender- Message- Channel and Receiver. The process of creating a message by a sender using the appropriate words, verbal or non-verbal communication to depict the intent and using the appropriate way or channel to reach the receiver is important to enable the right interpretation.

The Berlo's model also established that it is essential to put the social system into consideration when communicating; that is the cultural value and belief of the receiver for the intent of the message to be effectively received and interpreted. Therefore, there is a need to possess a good communication skills.

All the interviewees established that the Lyreco employees understood the importance of interpersonal communication within their team and its effect on their output. Ting-Toomey and Dorjees (2018) opined that interpersonal communication influences the hearts, minds and deed of persons in the daily social world to function effectively. When the issue of interpersonal communication is addressed, it will reduce the challenges of communication and non-effectiveness within the team members.



Devita (2000) stated that beyond communicating between individuals, communication is more of sharing ideas and feelings and willingness to participate. Lindroth (2020-05-01) reiterated that because the organization understands the effectiveness of good interpersonal communication, they introduced English and Swedish language as the official language in Lyreco. This greatly helped with effective and easy communication among all staff especially non-Swedish speaking staffs.

From the study, it is obvious that if there is a mutually agreed official language of communication in an organization, it will go a long way to bridge the communication gap between different foreigners working together in a multicultural team. In the case company studied-Lyreco, the official language was both English and Swedish language. This according to all interviewed eased the challenges that might ensued of interpersonal communication. If you do not speak Swedish, then you can communicate in English.

On the other hand Vivian believed that having an option of language made her developed a passion for Swedish language and that spur her to start learning because she wants to understand Swedish language more.

It is also observed that measures are in place to eradicate any challenge communication and culture diversity may posed mostly from the way information are disseminated and perceived. I also deduced from the interviews that beyond communicating in the two official languages, people of similar cultures are not restricted to do speak with each other in their local dialect intermittently to ease the stress of borrowed languages. Also, when there is an alternative official language, it creates curiosity to want to learn other language.

Overall, all the interviewees said they either communicate in English, Swedish and their local language but officially it is permissive to communicate in both English and Swedish.



5.2 Communication context

Communication researchers acknowledged the impact of perception and intent in communication, that is, intentionality is important for describing any type of communication (Bowers and Bradac, 1984). Hence, there is a need to be explicit with the context of communication especially in a multicultural team. Contextual information is presumed essential for thick-description of communication measures (Geertz, 1973).

It was observed from all the interviews that the company's management send out information informally and explicitly. The company did not underplay the danger of a complex information and the challenges that ensued in interpreting information by different cultures, the reason the company conducts their daily meeting in both English and Swedish language is mainly to avoid misinterpretation. Pictorial support was also introduced to explain information with follow up on assisting one another.

With the way the issue of communication is handled at Lyreco, it created a mutual and effective multicultural work team. I gathered that when information is clearly stated, it helps boost output because time is not wasted trying to understand the information rather it creates a conducive work environment and increases the level of cordial relationships between everyone at work irrespective of their nationalities or designation.

From the reactions of the interview, it is observed that when information is simplified, it reduces the chances of misinterpretation which mostly causes negative reactions when the intent of the communication is not well spelt out. Bateson (1978) confirmed that without context, words and actions may be meaningless.

Dahl (2004) stated that attention is expected on literal meanings of words and less to the context surrounding the words. Supporting the claim, Korac-Kakabadse and Kouzmin (2001) is of the opinion that the level to which a



speaker trust on dynamics other than unambiguous communication to express their messages to other colleague as stated by the interviewees.

Most of the interviewees spoken to agreed that when information is open and explicit it helps a great deal. Robinson(2020-04-16) stated that different strategies are used to communicate at Lyreco and above all, people are encourage to ask for more clarification if things are not clear enough. This encourage effective flow of communication within team members. Maltel (2020-04-04) acknowledged that in as much as communication could be a barrier, it is mandatory for all information to be explicit. Ali (2020-04-27) stated that explicit communication really helped him in achieving his task because there is always someone to make to explain to him better.

It is important to know that beyond the intent of a communication; communication presentation is a vital part of the dissemination process which might be low or high depending on the message context. To get the appropriate feedback and reaction; the context of the communication must be well chosen to fit the receiver; without context, words and actions may be meaningless (Bateson, 1978). It is imperative to note that the basis of non-effective communication springs up from the in-balance that occurs in communication context (Lunenburg, 2010).

Despite the fact that the issue of high versus low context communication was mentioned by theorists as one of the many challenges faced, it is imperative that measures to curtail this can be put in place like Lyreco did. The employees are more culturally sensitive. It is obvious from everyone I interviewed that the management of Lyreco has made it mandatory in their policy for information to be as open as possible. It is also mandatory for all information to be explicit enough to be understood and supported with pictorial communication materials. Another means to curtail this challenge is



the use of a common and central language that is open and informal. It is eminent that the challenges that occur when information are not properly sent are the basis of communication challenges, therefore, context of information is vital.

I could also see structural intervention in use. The organization avoided language been a barrier rather they introduced another language away from the host country language which is Swedish and introduced English just to have a balance communication. Also, the organization introduced basic Swedish class for their non-speaking Swedish staffs.

From the testimonial of Lyreco on the way the issue of communication is handled without challenge, I will call for the review and update of the Hall and Hall cultural value orientations to suit the present multicultural organization.

5.3 Individualism vs. Communitarianism

According to Yang (2019), Individualism and collectivism are two beliefs that impact the persona of culture. It is stated that individualism as a concept believed in an individual ideologies, interest and initiatives and looked down on others; it also ascribes more significance to privacy doing thing for his or her personal interest with no consideration for others. Communitarianism rather is a 'we' culture that is everything that is helpful to society is promoted (Hofstede, 1980). Whatever the interests of individual must agree with the society.

Lehrer (2001) further stated that there is a current conflict between individualistic and communitarian conceptions of rationality. Organization with combination of these dimension will surely thrive for balance in order to avoid friction among the workers. Both Hosfede and Trompenaar also shared this concept.



Despite the fact that Lyreco operates in an individualistic environment, the organizational culture chooses to practice communitarianism within the organization. At Lyreco, hierarchy is under play mainly to create a team spirit. The corporate culture calls for togetherness in everything and this is eminent in the corporate slogan of the company that states 'Together Working Together for Tomorrow'. From the empirical findings, it was discovered that despite the fact the organization is multicultural inclined, working as a team is the core value the organization rides on.

It should be noted that this Hofstede and Trompenaar's cultural dimension are mostly used by researchers to understand the modifications between different cultures (Cohen and Avrahami, 2006). Despite the fact that Sweden is individualistic by nature, but at Lyreco it is seen as a different ball game because the company practices collectivism.

From the responses, it was established that collective responsibilities improve work effectiveness. It is used as a strength in Lyreco and this is reflective in the company's corporate logo which states 'Working Together for Tomorrow'.

It established that the policy the organization operates on did not encourage ethnocentrism or ambient cultural disharmony because it did not encourage cultural superiority or intercultural tension or conflict within the staff.

5.4 Specific versus Diffuse

Looking through the dimensions, it depicts the way individuals communicate and relate with each other in the society (Smith, 1990) either by using perfect descriptive words, truthfulness and proofs to deliver what they want, that is an informal relationship between people or communicating using indirect communication with relative signs to pass message (Straub et al. 2002).



The dimensions analyzed individuals' connection and relationship with each other in their society and work places. It is established from the interviews that at Lyreco, diffuse dimension is operational because they believed that relationships cannot affect work objectives negatively rather it helps; it is an overlap between work and personal lives (Adler and Gundersen, 2007). Relationship is perceived differently depending on individual's cultural background.

Gaddis (2020-04-27) stipulated that overall, the benefit that has been enjoyed by having cordial relationship with the other team members is great. It made the work environment very conducive for everyone to work. Flores (2020-05-01) also agreed that relationship at Lyreco is beyond the organization.

From the information gathered at Lyreco, it was deduced that relationship is key within their work team. All staff interviewed attributed to a cordial relationship both at work and beyond work environment. It is obvious that cordial relationship breeds togetherness in a multicultural team and yield good output.

5.5 Multiculturalism

Culture is identified as relevant to communication; Hall and Hall (1990) stipulated that if it is not handled well, it is a prerequisite that causes differences within relationship in a multicultural team. Coming together of diverse individuals from different culture, exposure, educational background, viewpoints working together as a team will yield a better result if they on a project.

In as much as Sweden is an individualistic country, it is gathered that, Lyreco is not because they encourage togetherness within their team members. The interviewees acknowledged working together as a team and sharing



responsibilities gives them commitment to the success of the company too. Everyone interviewed reiterated that individualism is not encouraged at Lyreco at all making work place fun for the team members. It is seen that a team spirit has a big benefit.

Summing up my information, I could deduce that despite the differences in nationalities, every member of staff function on a common ground. They work as a team and it is even stated in the company's slogan 'Working Together for Tomorrow'.



6 Conclusion

This chapter of the thesis proffers answers to the research questions. The chapter will also present the managerial and the theoretical implications alongside the limitations of the study and suggestion for further research.

6.1 Answers to the Research Questions

The aim of this study was to understand challenges of interpersonal communication and intercultural differences posed into a multicultural organization and approaches to curtail its occurrences.

6.1.1 Research Question One

What are the challenges of interpersonal communication and cultural differences in a multicultural organization?

From this thesis, it is eminent that interpersonal communication and culture play a vital role in an internationalized organization. And for an organization to avoid the many challenges interpersonal communication and cultural differences within themselves brings, this research highlighted the importance of an organization to guide against cultural differences because it brews inter- cultural pressures and battles within individuals invariably undermines creative thinking in tasks that garner understanding from several cultures. And for a more vibrant and fulfilment of organizational goals, an organization needs a diverse team mainly to compare various creative viewpoints in handling a task.

According to the research, it is imperative that interpersonal communication as a challenge must not be based on assumptions, there is need to take cognizance of the communication style of the person been communicated with; that is using the right approach of either low context communication or high context communication considering the receiver's social system. It is



better if communication is open, informal, simplified and explicit. This will no doubt encourage effective communication among work colleagues

On the issue of cultural differences, it is established that ethnocentrism, individualism and ambient cultural disharmony are major intercultural challenges that might brew up conflict if not curtailed.

6.1.2 Research Question Two

In what way can the challenges in communication and cultural differences be resolved?

A well-structured organizational culture will surely proffer a lasting solution to the differences in communication and cultural differences in multicultural organization. This invariably encourages unison within workers. A well-structured organizational culture will surely proffer a lasting solution to the disparity in communication and cultural differences in multicultural organization. This invariably encourage unison within workers. From the research made, it is observed that there is need for cultural competence to strive among teams in a multicultural organization. Cultural competence gives the capability to efficiently comprehend, communicate and relate with others from other cultural background. It entails knowing every detail about an individual culture, having an encouraging approach towards other cultural differences, and understanding other cultural beliefs and values (Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud, 2006).

When a team member has cultural competence, such person will possess an open attitude to other cultures, self-awareness likewise of others, cultural knowledge and cultural skills. This invariably resolved the challenge of communication and cultural difference in a multicultural organization. Beyond this, there is need for employees of a multicultural organization to



be culturally sensitive, that is acknowledging that there is disparity among cultures but there is none is superior to the other; no need to give value to the differences, this create neutral attitude towards others. Culture are seen as the same with no preference to either one culture or the other. The above therefore calls for the need for regular cultural knowledge incorporated into organization culture. Cultural knowledge makes an individual inquire about other cultural characteristics, history, values, belief and behaviour of other cultural groups. (Sackmann, 1992). There is need to encourage cultural fluency among colleagues which calls for awareness with cultures; their environments, how they operate, and techniques they entwine with relationships in times of battle and agreement.

6.2 Managerial Implication

The result of the research findings can offer a useful viewpoints to multicultural organizations or organizations contemplating to internationalize.

The research highlighted the importance of communication and culture and its dangers if it is not properly managed. Therefore, it is imperative for communication to be simple, open and explicit for an easy understanding. Also the context of a communication should be influenced by the social setting of the receiver, this will corroborate the right use of context either low or high context communication.

It is important for a multicultural organization to cultivate a central language that will cut across every member of staff for easy communication. Above all, it is mandatory for the management of an organization to implement structural intervention. The research pinpointed that an organization has a vital role to play in order to curtail impending intercultural challenge and intercultural differences.



6.3 Theoretical Implication

This thesis can be a starting point for further researches on the antecedents of interpersonal communication and intercultural differences in a multicultural organization.

When conducting this research, it is glaring that most of the theory of communication and culture needed to be reviewed as the world is evolving, likewise knowledge also is expanding. Business managers also are working around the challenges that communication and culture differences might cause in order to have an effective work team (Harmon and Trends, 2010).

Organizational culture had taken a step forward to reduce the changes that is eminent in terms of communication and culture, therefore implementing different concepts like cultural fluency, cultural intelligence and also structural intervention to curb the excesses.

Furthermore, the thesis indicated that organizational culture also plays a greater role in bridging the gap between intercultural sentiments that might come within a multicultural team. Thereby putting into place machineries to curtail this and also encourage team spirit within the workforce.

Organizational culture had gone far ahead of most of the theory to proffer solution to the challenges of communication and culture.

6.4 Societal Implication

Ability to communicate an intent effectively within individuals without hitch is a thing that needs to be handled carefully. Therefore, it is important to channel information in the right context considering the cultural background of others without assumption.

It is expedient to have a collective cultural system that incorporates every culture in a society. Hence, Cultural fluency is a great asset to have in a



society, thereby every culture will understand element of other's culture and communication; this will enable a cordial cultural groups in the society (Scott, 1999).

It is also important in an organizational culture for members to be viable and possess cultural intelligence (Earley and Ang, 2003). That is connecting divisions and knowledge gaps in an organization by enlightening their peers about different cultures; transferring knowledge between different groups; helping to build interpersonal relationship.

Multiculturalism is important because it dilutes and dissipates the divisiveness of ignorance. It is important because it encourages dialogue, often between radically different cultures that have radically different perspectives.

6.5 Limitation

Presenting the results of this study, it is also imperative to discuss the limitations of the study. Working on a single case study design was a limitation and also the sudden outbreak of Covid 19 epidemic truncated the time frame and earlier outlined interview sessions which limited the numbers of respondents interviewed. Despite this, I endeavoured to secure the credibility and transferability of the study. It should be noted that working on a single case study do not give room for comparison to other firms but between the interviewees and their perceptions. To study a phenomenon on one case only is a risk, and can be a limitation due to the lack of no comparison between cases.

Although the entire organization is not my primary focus for the study, yet dealing with a subset—logistics department of the organization might be seen as a limitation therefore the result might on be based on the entire multicultural organization. Also, the case studied is based in Sweden, there is



tendency for the result to be influenced by this factor vis-a-viz if other part of the world is considered too because the result might be slightly different in another countries.

Despite the limitations experienced during the course of this thesis, the findings were able to give answer to the research questions.

6.6 Suggestion for future Research

For future research, I suggest that related studies could be conducted using reviewed and recent theoretical framework on culture and communication. As communication and culture is a phenomenon that is multifaceted and comprehensive with different conceptualized models and theories. I advise that this type of study should be done on a multiple case study or rather on another single case study from another country.

Since this study lay more emphasis on the challenges of interpersonal communication and cultural differences in a multicultural organization, it will be insightful if a research study could be done looking at the same subject in other part of the world so that it could be analysed if the phenomenon is a general occurrence in organizations.



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Appendix

Interview Guide

Introduction

1. Can you tell me your name, nationality, your department, years you have been working in Lyreco and your position?
2. Briefly can you take me through your operation, tell me what your jobs entails?

Multiculturalism

3. Lyreco Sweden is a multinational company that has so many nationalities working here, is this a management style of the company?
4. How does it feel like working with people from different part of the world in your team? Any experience you wish to share with me in term of relating with other nationalities at work?
5. Do you feeling inferior to Swedish born staffs?

Interpersonal Communication

6. Lyreco is a multicultural organization, how do you cope with other nationalities with different cultural status in terms of:
 - a. interpersonal communication
 - b. time spent on each task, how fast or slow are they compare to yourself
 - c. cultural differences
7. How do you communicate with each other within the team, especially with other nationalities? Can you share your experience with me most especially challenges faced.
8. From experience, what do you think are the challenges caused by interpersonal communication and what will you say is the best approach of



interpersonal communication within team member that can spur effective team spirit

Low versus high context communication

9. Do all nationals in your team understand or assimilate instructions and orders quickly? Will you say the level of understand varies?

10. How do you avoid communication misunderstanding in your team? If any, tell us about a time when your communication was misinterpreted, and how it resolved was.

11. Is there any differences in the allocation of responsibilities most especially in terms of hierarchy within the nationalities here? What about between genders?

Individualism versus communitarianism

12. Will you say all nationalities are treated equally and fairly in all situation?

13. Are task handled individually or as a group

Specific versus Diffuse

14. Beyond work environment, do you still relate with colleagues mostly from other countries after work. If yes or no why

15. Will you say the working environment is conducive for all nationalities?