

How do Project Managers address cross-cultural challenges in multicultural projects? Perspectives from the healthcare industry

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (Project Management Stream) at Dublin Business School

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Declaration

I, Seán Costello, declare that this dissertation I have submitted to Dublin Business School, for the award of Master of Business Administration (Project Management) is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references.

Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

Signed: Seán Costello

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Abstract

The study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge relating to how Project Managers address issues that can arise due to the presence of a multicultural workforce. The research examines information gathered from a group of 6 diverse Project Managers who work in the healthcare sector through a qualitative design by using semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis of these interviews shows that Project Managers implement a variety of methods such as setting clearly defined roles & responsibilities within the team, establishing trust, maintaining clear lines of communication & being able to adapt their styles of leadership as they see fit. The data also suggests that there is no one tool, theory or training that Project Managers utilize, but rather the skills they use to address these issues are developed from experience.

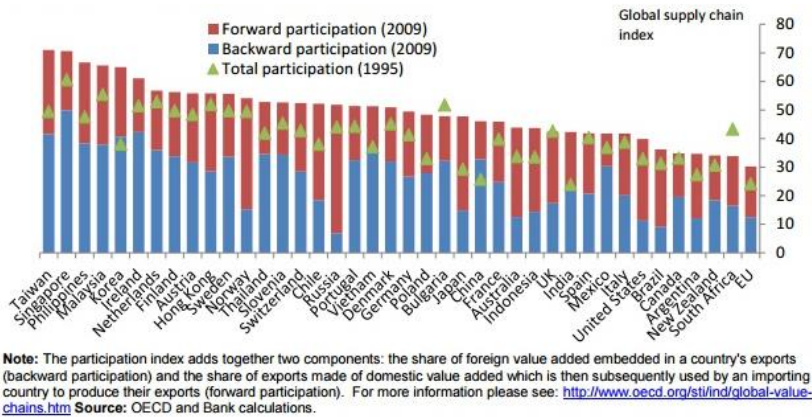
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background:

In the globalised economy that we find ourselves a part of in 2021, there is an inherent degree of systemic multiculturalism (Zinn and Goldsby, 2020). In turn, this multiculturalism leads to the idea that a majority, if not all, projects could be seen as 'multicultural' (Zinn and Goldsby, 2020).. As has been highlighted in the academic literature, certain cultures tend to have conflicting values & beliefs, preferences in methods of communication & forms of engagement and perspectives on work practices (Ronan & Shenkar, 2013; Kubicek, Bhanugopan & O'Neill, 2019). When working in multicultural projects therefore, it is crucial that the Project lead (or project manager) can utilise a set of skills and methods to overcome the barriers created by these various cultures.

A facet of the modern project team, systemic multiculturalism now requires individuals & groups from different organisations & countries who have different value systems to share authority, accountability and decision making (Rodrigues & Sbragia, 2013; Shore & Cross, 2005). Because of this, there is an extended responsibility for leaders in projects to create project synergy through the effective coordination of culturally diverse teams (Huang, 2016).

However, the business environment in 2021 is, in many senses, far removed from that of the world in the 1980s, in which many traditional forms of project management were developed (Azzopardi, 2021; Paul and Feliciano-Cestero, 2020). Globalisation has been central to this development, both economic and culturally.



In fact, the economic & cultural interdependence that is associated with globalisation has directly changed global supply chains (Zinn and Goldsby, 2020).

Figure 1. Index of Participation in Global Supply Chains

Source: World Economic Forum, 2022

This systemic multiculturalism now requires individuals & groups from different organisations & countries who have different value systems to share authority, accountability and decision making (Rodrigues & Sbragia, 2013; Shore & Cross, 2005). Recognising that traditional project management methods overlook these important factors, which often act as hidden stumbling blocks during projects (Huang, 2016; Dülfer, 2011), there is an extended responsibility for leaders in projects to create project synergy through the effective coordination of culturally diverse teams (Huang, 2016).

1.2 Rationale and Aim of the Study:

The Project Manager's role is primarily to guide a project from start to completion. But within this duty lies the responsibility to be able to react appropriately when unexpected circumstances arise (Kordova, Katz & Frank 2018; Wu et al., 2019). When it comes to this occurrence, there is at times a cross-cultural element which must be carefully managed (Lock and Wagner, 2019 p.209).

There is a wealth of academic literature which supports the view that team leaders who are sensitive to cultural differences, and who understand how to manage cultural barriers achieve more robust and successful results than those who lead homogenous teams with little diversity (Rock and Grant, 2016). However, a search in academic literature will not show a wealth of research in bridging cultural barriers with reference specifically to Project Managers. While cultural awareness is becoming increasingly promoted, and research of empirical practice of culture recognition is increasing, there is a lack of evidence of practice in the industry of Project Management (Huang, 2016). Furthermore, despite the importance of the impacts of cultural diversity being touted, research has shown that it has been poorly researched by authors in the field of Project Management (Rodrigues and Sgrabia, 2013; Leybourne, 2007). Furthermore, there is no consensus as to which types of cultures are the biggest priority to address for Project Managers. Essentially, ignorance of the challenges cultural differences can create instability within projects, and these cultural barriers can be overcome when the appropriate tools are applied (Ranf, 2010).

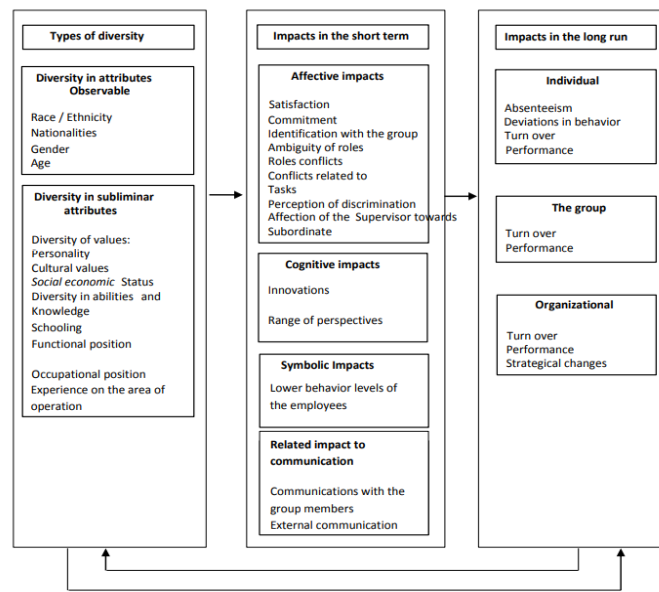


Figure 2. Impacts of Cultural Diversity on Individuals

Source: Lima and Patah, 2016

Specifically in the industry of healthcare, over the past number of decades the importance of interprofessional & intercultural collaboration has become prevalent (Tong et al, 2018; Hlongwa & Rispel, 2021). For healthcare projects to succeed it is of vital importance that healthcare professionals, especially project managers have the competence to coordinate these projects successfully (Hlongwa & Rispel, 2021). In their 2015 study into the socio-cultural influences of interprofessional collaboration in healthcare, Irajpouour and Alavi suggest that there is significantly more research in the area of cultural influences & challenges within healthcare, as the current literature related to this topic is scarce.

It is for this reason, that this dissertation aims to focus on what methods Project Managers in the healthcare sector use to address these challenges.

1.3 Research Questions

- *Are there any particular methods, frameworks or techniques that Project Managers implement when cross-cultural challenges arise?*
- *What skills do Project Managers use to overcome these challenges?*
- *Do the methods they use align with any theoretical frameworks?*

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is essentially to scrutinise the methods and skills that are utilised by Project Managers who work in the healthcare industry when attempting to overcome cultural barriers in projects that comprise multiple cultural groups. According to Saunders et al. (2015, p.72), the literature review acts as the connection between already gathered information, and the primary research being conducted. Therefore, the literature review in this study intends to generate a cognizance of the theories and findings from other researchers that already exist in the literature relating to how cultural barriers are overcome, and to gain an insight into the operations of multicultural projects. This literature review has also helped the author to identify knowledge gaps that existed prior to the conduction of the primary research.

Using a thematic approach, the literature review will follow the following headings:

Project Managers Role

Cultural Diversity & Intercultural Relations

The Importance of Diversity Management

Leadership in Projects

Multicultural Teams

Emotional Intelligence

Pre-Established Methods & Tools for Cultural Management

Theories Related to Cultural Management

2.2 The project manager's Role

The role of the Project Manager is to plan, schedule and transition projects through the various tasks or stages – central to this is the management and coordination between ‘task owners’ (Chen and Steinke, 2019). With the multicultural workforce core to the project's success, it is fair to assume that bridging cultural barriers within the project team is important to the Project Managers role (Chen and Steinke, 2019; Huang, 2016). Projects in the year 2021 have grown in complexity and require culturally and functionally diverse teams to work together – orchestrated by the project manager (Wu et al, 2019). As highlighted by Kerzner (2009), there are national cultures, organizational cultures, functional cultures, and team cultures. Similar methods of cultural bridging between these groups are required of Project Managers in practice. However, dealing with cultural diversity is not a huge component of the training in which Project Managers receive (Obikunle, 2002).

2.3 Cultural Diversity & Intercultural Relations

Multicultural teams differ significantly from monocultural teams, and it is of huge importance for the PM to find the optimal way of dealing with each group's individual attributes (PMBOK, 2017 p.65). Leadership styles of the PM must align & adapt to each cultural groups' characteristics and needs (Bonsu and Twum-Danso, 2018). While the term ‘culture’ is often used in its traditional sense (relating to national cultures) it is the thought processes, attitudes, values, and behaviours of groups of stakeholders within project teams that will define cultural groups (Chen and Steinke, 2019). Within project teams, there are other characteristics which will define cultural groups, such as religion, education level, age/generation, the defined culture of the industry/company,

or gender. These different cultural groups will often encompass opposing characteristics or points of view in their core values. For example, as described by Weaver (2001), American culture holds 'Individualism' as a crucial core value whereas Chinese culture holds 'non-competition' as a core value (Fan, 2000). As pointed out by the Author George Orwell 'Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it', and intergenerational project teams require a leader who is competent at breaking down these barriers.

According to Rouse and Rouse (2002), it is the combination of a multitude of factors such as behaviours, social norms, held values & beliefs which define a given culture. It has been described as the aggregate of characteristics which also determines the uniqueness of an individual (Hofstede, 2001; Ractham and Thompson, 2015 p. 117). Some authors have defined culture as being more of a way of behaving; something that a group of people with certain characteristics have evolved over time and share with one another (Gould, 2018). These authors are generally of the view that culture is something which is learned, absorbed and reinforced by their thoughts and perceptions but also how other cultures are interpreted (Olli, Gunnar Grendstad and Wollebaek, 2001; Schein and Schein, 2016 p.95).

In the business environment, where there are fundamental cultural differences within teams that are not recognized by the project leads, conflicts can easily arise due to frustration and lack of understanding between teams.

2.4 Cross-Cultural Challenges

The nature of international healthcare projects means that there can be high turnovers of staff (WHO, 2022). This leaves Project Managers with smaller windows of opportunities to create an environment that enhances multicultural synergy (Huang, 2016). Within this there lies the issue that each stakeholder will have their own outlooks, value systems and routines (Büll et al., 2019). Compounded with this is the unique nature of Projects – as touted by the Project Management Institute: *‘No two projects are ever identical’*. These ever-changing conditions add an additional layer of complexity to projects, and mean that Managers must remain dynamic and open to change at all times. Throughout the lifespan of a given project, the Project Manager may face some challenges related to this cultural diversity. As pointed by Huang (2016):

‘During the implementation period they mainly focus on the professional, regulatory and (infra)structural framework. On the other hand they don’t pay enough attention to the hidden stumbling blocks, namely the management of different people and cultures’

One significant challenge that arises in multicultural environments is the issue of language. As pointed out by Ramlan et al (2018), language barriers are one of the most common challenges faced by multicultural or international teams working in collaboration. While dialect and language can play a role in creating issues, this challenge also extends to the use of jargon (PMBOK, 2017).

The PMBOK (2017) presents a communication model which represents the idea that messages are directly influenced the sender & receivers culture and personal biases, in both how the message is sent and received (see figure 3). In this model along the transmission line of

the message the misinterpretations are symbolized by ‘noise’. When encountering cultural barriers with communication, this tool could be useful for Project Managers to understand why these issues have arisen by identifying the ‘noise’ (PMBOK, 2017).

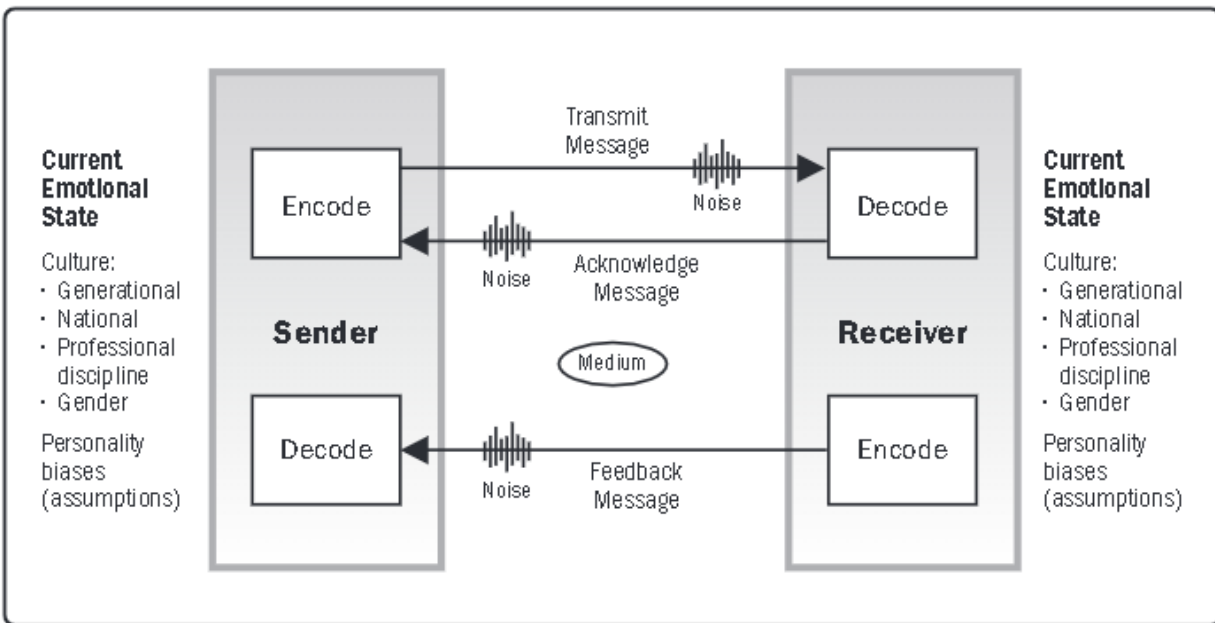


Figure 3: Communication bias Model Source: PMBOK, 2017, p. 373

Misunderstandings and disagreements can occur in such projects also due to differences in motivation (Sandstø & Reme-Ness, 2021). For example, Youker (2004) when describing humanitarian work completed in Africa how he witnessed conflicts caused by differences in how family and society are viewed. Explaining how the family unit is an integral part of some cultures, he states:

“extended family system is a wonderful social security system in a very uncertain environment. But it is also a barrier to developing a modern economy. It makes accumulation of capital for business difficult. It leads to nepotism instead of an honest civil service system.”

There have been studies on this topic which recommend that two conflicts principles can sometimes be joined together as norms, rather than fought against one another, for more favourable outcomes.

As shown by Irajpour & Alavi (2015), interprofessional collaboration in healthcare projects often results in conflicts related to socio-cultural factors, such as attitudes towards other groups or professions, attitudes to teamwork and how they view their own roles within healthcare teams. This could be due to a number of reasons, for example as pointed out by Erickson (2011), experiences in one's formative years can have significant impacts on how people from different generations view the working world. The varying outlooks will affect how messages between stakeholders are both conveyed and interpreted (McElfresh & Keiko Stark, 2019). This means that views of authority can act as catalysts in information exchange and ultimately project progression (Magano et al., 2020).

2.5 Importance of Diversity Management & the Influence of Leadership

There is a wealth of academic literature which supports the view that team leaders who are sensitive to cultural differences, and who understand how to manage cultural barriers achieve more robust and successful results than those who lead homogenous teams with little diversity (Rock and Grant, 2016). However, a search in academic literature will not show a wealth of research in bridging cultural barriers with reference specifically to Project Managers. While cultural awareness is becoming increasingly promoted, and research of empirical practice of culture recognition is increasing, there is a lack of evidence of practice in the industry of Project Management (Huang, 2016). Furthermore, despite the importance of the impacts of cultural diversity being touted, research has shown that it has been poorly researched by authors in the

field of Project Management (Rodrigues and Sgrabia, 2013; Leybourne, 2007). There also appears to be no consensus as to which aspects of cultures are the biggest priority to address for Project Managers. Essentially, ignorance of the challenges of cultural differences can create instability within projects, and these cultural barriers can be overcome when the appropriate tools are applied (Ranf, 2010).

There is evidence which supports the increasing need for groups of managers from a variety of cultures, in order to optimise project output (Romani, Mahadevan and Primecz, 2018). This will inherently bring about an understanding of different cultures. However, some organisations have found that this method can be problematic, rather than an opportunity to create competitive advantage due to the challenges that arise from communication standpoints (Jenifer and Raman, 2015; Hussain, 2018). Singh (2014) highlights that these difficulties exist not so much because of the diversity, but rather due to a pre-existing lack of understanding of the nature and value in cultural diversity from managers.

Of the various leadership models & approaches which have been developed, naturally, each of them contain their own strengths & reasons for criticism (Pretorius et al., 2018). However, the general consensus is that leadership is one of the most critical success factors in any project, regardless. Traditional outlooks on leadership describe a 'top-down approach', or 'autocratic leadership' styles as being the approach to strive for (Wang and Liu, 2019). However this has changed significantly throughout the decades and the role of a leader is now seen as more of a transformative, coaching position, whereby a strong leader must evaluate the internal & external forces, the social environment & needs of their team members to optimise

organisational interdependencies and practices (Pretorius et al., 2018; Pearce et al., 2014; Sandstø and Reme-Ness, 2021).

With regard to leadership within projects, the Project manager plays a critical role in acting as a leader and 'link-man' between the various project teams that co-exist and work together (George, 2020). However, the content on professional certificates within Project Management such as the PMP exam, does not emphasise this. According to Pretorius et al. (2018), this is in contradiction to current evidence which promotes flexibility in leadership styles. This is largely because the nature of projects is that of an agile environment due to the high risks aligned with the constant need for changes within project scope (Sandstø and Reme-Ness, 2021). Although this agility is preached in certain areas, there insufficient mention of cultural training. Cunningham et al., (2015) describes how it is the down the individual project manager, rather than the training they receive which defines their leadership style in relation to cultural management.

2.6 Transformational Leadership

The concept of transformational leadership is a proactive approach which the leader attempts to inspire their team members to innovate by creating an environment & atmosphere which is conducive to doing so (Gehrke and Claes, 2014, p.133). It has been described as being an adaptive approach, rather than an organisational culture (Gehrke and Claes, 2014). This approach has been aligned with being a



Figure 4. Aspects of Transformational Leadership

Source: American Nurse, 2022

significant factor in successful projects, likely due to its role in enhancing overall team communication and teamwork (Aga et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2011).

2.7 Cross-Cultural Leadership

According to Bonsu and Twum-Danso (2018), managers who express sensitivity and expand their knowledge on other cultures produce better outcomes. By focussing on an openness understanding between cultures, lines of communication can be significantly improved and ultimately achieving multicultural synergy (Brasseur, 2020). Huang (2016) highlights the importance of synergy, or harmony among teams for the success of a project. While Barmeyer, Bausch and Moncayo, in their 2019 paper completed an analysis of cross-cultural management in the literature. Describing it as a *'young and interdisciplinary field'* with a *'great number of approaches. Problems, researchers and disciplines'*, Huang highlights that this concept contains three distinct areas: expertise, empathy and cultural competency - arguably the most important when dealing with multicultural projects. It is stated that it is essential that Project Managers are equipped with the necessary skills in these areas to help bridge the challenges that arise in multicultural projects.

2.8 Emotional intelligence (EI)

Closely linked to leadership style is the notion of EI. The importance of EI in project management should not be underestimated (PMI, 2019) and it has been suggested that managers who have higher levels of EI can enhance the job satisfaction of their team members & more effectively lead their teams (Hasson, 2015 p.19).

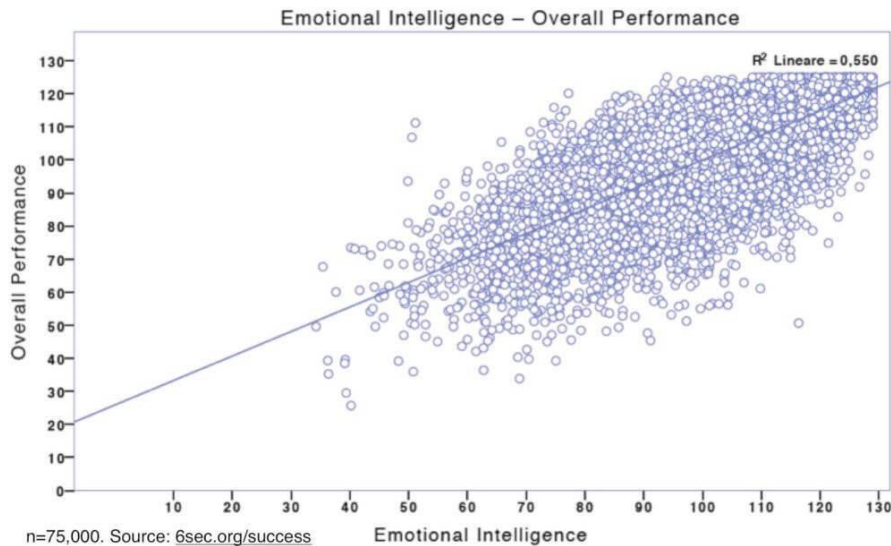


Figure 5. Correlation between EI and KPI performance of managers

Source: Freedman & Fariselli, 2016

For the purpose of this research, it is important to clarify the role that EI plays in overcoming the challenges that arise in culturally-diverse projects. EI is an important element in the recognition of a given culture's needs, and therefore cultural management. While the literature highlights how the application of EI can effectively manage change, deal with conflict & make decisions, it does not receive adequate attention within project management education such as the PMI certification, or the PMBOK (Connolly & Reinicke, 2017, p.5). Despite this, it has been shown that the correct usage of EI aids managers in improving their leadership style and is associated with positive results (Rechtfertig, 2010). Greater levels of EI are also attributed to the ability to guide,

persuade and influence others (Casper 2019), which gives significant assistance to deal development and management in projects. Essentially, higher EI provides managers with the ability to view the world through the eyes of a different cultural group, and could be of huge value in the business environment.

2.9 Multicultural Management

A significant issue when it comes to conflict management within cultural management, is that a 'one size-fits-all' approach is rarely an effective solution (Nyamubarwa and Chipunza, 2019). With modern day healthcare projects consisting of such variations in belief systems, communication styles and incentivising multicultural projects are prone to conflict. However, there are several theories & tools which have been developed to address this, and while methods of cultural management are suggested, they do not feature in prominent Project Management textbooks such as the PMBOK. 'Crossvergence' for example, is the combination of management practices of two or more cultures, to create a heterogenous culture (Ralston et al, 1997 cited in Nakagawa, Tada and Fukuchi, 2017), and it has been highlighted by academics as an effective tool in creating successful projects (Ranf, 2010). 'Hybridisation', on the other hand is a tool which is also used in multicultural management but it utilises a common body of information or knowledge which emphasizes selective parts of practices which have proven to be successful from the various cultures involved in projects.

According to Singh (2014), there are certain steps which organisations can take in preventing cultural shock, and effectively improve multicultural management in a given project.

They include:

- Careful selection of employees
- Choosing a workforce which is compatible to the given project goals and tasks
- Providing pre-start training to hasten any adjustment stages
- Orientation to what may be new environments
- Finding out what incentives and guarantees will best motivate the team members

Where Project Managers can implement methods such as these, it would be fair to suggest that it could improve cross-cultural relations, and in turn create the multicultural synergy which is necessitated in such projects.

2.10 Cultural Management Tools

By investigating different sources of information, both historic and cultural, Project Managers can gain an insight into how their team members really see the world, and understand the values held within each cultural group in a given project. However, there is very little consensus at present as to how best to investigate this (Huang, 2016). For example, while the 'cultural gap tool', proposed by Koster (2010 p. 89-90), assists in identifying where cultural differences manifest within projects, and in measuring the 'cultural distance' between stakeholders, it does not establish a pathway to managing these differences.

Though not exactly a tool, the development of 'Soft skills' has been cited as a key factor in the coordination of teams with varying cultural differences (Magano et al., 2020). Technical skills, language lessons and cross-cultural training have been highlighted as being core to this skills development (Magano et al., 2020), but again there is no consensus specific to project management how best to approach it. Language use has been established by various studies as

having significant influence on all levels of decision making in Multinational companies, and this can certainly be transferred to language use in multicultural projects (Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio 2011). In fact, differences in language have been highlighted as a major barrier within multicultural projects (Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio 2011).

2.11 Theories

When discussing cultural diversity in the context of a globalised world, there are inevitable considerations relating to diversity which must be considered. There have been various experts in the fields of HR and beyond who have published models and theories relating to how multicultural synergy can be acquired. Some of these works aim to identify some of the major challenges when developing practices to assist multicultural flexibility and the building of a worldwide learning capability. A common theme with these works is that they maintain that achieving this balance requires the organisations to develop their cultural sensitivity and ability to manage, while leveraging learning to build future capabilities.

Hofstede Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede has been referred to as the ‘father of comparative intercultural research’, largely due to his avant-garde work: ‘Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions’. Due to the fact that most people are so immersed in their own cultural characteristics, they can often fail to recognise how it affects their own behavior, or their own patterns of thinking. In a later work, Hofstede along with his colleague extended this work to six key dimensions which can play a role in how certain cultures behave:

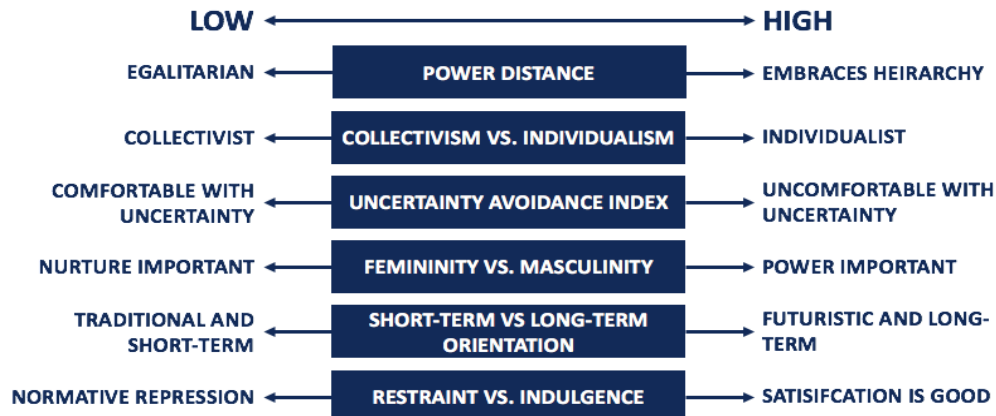


Figure 6: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Source: Steers et al., 2013

1. *The power-distance index* measures the extend to which people are likely to accept hierarchical power or control over their own actions, or at least question that power’s legitimacy.
2. *The individualism-Collectivism* dimension then measure the the extent to which the cultural group prioritises their own need. In this dimension the lower index gears towards self-orientated goals & and higher index indicates a societal or teamwork orientated outlook.
3. *Masculinity-Feminity index* refers to measuring how a national culture will tend to prioritise competition towards material success versus their own desire for welfare-orientated goals.
4. *Uncertainty-avoidance index* refers to the levels which a society may tolerate ambiguity; a low index has a preference towards control & certainty, whereas a high index prefers the unexpected, or more reactive approaches.
5. *Long-term vs short-term orientation* describes the manner in which a particular culture looks into the future. It gives an insight into how these cultural groups tend to embrace change, or with a higher index how they tend to have a narrower perspective with a focus on ritual and habit.
6. *Indulgence vs restraint:* This dimensions describes the extent to which groups value their autonomy or freedom and decide to do only what they choose, or on the other hand how geared they are towards conforming to a higher authority or societal norm.

While these dimensions are significantly mentioned throughout the research, there are aspects of cultural complexity to which Hofstede overlooks. For example, culture is not solely restricted to national culture, or that nationality does not extend solely to a person's place of birth. With this recognized, however, it has been touted as one method to help Project Managers identify ways in when engaged in planning their multicultural project (Steers et al, 2013).

Global Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness (GLOBE) Study

Adopted from Hofstede's 'Cultural Dimensions', is The GLOBE study. This is a multiphased, multimethod project which focused on the relationships between certain cultures and leadership models, with the ultimate goal of finding the most effective leadership models for Project Managers when dealing with globalised projects (Gehrke and Claes, 2014 p. 135; Warner-Søderholm, 2012). This cultural framework provides managers with 9 cultural dimensions, a multitude of personality traits & six different leadership profiles through which they can better understand how to get the best out of their multicultural workforce (House et al, 2004). The idea that a Project Manager's leadership style must be flexible and open to change can be guided by this framework, which gives insights into which cultures prefer which leadership styles, and equally as important which traits.



Figure 7 Societal Cultural Practices scores from Norway, Sweden and Denmark Source: Adapted from House et al., 2004; Warner-Søderholm, 2010b.

Richard D. Lewis – Cultural Model

In his book “When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures”, Richard D. Lewis presents the ‘Lewis Model’, which describes his hypothesis that humans can be based into three distinct cultural groups. What differs model from the likes of Hofstede, Trompenaars & the GLOBE study, is that these categories are based on actionability & behavior, rather than nationality, age or religion (Gates et al, 2009). This model, though a search in the literature does not explicitly mention it in relation to Project Management, could be of great benefit to leaders of multicultural projects.

This model acknowledges that when defining cultures into differences in nationality, religion or generation, that the number of category can exponentially, or even infinitely grow. Therefore its succinct approach allows managers to view their team members into three distinct categories:

1. Multi-active cultures tend to be impulsive, emotional people who put experiences or relationships ahead of agendas. They tend to prefer multitasking & don’t like sticking to rigid plans. They are generally extroverts who are adept at weaving between the social and professional.
2. Linear-Active cultures on the other hand are task-orientated people who best manage by focusing on one task at a time, in a planned methodical approach. They tend to rely on rules & logic. Linear-active people tend to be more direct than other cultures and prefer to use facts, while separating their social and the professional lives.

3. Reactive cultures are generally attentive listeners who require guidance, as they don't like to initiate action or discussion. Reactive cultures hold harmony in high regard and prefer diplomacy over any other forms of decision making.
4. Because the nature of these behaviours is not necessarily distinct, some people may overlap behaviours between different cultures. Within the world of Project Management, however, the Lewis model could act as a guide for managers when it comes to planning & coordinating projects.

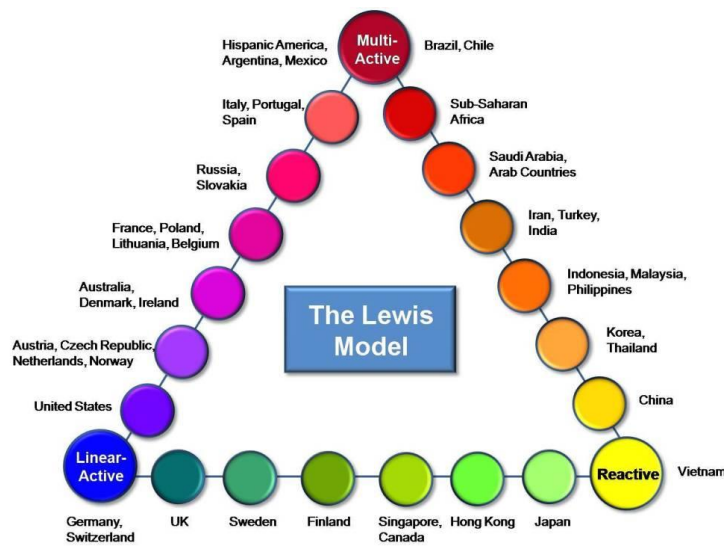


Figure 8. The Lewis Model analysis of various countries

2.13 Literature Conclusion:

The recurring themes from the literature indicate that while there are various factors that affect how multicultural teams operate, there are also tools and theories which can assist Project Managers in identifying the best ways to approach any challenges that can arise. Project Managers have an important role in the planning, implantation and evaluating of practices within projects. They have a responsibility to develop their skills in relation to multicultural management & to use whatever resources they have available to overcome these challenges.

While the literature does show that there are some theories readily available, there has not been a recognisable amount of systematic investigation into how Project Managers tackle these challenges in working environment. It is because of this, it cannot be clearly identified what methods are implemented in practice. Nor is there any well-renowned model for designing appropriate management systems for Projects where multiple cultures co-exist and cooperate.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In addition to the provision of information and theories related to the topic in the literature review, this study aims to provide greater insight through primary research. The conduction of research is essentially the process in which individuals attempt to understand the world around them in a systemic fashion (Saunders et al, 2015), and crucial to any primary research is the issue of research methodology (Saunders et al, 2015). In order to obtain meaningful data, the study must have a sufficient and appropriate means or procedure designed to gather it (Saunders et al, 2007). The research methodology in this study will support the questions which have been generated from the research problem, and in turn gather the appropriate data required to answer them. The methodology section gives an overview into how this primary research was carried out. For the purpose of this dissertation, the author will utilise the ‘research onion’ methodology, as popularised by Saunders et al (2007). There are six layers that are identified in the research onion, which aid in creating a structure to decide which research methodologies would be optimal for use in this dissertation.

As defined by Sekaran and Bougie (2010), business research should be undertaken with the intention of creating a solution to a problem or answering a question, while being systematic, organised and objective. Furthermore, it has been suggested that management research is more often covered by descriptive or explanatory studies (Cooper and Schindler, 2011).

As highlighted in the literature review, there have been numerous studies which support the importance and relevance of Emotional Intelligence and effective leadership in the area of

project management. As suggested by Claude-Hélène Mayer et al (2017), studies involving leadership and EI should strongly consider 'diversity markers such as age, race, culture, mother tongue and gender', to avoid the study sample falling into a single segmentation. Therefore, when choosing the participants in this study, these diversity markers will be reflective of the general population.

Essentially, the purpose of this study is to investigate and explore the leadership styles & behaviours, organisational practices and the methodologies used in multicultural projects in healthcare, based on project managers' perceptions. This section will present the research methodology which was designed and employed in this study; it includes the research design, the target population, sampling procedures and the sample itself. The data collection procedure and analysis utilised will also be described. The main data collection in this study is from a selection of qualitative semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Population Sampling Technique:

Due to the expansive nature of projects, and the broad term 'multicultural', it is difficult to put a figure to the targeted population. The population in the study reflects the international business environment, and will be conducted on Project Managers who work in international Projects. Since full population is not accessible, purposive sampling and non-probability sampling technique will be used (in the form of a hybrid of convenience) to gauge a representative sample. The sampling technique will take every relevant person into consideration for the primary aspect

of the research, therefore the author has chosen to use judgemental, or purposive sampling for those interviewed (Saunders, 2015). For the semi-structured interviews, subjects will be based on subjective judgment of the researcher. The Managers will be sourced from a pool working with multinational medical companies, and from the online network LinkedIn.

This method provides the study with more in-depth and detailed information on the phenomenon being explored (Saunders, 2015). Project Managers were recruited who have experience in healthcare related projects which have encompassed a significant degree of multiculturalism - the term multicultural referring to any diversity in stakeholders with regard to gender, age, industry worked in, nationality, ethnicity or religion. With regard to the sample actually being reflective of the general population, the author has relevant experience within healthcare projects, and feels that he can competently identify appropriate sampling based on his own judgement. The author will implement heterogeneous sampling, to allow for the study to capture a sufficient range of perspectives within the topic.

3.2.2 Inclusion / Exclusion Criteria:

The subgroup interview at a minimum must be Professional Project Managers who have held a management role in at least 3 international healthcare projects.

The subgroup interviewed will essentially consist of line-managers and project managers who have experience in at least 3 multicultural healthcare projects, from all genders, generations and nationalities. The ages of the participants will range from 35-62. It is envisaged that the diversity in this group will afford the opportunity to thoroughly investigate the benefits of, and challenges that can arise in multicultural project, as well as how best project managers can coordinate & lead these multicultural teams.

3.2.3 Rationale:

As recommended by Saunders (2015), for semi-structured/in-depth interviews sample sizes between 5 and 25 are appropriate, and when considering a heterogeneous population a sample size of 12-30 is recommended. The author has chosen to conduct 8 semi-structured interviews on this heterogeneous sample group.

It has also been ensured that each and every participant in the study has taken part out of their own willingness to contribute and has done so voluntarily to support this research study.

In order to effectively examine how cultural barriers are overcome, it is important to analyse the opinions of workers at all levels in projects. By reaching out to experienced Project Managers the researcher is satisfied that they have the relevant experience and insight into how the methods were undertaken.

3.3 Design

The research design plays a critical role in acting as a connection between the theories and arguments which underpin the primary research in a study (Saunders et al, 2015). Ultimately it provides a sense of direction for the collection and data analysis in the study (Bell and Waters, 2018).

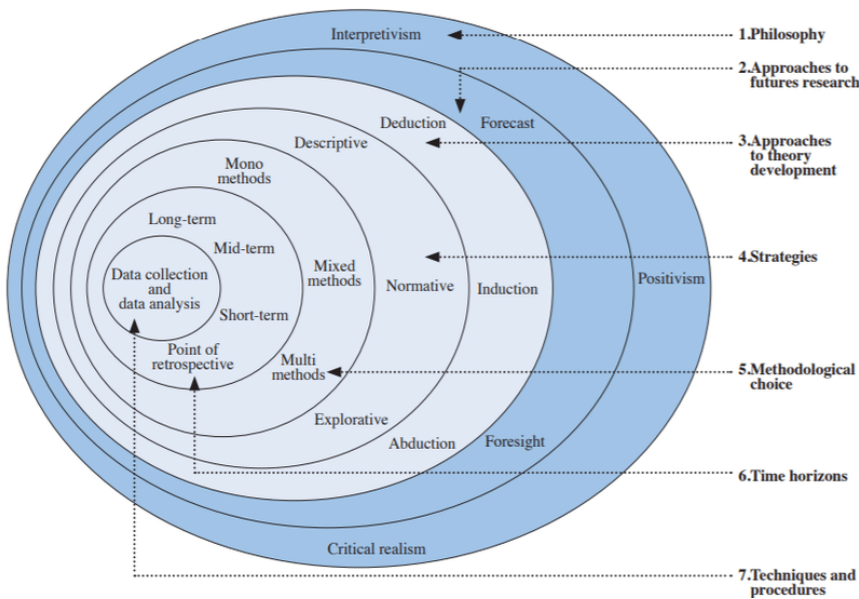
The proposed research design of this study has been designed with the aim of answering the research questions that were posed from the research problem. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were contemplated and it was decided that utilising qualitative design only would be more conducive to appropriately analysing the subject matter. This was due to the idea that

qualitative research is preferable for exploratory structures that have been identified as phenomena, ethnography, grounded theory, and case studies.

Using the ‘research onion’, as popularised by Saunders and Lewis (2018), a description of the research design on this study *is orientated below (figure 5).*

Figure 9. The Research Onion

Source: Saunders et al., 2018



The ‘research onion’ represents the study as a whole, and displays the several layers and approaches that are available in a given study (Saunders et al, 2018). The central point, displayed as the core of the onion, is the data collection and analysis. In the figure (Below/above) illustrates all the contents of the layers of this study - namely the philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time limits and procedures.

3.4 Research Philosophy

The collection of relevant data in this study will be obtained from an extensive literature review, semi-structured interviews, and an in-depth thematic analysis of those interviews. With this in mind, the research philosophy is to be regarded as a phenomenology design. The research philosophy is the first layer of the research onion and is arguably the most crucial layer (Saunders et al, 2018). By recognising the philosophy of this study, we can more strategically plan the collection, interpretation and analysis of the data collected (Saunders et al, 2007). This layer of the research onion affords the researcher the chance to reflect the important assumptions made about their own opinions and ways in which they view the world. This design was chosen due to being a reasonably acceptable method to describe human experience (CIRT, 2021). However, while interpretivism may be considered as the fulcrum for this research design, it is definitely not the overall prerequisite. It has been chosen purely for the purpose of interpreting how project managers address cross-cultural challenges in multicultural projects, as a phenomenon based on their own perspectives from their relevant industry - the healthcare industry.

3.5 Research Strategy

A study's research strategy is essentially the combination of its stated research philosophy and the subsequent methods of data collection & interpretation (Saunders et al., 2015, p.176). This study implements a qualitative, analytic approach by interpreting the testimonies from chosen subjects in semi-structured interviews. According to Saunders et al (2018), qualitative studies are 'non-standardised' which allows procedures & certain questions flexibility throughout the process. This approach gives the researcher the opportunity to delve deeper & explore topics of interest which may not have been apparent initially. They also tend to be associated with the analysis of phenomena & experiential data (Saunders et al, 2018), which this research is. It has been cited as focussing more on trying to understand human experiences, rather than collecting scientific theories (Bell and Waters, 2018).

As this study focuses mainly on a very specific group (Project managers who have experience in multicultural projects in the healthcare industry), it is fair to assume that a research strategy which can focus on a select group is more appropriate. This particular piece of research benefits far greater from qualitatively investigating and exploring as much information as possible from this limited research group, rather than quantitative surveys of a larger population. This decision is also supported by Bell and Waters (2018, p. 40), which highlights that qualitative studies is the appropriate study of cultural and interpersonal relations, as well as emotional intelligence and cultural characteristics.

The use of semi-structured interviews allows for appropriate flexibility during the interview process, while maintaining a focus on the topic in question. The interviews themselves create the

opportunity for the personal opinions of these experienced and well qualified individuals to be analysed, in relation to the topic. This was done so with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the real-life experience of culturally diverse projects. These interviews also aim to analyse the opinions of the subjects with regard to leadership styles, EI and teamwork. Additional questions arose, which allowed for different arguments of the respondents to ultimately gather more in-depth information.

3.6 Materials

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were developed from the research strategy for the purpose of thematic analysis.

The implementation of these interviews initially began with gaining access to the respondents, and then arranging interviews through zoom, LinkedIn messenger and physical meetings in a 'covid-safe environment'. The population to be interviewed was proposed for 6-8 project managers, and a total of 6 were finally interviewed. A set of questions were developed for the purpose of developing a defined structure of the in-depth interview. They will be interviewed using the same general format. However, given the nature of semi-structured interviews they will all encompass their own respective differences.

The set questions will be derived from the content of the literature review as well as the educated intuition of the researcher (Saunders et al, 2015). The use of 'open questions' was used in order to allow for the subjects to express their thoughts and develop answers with great insights. The utilisation of 'probing questions' was also employed to encourage the subject to further expand

on points which allowed for greater revelations on the subject matter. Closed questions, on the other hand, were used to confirm facts or specific information (Saunders et al, 2015, p.408).

Throughout the entire interview process, it was ensured that at absolutely no point the subject felt that they are being coerced or forced to give any specific answers. Appropriate efforts were made when phrasing the questions with specific & intentional wording, and 'leading questions' were avoided.

3.7 Data Collection

An interview guide detailing the topics to be covered within the interview will be used (Welman & Kruger, 2001). Please see Appendix 1. Alignment to the research propositions as stated in Chapter Three was critical in designing the interview guide. Semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions will be used to obtain insights into multicultural management within the project management sector, and to ascertain the impact of these on project success and organisational benefits, if they exist.

Through these interviews, the interviewer was able to delve into the level of detail required of this stage of the research. Respondents were also more responsive than may have been had the interview been conducted tele, giving the respondents appropriate time to respond. There is also an increased likelihood of better response than if it was done phonically.

3.8 Data Analysis

The responses that will be extrapolated from the interviews will be analysed with the assistance of NVIVO. The researcher will initially categorise the data collected in terms of the specific research propositions that they relate to (as discussed earlier). The responses will be analysed to ascertain if there are any common themes and patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis will be used to determine whether perspectives were generally shared in among the subjects, or whether these are simply the isolated views of one individual (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These results will also be compared to any descriptive analysis of the similar data that was found in the extensive literature review; This will hopefully find evidence to corroborate the relationships (or lack thereof) established from the questionnaire responses.

3.9 Ethics

The ethical principles associated with this study relate to all stakeholders involved, as well as the wider community (Cresswell, 2014). It is the responsibility of the researcher to protect all respondents involved with the study (Cresswell, 2014, p.132). However, as is the case with all studies there are ethical issues which arise.

Firstly, there are ethical issues relating to access - although the chosen sample group has been identified, it does not necessarily mean that all desirable participants will be forthcoming to contribute to the research. This creates certain time constraints as the relevant formal consent must be obtained prior to initiating any part of the study. Although the study will remain entirely anonymous, some of the participants may not be able or willing to divulge or discuss any relevant information to the study due to confidentiality clauses or non-disclosure agreements in their contracts with former, or present, employers. Despite the anonymisation of the data, which would provide some degree of protection to the subjects, it is understandable that this ethical constraint will exist.

While the risk of breaching any clauses is significantly low, as the semi-structured interviews will not require any explicit data regarding employers, projects or business partners, there still are risks relating to potentially misinformed consent, research conflict, issues relating to vulnerable populations, among various others.

As recommended by Bell and Waters (2018, p. 237), In efforts to overcome these challenges, prior to gaining consent & commencing their participation, all subjects will receive supporting information & documents, which will include an ethics checklist (see appendix D). They will also receive written assurances that the data & information gathered in the interviews will be

respectfully and reliably managed (Greenfield and Greener, 2016, p. 46). Once satisfied with the conditions of their willing participation, each participant will receive a consent sheet and the interviews will only be commenced once they have been signed via an eSignature & fully completed.

This will give some degree of confidence that every participant will have the appropriate understanding of the study and accepts the diffusion of content from the semi-structured interviews.

Prior to beginning the interviews, the participants will be informed that the content will be recorded, but once the research is complete the data shall be deleted.

Utilising the list compiled by Saunders (2015, p.243) which describe several ethical issues which may occur during the research process, the researcher has compiled a series of ethical issues which may arise during the research process.

- During one of the interviews, the researcher wants to discuss about experiences that the interviewee has had with multicultural team members. Since the interviewee is describing other people's behaviour, it could occur that those mentioned do not appreciate being mentioned. Therefore, it is crucial that the research always remains fully anonymous. Prior to the interview, the respondents will be fully informed about their anonymity. The interviewee will ensure that only the content which is necessary for the study is used.
- Some subjects in the study have a pre-existing professional rapport with the author, and because of this they may feel obliged to participate in the study and cannot withdraw from it. Because of this, the researcher will clearly communicate throughout that their

participation must be 100% voluntary and they each have a right to withdraw at any point. It will also be clearly communicated that this interview will be entirely independent of any relationships outside of the study.

3.10 Limitations of this Research:

As with all forms of research, the semi-structured interviews has its own limitations, and it is of significance to note these limitations when referring to the study.

- The nature of semi-structured interviews requires expertise on the part of the interviewer to ensure that information relevant to the research was obtained. While there may be a litany of information gathered in the research, where there is a knowledge gap on behalf of the research, important findings may be overlooked.
- The researcher will have a confirmation bias to some degree, regardless of the circumstance. This may unintentionally lead the questioning to hone in on certain aspects of the topic despite that subjects may not necessarily entirely see it as the most important.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction:

The aim of the data collection & analysis was to help to answer the research questions and achieve the main objective of the study (Saunders and Lewis, 2018, p. 178). In this case, to establish how project managers deal with the challenges that may arise in cross-cultural management.

The author of this dissertation decided that it was most prudent to conduct a thematic analysis in the identification & analysis of themes in the data obtained from the primary research. This was done so to interpret the aspects of the topics on various levels. This process was completed using the 6 steps of thematic analysis, as described by Braun & Clarke (2006), as a guide:

4.1.1 Process of data collection:

The data corpus of the primary data study consisted of 6 data items obtained in the data, through the conduction of the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were guided by 12 different questions as shown in appendix A. There were 6 participants who contributed to the study, and each of them had significant experience in international healthcare & humanitarian projects through private medical companies, military organisations and NGOs. Further to this, they each encompassed various educational backgrounds from no formal higher-level education, through to PHD level, as well as different nationalities, ethnicities, ages and genders. The author is of the opinion that this diverse sample contributes significantly to a broad insight into how different project managers approach leading culturally diverse teams. An overview of the participants is seen below in the table in figure 6.

Subject:	Professional Background prior to healthcare PM:	Education Level:	Age:	Gender:	Ethnicity:	Nationality:
Subject 1	Medicine	Doctorate	55	Female	White	Irish
Subject 2	Healthcare	Bachelors Degree	38	Female	Asian	Malaysian
Subject 3	Military	Masters	63	Male	Aboriginal	Australian
Subject 4	Nursing	Bachelor's Degree	56	Female	White	Australian
Subject 5	Military	No formal	59	Male	White	Irish
Subject 6	Humanitarian	PHD	43	Male	Caucasian	English

Figure 10. Table of Subjects' Biographical Details

4.1.2 Process of coding

During this the subjects were voice recorded using an iPhone. The subjects were aware & consenting to same - this was done for the purpose of transcribing the interviews at a later time. This process also contributed to the author familiarising themselves with the data, while also affording the opportunity to more carefully analyse and interpret the content of the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Throughout the interviews notes were taken with the intention of marking certain ideas & points for coding.

These notes led to the generation of the initial codes, which in turn contributed to the formation of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. By working systematically & thoroughly through the data sets, as recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006), the generated codes assisted in identifying recurring and interesting themes within the data. The codes were initially manually marked on the transcripts, but then logged, collated & arranged into a data extract table (see appendix D).

The data extract table was utilised by the author to collate the codes into an initial list of potential teams, with all themes being considered. A process of elimination was then carried out on unsuitable or inappropriately conflicting themes. This table aided the author in finalising their decision if the selected themes were appropriate in relation to the coded extracts & entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A thematic 'map' of the analysis was then generated, as suggested in the 6-phases of thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006). The author used this thematic map to assist them in clearly defining and ultimately in naming the themes discussed:

The data extract table, seen in appendix D, assisted the author in capturing the recurrent or important themes relating to the research topic. The codes were used to help categorise the different opinions, methods held in high regard by interviewees, concepts and challenges that they described or identified. one challenge identified during this process was interpreting when a code was becoming large enough that it was actually a significant theme. As highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2006):

'there is no hard-and-fast answer to the question of what proportion of your data set needs to display evidence of the theme for it to be considered a theme.'

The identified codes were used to identify features of the semantic content or latent data which on initial interpretation appeared that it could be assessed in regard to the phenomenon, and allowed for the interview data to be organised into meaningful groups (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Several thematic maps were trialled from the codes, until after two levels of reviewing and refining them led to the creation of the thematic map in figure 7. This thematic map afforded the

author the chance identify the overarching themes and relationships within the primary research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While the thematic map contained candidate themes & sub-themes, there were still a handful of codes that would possibly still be of interest to the research, and they were sorted into the theme ‘miscellaneous’.

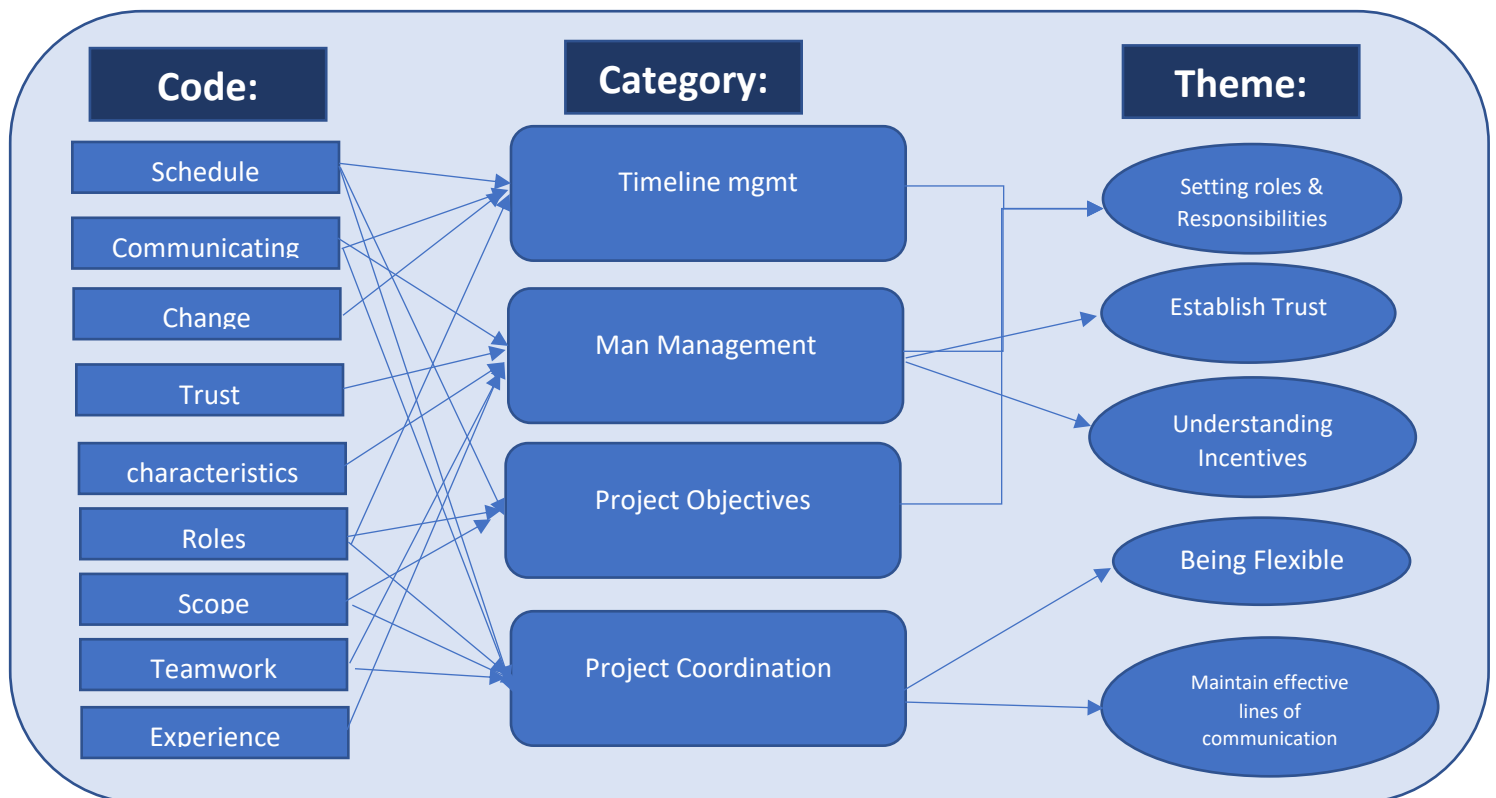


Figure 11. Thematic Map from Semi-Structured Interviews

Five overarching categories of themes were devised in the analysis, with *roles & responsibilities*, *communication*, *‘soft skills’* and *‘being adaptable’* repeatedly mentioned in interviews. The results of the analysis have been finalised into a format which was based on the researcher’s analytic thinking, intuition and of course an interpretation of the information which was attained from the participants in the interviews.

Note: the findings which are discussed in this chapter are supported by the direct quotations from the interview respondents during semi-structured interviews. These quotations & extracts are verbatim and therefore the author would like to highlight that any errors in speech or informal grammar stems from the subjects, and not from the author of the research.

4.2 Setting Clear Roles & Responsibilities along with measurable outcomes makes multicultural synergy more easily attained:

All but one participant stated that their most important aspect of management when it comes to multicultural projects was that each group, no matter what their cultural background, was the necessity of having clearly defined roles, responsibilities and scope.

Subject 1 highlighted her belief that teams work better, in general, regardless of culture where there is a consistency in members knowing their part to play:

'You can almost bypass any challenges that arise because of cultural differences (when every stakeholder has a clearly defined role). When they know what they can do & know what everyone else can do, and where their responsibilities end you avoid any big issues'

Subject 4 supported this point:

'[in relation to a humanitarian project in a warzone in the middle East] when people knew their jobs things ran smoothly, once people start creeping over into other people's roles people started getting annoyed and problems started to arise.'

but it is worth noting that another point in the interview she stated:

'Managing a group means managing the people in that group individually. If you make a person happy in a team they'll properly commit.'

It is apparent that when it comes to healthcare projects, that having measurable outcomes such as increases in vaccination rates, reduced fatalities from illnesses associated with poor socio-economic conditions or improved uptake primary health services, that challenges that may be associated with cultural differences can be avoided or at least bridged.

Subject 1:

'There needs to be measurable outcomes - its all well & good with everyone getting on and avoiding any conflicts, but the way I've always looked at my role as Project Manager has been to get the important jobs done within the timeframe. It avoids any of the issues that take up far more time than it needs attention and means everyone can see the improvement which makes the team work better as a whole.'

Subject 2:

'The obvious [example of where measurable outcomes helped overcome cultural barriers] was in the vaccination rollout in some of our indigenous communities. Some of the elders who may initially have been slightly reluctant to promote the covid vaccine, when they could see progress made with respect to covid in other similar communities around the world due to high vaccination rates, were more readily willing to promote the rollout within their communities. This gave everyone within the project a great boost in terms of that we were using a strong approach, and definitely helped the entire rollout.'

Subject 3 described how having clearly defined roles & responsibilities can aid in the conflicts that arise in *why* certain groups are involved in healthcare projects:

'In the army there is a term called 'mission creep' - essentially it means getting side tracked away from the main goal, on a task that can be done by the team but it takes away attention from the main objective. When i was working on an infrastructure project in the Solomon islands there was always the chance that we could get sidetracked from the main goal of bringing clean drinking water to a certain area as nearby villages would be insisting on getting a supply for their own area. Although difficult, it was crucial that we avoided mission creep as if the objectives were diverted, neither village would be supplied with water. Once we had a clearly defined scope, we could focus on the project and those people who fell under the 'missionaries' cultural category wouldn't be affected by 'mission creep', and could avoid feeling as conflicted.'

This concept is supported by Meduri (2014) and Kyokan et al (2020), which describe the phenomena of humanitarian workers & organisation not achieving their goals due to taking on too broad scope of projects, with no distinct direction.

4.3 Establishing levels of trust & work ethics

When the subjects were asked about 3 'non-negotiable characteristics' that they feel members on their project teams should have, there was yet again a consensus in agreement that traits related to honesty, integrity & trustworthiness were crucial characteristics in multicultural healthcare projects. The subjects were asked what methods or tools they use to establish levels of trust:

Subject 1:

'That's a good question - I usually trust the recruitment process, and that people's credentials tend to speak for themselves. If they're an advanced nurse practitioner, or a cardiothoracic surgeon they haven't gotten there by chance. I've been lucky that this trust has never been an issue, but i think letting people know that you acknowledge their qualifications and respect their opinion helps.'

Subject 2:

'Honesty is huge for me. When you're the PM you have to know that people who may not be from a similar background as you are gonna commit to the project. You need to know that they will work hard, and will find a way of doing something the right way, rather than taking shortcuts or finding ways around [getting tasks done]. There have been times in the past where '

Subject 4:

'The thing i have found best to establish trust with multidisciplinary teams I have worked with has been to acknowledge my own shortcomings - referrals to other specialists is obviously a core aspect of healthcare, and i think when you do this correctly you show that you respect their

position & authority, and generally its returned. Its the exact same principle i use now when coordinating the projects i work with these days.'

Subject 1 mentioned how projects she has worked on before seemed to have good levels of trust when people had previously known one another from outside the project, and how he felt that having some sort of 'team bonding' sessions such as meeting for a drink outside of working environment beforehand can be useful, when appropriate. This was mentioned in discussion to **Subject 6** who explained that although he could '*see the merits in it*', that of all the healthcare projects he had been involved with this was never an option '*due to the nature of the work, where we were working were generally pretty dangerous places. The size of the groups I've always worked with too, it just wouldnt be possible.*'. He reiterated his belief that the levels of trust stem from having clearly defined roles & responsibilities, which in turn address the challenges by people only carrying out their own tasks.

4.4 Knowing what incentives work & why people are involved

Subject 3 uniquely described how he prefers to look at cultures through the concept of *'mercenaries, missionaries & misfits'*, which he believes gives an insight into how they will complete their jobs within the projects:

'When i was working on a project in PNG [Papa New Guinea], I was familiarised with a book of short stories called missionaries, mercenaries and Misfits', which is about the different groups that exist within developing countries', the subject went on to describe how in any healthcare projects in the developing world, there are always three distinct groups of people involved, and they can be classed by their intentions of being involved in the projects:

'Missionaries are the 'good samaritans', they're often the volunteer healthcare workers whos number one aim is to help those in need. They're generally driven by the need to help people. Nurses and doctors working for companies like UNICEF would be a great example of missionaries.'

'Mercenaries are very similar to the missionaries as they complete the work that will benefit those in need, however core to their incentives is capital gain, which may come from governments funding or elsewhere', he went onto describe how medical companies who can provide much needed infrastructure & consultancy would fall under this category.

'The misfits category often consists of the most difficult kind of people to get work done. They're opportunists who can be seen as 'lazy mercenaries', and they're often unreliable. An example would be agencies that are poorly set up on a whim, promise everything thats needed in the hope of getting a quick buck, and then disappear - never to be seen again.'

This alternative view draws similarities with the Lewis Model, which analyses cultures by behaviours rather than biographical details. This view of multicultural management may support the idea that workers are best managed through their own personal gains. Furthermore, this approach could also be linked to ‘Maslow’s hierarchy of needs’, which emphasizes the need to fulfil employees’ (or in this case groups of employees) motivational requirements by where they are in said hierarchy.

While staying on the topic of employee incentives, **Subject 2** described the challenges that are related to the issue of ‘casual contract workers’, which is often the norm for international healthcare projects:

‘one challenge i have noticed is the issue of managing ‘casual workers’, which is common in healthcare projects in Australia. These are short-term contracts where there is pretty much no obligation on both the employee and the employer in terms of resignations or relief of duties.’

He went on to explain that when trying to attain a level of working for a common goal, that these workers can sometimes be more difficult to get to ‘row in together’, as they sometimes feel more independent than the rest of the team members. He stated that:

‘As the project manager, I suppose it is kind of my job to make these workers feel part of the team’

This brought about the concept of *how* to make these workers feel as part of the team:

Subject 5 described how knowing about people’s cultural backgrounds helps the PM to understand what they value, and what their incentives are to achieve the goals of the project:

'The thing about cultural diversity is that people are shaped by their experiences, and as a result they hold some things in higher esteem than others. When you find out what these things are it can help you identify how best they will work together with other groups in a Project.' He went onto say how when cross-cultural challenges occur, and those groups all want to achieve the overall goal, that they find resolutions themselves quite quickly:

'Once everyone is in the same boat with wanting to achieve the overall goal, they don't get bogged down on problems, and find the solutions themselves'

4.5 There is no 'one-size fits all' when it comes to Leadership styles

There was a strong consensus among the participants that there is not one particular style of leadership that will always work, regardless. They all mentioned that with each project encompassing its own challenges and such varying cultures, that there is a responsibility on the PM to adapt as appropriate for a given project.

Subject 4 explained how, as a PM one must 'take every team member at face-value'. This was also described by subject 1 in a very similar manner:

'I think as a PM, you have to know whats going to work, with what groups. You need to go into every project with a clean slate and try not to let any biases you may have overlook the person in front of you.'

Subject 3 described how having a military background has allowed him first hand to witness the cultural challenges that occur when military cultures clash with healthcare cultures such as nursing:

'The nature of the culture in some industries such as dealing with military personell can be very much 'up front' and 'straight head on' with you, whereas i have found that sometimes healthcare backgrounds are more driven by bureaucratic means of dealing with things, and this can sometimes be construed as 'going behind someone's back'.

He explained that at an earlier stage of his career he would have dealt with any conflict between the two in a completely different manner, possibly trying to get both sides to discuss the conflict face-to-face; whereas now he would take time to assess the situation and find a middle ground

to act as a mediator and establish a plan for going forward, while communicating in ways that both parties would best respond to.

Subject 6 believed a PM is a *'constantly changing role'* and requires the PM to be *'competent in continuous team development & management in a continuously changing environment'*. The notion that every project encompasses its own cultural-uniqueness may be supported by the health inequalities throughout the world, meaning that healthcare workers may have completely different views on how best practice is carried out:

4.6 Emotional Intelligence is crucial in multicultural management, and this skill is best learned from experience

As discussed in the literature review in chapter 3, the role of EI in managing culturally diverse projects is huge. During the interviews, the topic of EI was approached, and the concept of training with regard to EI was discussed. Each of the participants in the study mentioned that their EI regarding multicultural management stems from experiences that they have had, rather than any courses or training they may/may not have received.

When asked where they learned how they interact with new cultures, they answered:

The above statements from the respondents support the idea that as multicultural teams encompass such diverse characteristics, it is helpful to the entire project for the project manager to acknowledge their individual needs. Furthermore, Respondent 1 highlighted the importance of empathy and trying to see things from different perspectives when managing conflicts. Respondents 2, 4, 5 & 6 also stressed the significance of mutual respect in multicultural teams, highlighting how EI helps them to maintain effective working relationships.

4.7 The power of effective communication cannot be underestimated

Knutson (2002, p.458), points out that in order to manage several different cultural groups at the same time, there is a need to implement effective lines of communication. When the issue of communication was approached during the interview, it was touted as both the biggest challenge & the biggest asset when it comes to multicultural management:

Subject 1:

'Oh god, communicating in the right way is so important! Its so important that everyone is on the same page with regards to the project. Jargon or slang words can often be a big issue when you're dealing with groups of people who may not use the same dictation as you'

Subject 2:

'...I've found that since the [covid-19] pandemic, correct lines of communication are more important than ever before. Misunderstandings before [the pandemic] could be avoided because you could read body language...'

Subject 5:

'...we're all a part of the same team [in healthcare projects], and some groups have their own preferred way of doing things. I know its stereotypical to say but, as a generalization, traditionally Germans are quite literal, or straight to the point, whereas Swiss people prefer to have a conversation first before getting down to it ... if you know how best to communicate what you want to a person you're gonna have a lot better luck.'

As can be seen in the answers above, Project Managers see communication as being a key to unlocking the potential of a group, and can create the syngergy needed to achieve the goals of a

given healthcare project. It appears from the answers above that PMs utilise effective communication to link together the concepts of clearly defined roles, monitoring progress and information exchange. Further to this subject 3 explained how when communicating with various cultures, *'often its more to do with how you say something, than what you're actually saying'* and that *'when dealing with conflicts between groups, your attempts to de-escalate a situation really depend on how you manage their sensitivities'*. Subjects 4 & 6 were both in agreement that you need to avoid coming across as condescending, as this can lead to problems:

Subject 4:

'a lot of the time people will respond better to you when you try not to come across as having authority over them. I can remember when working in [a country with an Ebola outbreak] it was crucial that everyone within the project was respectful of everyone else's position, and ensured that this was shown in how we communicated with one another. This led to better outcomes for both the workers and the people we were helping.'

Subject 6:

'I know that some places i have worked - particularly in what could be seen as 'old-fashioned' and strongly catholic countries that there is a hierarchical power dynamic, and its always so visible in the lines of communication. Its changed a lot over the past 2 decades, but I can recall some areas I have worked in with religious organisations that the biggest conflicts came about because people were 'talked down to', from people they probably couldn't easily relate with.'

Essentially, this study highlights the important role that communication can play in avoiding, managing and ultimately bridging the challenges that arise within multicultural projects. Due care

needs to be taken by all teams when communicating within a project, and the Project Manager has a significant role in ensuring that these lines of communication are operating effectively (Zulch, 2014).

4.8 Project Managers rely on their own personal experiences & Intuition when overcoming cultural barriers

When asked simply how they learned to address cultural barriers, the subjects each stated that they had developed them over time, largely from their own professional experiences rather than from any courses or literature.:

Subject 1:

'I believe that there is not much better training than actually dealing face-to-face with different cultures. When it comes to these challenges I feel as though theoretical frameworks can probably only go so far, as everyone has their own individual levels of complexity'.

Subject 2:

'Theoretical frameworks...yeah...I don't think they're always translatable into the work environment. People are not just their nationality or their gender – they're people. You get to know people at a personal level and then you manage them at that level. I have not learned much from classrooms about managing different people, its been a lot from my own work experience.'

The subjects were informed of some of the theories mentioned in the literature review, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Stressing the importance of finding a way that suits one's self,

Subject 4 described how *'these models give generalisations'* about nations and that shortcomings can exist as *'people are people'*.

4.9 Conclusion

The results of the interviews show that Project Managers address cultural challenges by setting clearly defined roles & responsibilities, remaining flexible in their management styles, maintaining clear lines of communication and establishing levels of trust. The results demonstrate the complex nature of the multicultural project environment & identified how managers develop these skills. Figure 8 illustrates the key findings of the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The overall aim of this research was to investigate what methods are implemented by Project Managers within the healthcare sector, when it comes to addressing the challenges that arise from cultural diversity. The role of Project Manager can be a challenging one, and when it comes to International Healthcare Projects, the challenges are definitely compounded in complexity.

Considering cultural management is not a huge component of traditional Project Management training, this study was underpinned by the hypothesis that Project Managers develop their own methods through learned experiences, and their own professional intuition. Through the analysis of the available literature, combined with primary research data, this dissertation was completed with the aim of helping Project Managers in developing their own approaches to managing the challenges associated with multiculturalism.

The conduction of the primary research led to the formation of 4 major themes which gave an insight into how Project Managers overcome these challenges when leading multicultural teams. The findings within these themes cover the topics of project planning, scope creation, interpersonal skills & man-management. It is apparent that when these skills are effectively accoutered, that multicultural healthcare projects can be successfully executed.

A majority of the interviews displayed a trend that Project Managers address these cultural challenges by simply finding ways that they do not arise in the first place. The concept of having clearly defined roles & responsibilities appears to be enough to address any issues before they become problems.

According to Burke, Georganta and Marlow (2019), when team members know their own scope of practice, overall project synergy is more easily achieved - this can be extended to the management of multicultural teamwork. One of the key roles of the Project Manager in healthcare is to establish the norms & protocols, and to guide the team members to adhering to them (PMBOK, 2017). This study supports the idea that when a project's common goal is broken up into actionable steps, to which each member (or group of members) can take their appropriate responsibility for, conflicts & cultural challenges are avoided. It can be argued that this method used by the managers in addressing cultural challenges assists them in creating project uniformity or synergy.

It is also worth noting however, that the Project Management training in textbooks such as the PMBOK and the content on the PMP qualification stress the importance of setting these principles to avoid conflict, which may contribute to the subjects' enthusiasm towards this approach. Related to the point of clearly defined roles & responsibilities is the concept of *using of measurable outcomes*. Cruz Villazón et al. (2020) highlights that projects which have clearly measurable outcomes tend to have higher success rates. When it comes to the progress of projects, Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) state that when everyone wants to achieve the same goals, avoidable issues, which can be attributed to cultural challenges are worked around. Therefore, when the accumulation of clarified roles & responsibilities and measurable outcomes is achieved,

team members can stay on top of process flows. This can reduce any information gaps, which have been identified as one of the biggest cultural challenges that arise when it comes to multicultural teams.

The dynamics that exist in multicultural environments are such that there is no absolute formula for the correct way to manage, which gives reason to the idea that the best solution is for a leader to develop their own style, specific to that project. Furthermore, the content of the primary research in this study supports this idea.

While the literature does highlight the hugely important role of leadership, this study supports the claim that in multicultural projects strong leadership is even more important. The subjects in this research were all in agreement that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' when it comes to leadership styles in these projects, and the results suggest that an agile, or flexible approach would suit best in multicultural projects. This idea is supported by Blaskova & Blasko (2015), who state that flexibility is a crucial competency of a leader in a multicultural team.

'Flexibility is the ability to be easily modified to respond to altered circumstances (Soanes, Stevenson, 2003, p. 661). Flexibility is elasticity, adaptability of mental processes and behavior, ability of fast action (Paulička et al., 2002a, p. 972). Organizations might wish to promote flexibility in their labor through the enhancement of the quality and competencies of their employees. Equally, we could recognize employment flexibility when management makes

use of the external labor market to face internal shortages or deficiencies in the necessary amount of workforce (Sarantinos, 2007, p. 3).

When attempting to maximize the output of their diversified human resources, it is of crucial importance that managers remain flexible in their approaches and consider the cultural differences entailed in the project and prepare to react as appropriate to each (Blaskova & Blasko, 2015). From the research performed in this paper, the author suggests that Project Managers should remain flexible for a multitude of reasons, including, but not limited to:

1. To connect & develop the personality traits of the multicultural project members
2. To optimally & effectively link the competencies & responsibilities of the various cultures
3. Responding appropriately to conflicts, misunderstandings & requirements that may arise between the cultural groups.

By developing their own flexibility, Project Managers will be able to adapt and overcome the challenges that present themselves in the cultural diverse environs they find themselves in (Pollack and Adler, 2014). It is a crucial competency which Project Managers must have and utilize when guiding these multicultural projects. The author suggests that by embodying this crucial competency, they will be able to connect the project across cultural norms and cultivate a degree of multicultural synergy.

While the literature suggests a combination of transformational & cross-cultural theories, the interviews suggest that theoretical frameworks have their own limitations, and that at present, it is largely experiential learning that is guiding Project Managers in the healthcare industry. With that said, the study has its own limitations in that there were only 6 interviews

completed, and while they did encompass a diverse range of ethnographical details, there is a chance that this is not reflective of the entire population of Project Managers in the healthcare industry. It is the author's opinion that this study suggests that Project Managers continuously adapt and alter their leadership styles as appropriate to the cultural groups they manage - with some cultures requiring a more 'hands on approach', and others requiring more bureaucratic means to solve problems. Project Managers can benefit from giving everyone involved a chance to voice their opinions throughout projects, so that the manager can understand how best to adapt to manage the multicultural group. By their leadership still remaining agile, the Project Manager can create a better rapport with each member, rather than decisions being heavily influenced by those who respond best to the leaders certain style (Shakeri, Khalilzadeh, Raslanas and Zavadskas, 2020). This may suggest that certifications such as the Agile Practice certification in Project Management, although not directly relating to cultural management may emphasise the principles required in addressing cultural issues. Agile practices tend have been described as 'cross-functional' and 'people-oriented' (Sandstø and Reme-Ness, 2021), which in turn emphasise the communication patterns which can directly impact on the flow of information between cultural groups. The author agrees with this viewpoint, and the data in this research certainly supports this idea.

When attempting to alleviate issues caused by cultural barriers, it appears from this research that higher levels of EI from the Project Manager are required. However, While all subjects held EI in high regard, some of the managers held it in higher esteem than others when it comes to overcoming multicultural challenges. Baesu (2018) highlights that optimal leaders are those who understand their colleagues, and this claim was supported by 2 of the subjects.

However, the rest of the subjects all viewed this as less important than setting clearly defined roles & responsibilities. Considering that there is no consensus on the topic, this disagreement is probably congruent to the inconclusive nature of the literature. Accounting for what the literature says in fields outside of healthcare projects, it would be fair to assume that Project Managers need to be sensitive of the cultural needs of their team members, in order to work around any challenges that may arise.

Although the subjects stated that they were not overly familiar with the term 'transformational leadership' and that they did not necessarily hold it in high regard, they did recognise EI's importance; it is an important aspect of of this leadership style and helps to understand the underpinning emotions that may lie beneath the causes of certain conflicts (Fadhul, 2017). Evidently Project Managers use their EI to proactively eliminate or reduce intercultural conflicts in Projects.

Another aspect of addressing these challenges is choosing how to approach issue of communication. In the post-covid-19 world that we now find ourselves in, online communication is far more important. This brings about additional challenges such as a lack of social cues such as body language, and Project Managers have an extended responsibility to reduce the chance of this happening (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010; Cagiltay, Bichelmeyer & Akilli, 2015). This once again links into the adaptability and flexibility of managers, and in turn their ability to overcome the challenges they are presented with. Within a project there may be certain team members or groups which display some degree of homogeneity (Boyacigiller, Goodman and Phillips, 2003). This can lead to conflicts as they may attempt to influence the entire project to follow their

preferred way. It appears that Project Managers avert this by setting the clearly defined roles, responsibilities & Project map.

Considering the evidence from the semi-structured interviews and the literature review, the author believes that establishing & maintaining clear & effective lines of communication is of vital importance when addressing the challenges that occur in multicultural projects.

It is important to recognize and respect individual cultural differences to build unity within a culturally diverse team (Obikunle, 2002). The evidence shown in the interviews displayed that Project Managers extremely value mutual respect between team members in their projects. It appears that managers take initiative to establish trust to create a synergetic, collaborative multicultural environment. While the subjects were not all in agreement, nor had experience in 'team-bonding exercises', there is merit in taking trust-building exercises such as those mentioned in 'the Five Dysfunctions of a Team' by Lencioni (2002), which have had beneficial results reported. The author opines that while cross-cultural challenges occur, they can be averted by managers by applying an understanding & accepting atmosphere that is conducive to an effective multicultural team.

Essentially multicultural project teams encompass both the cultures of themselves, and the shared culture of the overall Project. The responsibility of the Project Manager to effectively coordinate everyone involved means that their skills in cultural management can be linked directly to Project success. The results of this primary research indicates that Project managers learn these cultural management skills over time, and this is supported in the literature.

It is inevitable that cultural diversity is going to continue to become more and more prevalent in the coming years due to globalization. This will result in more & more culturally diverse projects. While they do have their challenges, they also bring with them more diverse sources of creativity & broadened perspective. As this trend continues to grow, the literature will likely continue to do so too; within the coming years, conceptual frameworks that help the Project Managers address any challenges will likely come into common use.

Preparation for conflict resolution is key to the assurance of ensuring that issues that arise can be effectively dealt with (Leung et al., 2011). It affords the project leads the opportunity to create optimal solutions and effectively achieves greater levels of trust (Cagiltay, Bichelmeyer & Akilli, 2015) . In turn this improves working conditions and leads to a greater chance of project success (Lisak & Erez, 2015). When conflicts do arise, however, it is crucial that the Project Manager can apply an appropriate & constructive conflict management strategy which allows for an effective process of conflict resolution. The managers interviewed in this study appear to recognise this, and using their own intuition develop respective methods to come to appropriate resolutions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that Project Managers within the healthcare industry, although they generally do not receive formal training in it, engage various methods of multicultural management. Project managers emphasise the clarification of roles & responsibilities, effective lines of communication and interpersonal skills to optimize the output of their teams in efforts to achieve the ultimate project goals. The findings also support the idea that Project Managers develop these skills through experiential learning, and that they believe the use of 'soft-skills' and rigid planning contribute to better outcomes for within projects. Considering the limitations mentioned earlier in chapter 3, namely the smaller sample size, the author suggests that further research is required on the themes that have emerged in this study.

In healthcare care projects, the credentialing process that are required prior to commencement means that in general the team members are highly skilled. As such the quality & technical side of the work is usually not as high concern to the Project Manager; the Project Manager's core task is to coordinate the project as fluidly and efficiently as possible, to achieve the overall project objective. It is important that the multicultural competencies that these managers possess are matured & utilized at every opportunity. This affords the multicultural leader the opportunity to effectively guide the project to success as smoothly as possible; addressing barriers as they arise and adapting as appropriate. This study shows that there is not one

particular way Project Managers address multicultural issues, but that they create their own responses using their planning, man-management & Emotional Intelligence skills to do so.

Appendix

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guiding Questions

1. When leading a diverse group of people in a project, what, in your opinion, is the role of the project manager?
2. Do you see working in a multicultural team as a bigger challenge than a monocultural team? Why/Why not?
3. If you could pick the three non-negotiable characteristics of team members that contribute to success, what are the characteristics that you are looking for?
4. Do you change (or Did you change) your leadership and teamwork style depending on working with monocultural or multicultural teams and where are the differences?
5. How do/does...
 - a. you adjust yourself to multicultural teams?
 - b. your project team members have to adjust to multicultural teams?
 - c. an organisation/management level have to adjust to deal with this change in team composition?

Do you think you could identify what the underlying reason that this worked was?

6. Are you familiar with any theoretical frameworks which relate to multicultural management? If so, could you describe them to me?

Possible question to follow: *There is a lot of academic literature which indicates that two leadership models best fit to handle multicultural challenges: Transformational and Cross-cultural Leadership. Are you familiar with these two models?*

7. Are you familiar with the term “Emotional Intelligence”? *(If so) How would you define it?*
8. Have you ever taken courses related to cultural management from your employer as part of employees’ welfare or on your own?

(If so) When did you last attend to these courses?

(If taken by their own initiative) Would you explain what motivated you into taking this action?

9. Do you agree or disagree that influence and persuasion help managers to build their authority as leaders? Why?
10. How crucial is the notion of trust in projects? In the past have you implemented any technique to establish trust within the people involved in a project?
11. Have you ever had to solve a dispute between two team members who are part of your project due to a cross-cultural issue?

In what way do you think Emotional Intelligence would help in this type of Situations?

do you think that differences in outlook from a given cultural group can (e.g. time constraints looked at differently from someone with a healthcare background vs data analytics background?)

12. In-depth cultural knowledge has been identified in the literature as a key element in leading MC projects. What do you think about the importance of cultural knowledge?

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Research project title: *How do Project Managers address cross-cultural challenges in multicultural projects? Perspectives from the healthcare industry*

Student Researcher: Sean Costello

Research Supervisor: Dr. Heikki Laiho

About the Project

Introduction:

I am a Masters student at Dublin Business School (DBS), undertaking the MBA programme in Project Management. I am carrying out my dissertation project under the supervision of Dr. Heikki Laiho, which is titled ‘How do Project Managers address cross-cultural challenges in multicultural projects? Perspectives from the healthcare industry’

Aims:

The aim of this project is to gather qualitative and quantitative data from both project managers and professionals who have been involved in multicultural projects. The project will aim to examine the various cultural challenges that exist in multicultural projects, how they present themselves, and the strategies utilised to overcome those challenges by project managers.

Request/Invitation:

I would like to invite you to take part in this study which will be conducted via a recorded face-to-face interview over zoom or in person, or via a messenger app.

In this study you will be asked to answer a set of questions related to the projects research aims.

What would be required?

As a participant in the study, you would be required to answer a set of loosely prescribed interview questions.

With regards to time commitment, the process will typically take around 30 minutes maximum, and will be one time only. However, I will of course be able to work around this in a way to suit you better. I may have to reach out to you via email to clarify certain points which are not clear in the analysis of the interview. The data obtained in these interviews and questionnaire will formulate my final analysis of the topic and will ultimately form the project’s conclusion.

Data Protection

For Interviews:

The interviews will be recorded solely for the purpose of facilitating later transcription of the data. Precise transcripts are integral to ensure that the acquired data is recorded accurately. This will allow the interviewer to be more present in the conversation and, importantly, to support greater accountability and scientific integrity.

During the transcription phase, your data will undergo de-identification involving the removal of all personally identifying information thereby rendering them anonymous for retention. The

original recordings will be digitized, encrypted and kept under password protection. Upon graduation of the programme, all recordings will be permanently deleted. Your data will be used strictly for academic purposes and will not be shared with used or shared with anyone for commercial purposes. The researcher will adhere to strict ethical guidelines and principles and will not anecdotally share any personally identifying information about you with anyone.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?

In addition to providing much appreciated assistance to the student researcher, the main benefit of taking part in this study will be your contribution to academic research, which aims to expand knowledge and generate new insights into the world of project management. There will be no risks posed to you as a participant in this study, either physical or psychological, beyond that which is normally expected of day-to-day activities.

If you are interested in taking part...

If you are interested in taking part, please review the information provided in the consent form and if you are happy to proceed with the study then please indicate your willingness to take part by ticking the appropriate box / signing your name where appropriate.

You are under absolutely no obligation to take part in this study or to provide a reason if you decide not to take part. You may of course choose not to take part without fear of any penalties.

If you agree to take part, you have the right to cease participation and withdraw your data at any time for any reason without fear of penalty. This data will not be used by any member of the project team for commercial purposes.

Appendix C: Participant Consent Sheet

I _____, voluntarily agree to take part in this research study. I understand that I am not obliged to take part in this study and agree that my participation in the study is entirely voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any question without the need to provide reason and without fear of negative consequences.

I understand and accept that digital recordings of any interviews relating to the study will be stored under encrypted password protection for a duration until the approval of their dissertation by the examination board, at which point recordings will be permanently deleted. I understand that my data will undergo de-identification during transcription and will be rendered anonymous for retention and for the purpose of subsequent publications.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research. I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

I understand that signed consent forms will be retained for some time until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation.

I confirm that I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study with satisfactory answers provided.

I confirm that I have read and fully understood the information provided and statements above.

Name & Signature of research participant

Name & Signature of researcher

Appendix D: Ethics Checklist

Researcher Details	
Name	Sean Costello
Student Number	10576545
Submission Date	
Proposed Research Title	How do Project Managers address cross-cultural challenges in multicultural projects? Perspectives from the healthcare industry
Brief Description of Research	

Sampling	
Population of Interest	Project Managers who work in Multicultural Healthcare Projects
Sample of Interest	Professionals who have experience managing in at least 2 multicultural projects in the healthcare industry

Data Management of Primary Research	
Is the data anonymised? How is this done?	Yes, the interviews will be kept strictly confidential and x Psuedonyms will also be used to de-identify the transcripts.
How is confidentiality maintained?	Psuedonyms will also be used to de-identify the transcripts.
Where will the data be stored?	The interviews will be kept strictly confidential and all transcripts will be held in encrypted, password protected files.
When will the data be erased?	These files will be deleted once the study is complete.

Ethical Considerations	
Do the subjects belong to a vulnerable group in society or not (e.g. children <18, older adults 65+, patients, criminals etc).	The sample population in this study will be Professional Project Managers & working professionals who are currently/have recently worked as part of multicultural projects. These participants are not considered a vulnerable group in society. As a result, there a no additional moral considerations relating to this study.
Do participants face any risks or benefits by taking part in this research project?	The participants in this study do not face any risks, nor benefits by taking part in this project. I will ensure that no personal questions not relating to the study are asked, and take care not to ask anything that could cause psychological distress.

What steps have you undertaken to assess and minimise risks?	It will be clarified and ensured that all participants are voluntarily engaging and are not incentivised to answer any particular answers.
Please declare any conflict(s) of interest that could affect, or be perceived to affect, the integrity of your research.	I, Seán Costello declare that there is absolutely no conflict of interest that could, or be perceived to be affecting the integrity of my research. I have no personal interest with any bodies that will be asked to take part in the study.

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