ITALIAN CONFUCIANISM:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY
ON THE CULTURAL AND CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TRAITS
OF ITALY AND SOUTH KOREA

Author: Brando Maltauro
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede
The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the differences and similarities in leadership styles between Italy and South Korea, focusing on how Italian managers can adapt to the South Korean working environment. By examining the mechanisms and characteristics of paternalistic leadership in both countries, the research addresses the prevalence and effectiveness of this style and the relationship between leaders and followers. Additionally, the study explores how Italian employees and managers cope with cultural differences, the similarities and differences between the two leadership styles, and whether paternalistic leadership can serve as a common ground for both Korean and Italian managers.

Through a qualitative research approach involving interviews with five Italian professionals working in South Korea, the findings reveal significant differences in hierarchical structures, communication styles, and decision-making processes. Italian managers often find the highly formal and hierarchical Korean business environment challenging, whereas Korean employees appreciate the familiar atmosphere created by Italian leaders.

The study confirms that while both cultures exhibit paternalistic leadership traits, these are influenced by different cultural and historical contexts. In South Korea, paternalistic leadership is deeply rooted in Confucian values, emphasizing hierarchy, loyalty, and a father-like approach. In Italy, similar traits are shaped by historical, cultural, and familial factors, focusing on mutual trust and loyalty.

Practical recommendations for Italian managers include adapting to Korean hierarchical structures, practicing indirect communication, and engaging in social activities to build strong business relationships. This research contributes to the broader discourse on cross-cultural management, emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness and adaptability in fostering effective leadership in a globalized business environment. Future research should further explore these dynamics with larger, more diverse samples and quantitative methods to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Graduation Committee members:
Dr. Arnold Enklaar, University of Twente

Keywords
Republic of Korea, Italy, Leadership, Confucianism, Cultural Dimensions, Paternalistic Leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers have explored many facets of leader characteristics and leadership styles in the fields of organizational behavior, strategy, finance, accounting, and psychology (Park & Koo, 2018). However, as growth has accelerated in emerging markets and slowed down in advanced economies, corporate leaders have had to rethink the adequacy of their global strategies and leadership styles (Ramamurti, 2012). While entering Asian markets looks very attractive for global manufacturers and consumer goods companies, organizations must not underestimate the diversity and complexity of the Confucian regions (McKinsey & Company, 2014). The GLOBE Confucian Asia cluster includes China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. (GLOBE, 2020). Although the concept of leadership is viewed to be universal when considering key values such as good judgment, integrity and skills, the way in which it is engaged and practiced on the work floor is usually dependent on the specific cultures (Chamorro & Sanger, 2016). Divergent points of view exist in the leadership literature regarding the transferability of corporate leader behaviors, communication strategies, expectations and processes across cultures (Dorfman, et al., 1997). However, most of the big-sized firms globally deal with multicultural teams, employees and partners, considering how the globalization phenomenon is shaping our societies. By looking at the latest score of the top 35 countries in the Globalization index, it can be seen that only two Confucian countries are on the list, namely Singapore and the Republic of Korea (Statista, 2021). Since the latter has experienced a huge economic and social growth in the last decades, becoming a global leader in technology, software and automotive industries, a comparative study with Italy is conducted by focusing on their corporate leadership styles.

Unquestionably, the historical, cultural and social differences between the selected countries for this study have generated distinctive leadership traits and attributes. Presently, countless studies have been conducted on leadership styles, strategic communication, as well as on numerous organizational behavior topics; nevertheless, scant research is available in regard to the characteristics and similarities of the leadership styles adopted in Korea and Italy, nor has a framework for Italian businessmen keen to be working with Korean partners in a successful and efficient way been provided. Consequently, this paper aims to investigate whether the two cultures share similarities in the way they think of, approach and apply leadership.

First, relative to the Korean, and Asian culture in general, Confucian philosophy will be reviewed considering its cardinal contribution to Korean history, society, organizational leadership and how it has influenced the development of a culture built upon paternalism (Ahlstrom & Chen, 2010). Next, literature available on paternalistic leadership will be reviewed, explaining the historical elements and describing its main characteristics (Sposato, 2019). The reasons why this kind of leadership seems to work best in these regions will be analyzed in section 2.1, as well as those leadership styles known as "charismatic" or "participative" which apparently do not positively impact Korean organizations. (Park, Han, Hwang, & Park, 2019 Vol 22).

Lastly, the available literature on the characteristics of the Italian organizational culture will be examined, together with the paternalistic style which appears to be a common trait among Italian corporate leaders (Warburton, 2022) despite being better recognized in the West with the name of leader-member exchange theory (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000) (Marturano, 2012). In spite of the fact that Italian leadership had to shift from an old paternalistic mentality as suggested by Sergio Marchionne, traits of this style are strongly related to how Italians perceive and carry on organizational culture to achieve business objectives (Marchionne, 2008).

Although there is no common opinion between Italian and Korean managers about how a good leader should behave (Pizzinato, 2020), it has been found that Italians and Koreans share similar scores for certain cultural characteristics and dimensions, in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance (Hofstede, 1984).

1.1 Research question

Given the above, the following research question was constructed:

How do the Italian and Korean leadership styles differ?

1.1.1 Sub-questions

- *What are the similarities and differences between Korean and Italian leadership style?*
- *To what extent is the paternalistic leadership style a common ground that can be mutually understood and effectively applied by both Korean and Italian managers?*
- *How do Italian employees and managers in South Korea cope with the existing cultural differences in leadership style?*

1.2 Academic and practical relevance

The goal of this research is advancing the studies in the field of leadership and specifically in the paternalistic leadership niche. Paternalistic leadership is an emerging concept promoted by Chinese culture; however, the model could be useful for Italian and European managers too. By comparing the way business is conducted in the two countries, the paper will be functional to facilitate the comprehension of the Confucian and the Italian culture as well as their leadership styles.

This study is believed to be helpful for Italian entrepreneurs and managers who will happen to fill a leadership position in a Confucian society, and specifically in South Korea. Specifically, the results of this paper will be of support to identify behavioral patterns visible in Korean employees, colleagues or seniors when exchanging feedback, communicating with team members, and managing a team in a Korean business environment.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This segment deals with the relevant literature around the proposed study. Dividing this segment into four sections will help the reader to comprehend more easily the proposed topic.

2.1 Korean Leadership

Korean firms have sustained incredible development in the last 35 years, elevating its national economy into the top ten wealthiest countries in the world. By witnessing an annual average GDP growth of 5.45%, Korea transformed itself from a low-income to a high-income economy and a global leader in innovation and technology (The World Bank, 2021).

Although European and American economies experienced positive growth overall too, there's a distinction in leadership styles between western and Asian countries, considering the different cultures, traditional philosophies, and governance

structures (Park & Park, 2018). Nevertheless, what has been extensively researched and corroborated is that Asia embodies a unique culture that emphasizes a hierarchy based on paternalism (Ahlstrom & Chen, 2010). The moral values and codes of conduct that prevailed in a family unit were extended to the society and nation as a whole, as well as to Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean organizations. This fundamental concept deriving from Confucianism is reflected in the Chinese word *guo jia* (国家), which literally means 'nation' and 'family'. As within the family unit, loyalty and obedience to rulers were paramount virtues within society. In the same vein, the rulers are to behave toward those they govern in the same caring way in which fathers were encouraged to behave toward their children (Wang & Madson, 2013). By the huge influence of Confucian values one can assume that paternalistic leadership traits are highly visible, impactful and deep-rooted in Korean society.

It is common to notice a high degree of formality, power distance orientation, and a collectivist culture when we consider the position of a leader in an Asian context (Park & Park, 2018). On top of that, the decision-making process concerning the overall strategy and direction of a Korean company is into the hands of the CEO or the founder (which is the same person most of the time), showing a vivid level of centralization and control. (Shin, 1998). The hierarchical leadership style in South Korea is deeply influenced by the cultural concept of "inwha" (인화), which emphasizes harmony, particularly in professional settings. To preserve inwha, especially with leaders, subordinates often try to avoid giving negative responses and feel uncomfortable refusing requests. This practice is closely tied to the notion of "Gibun" (기분), which relates to maintaining one's dignity or reputation among peers or seniors. Face-saving is a critical aspect of Korean culture, and actions that could potentially disrupt harmonious relationships, whether in personal or professional contexts, are generally disfavored, even if they might be beneficial for business (Toyryla, 2023).

In South Korean culture, age and wisdom are closely tied to the concept of respect, which could be linked to the country's low score on the Individualism dimension in the Hofstede cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 1980). This cultural norm often results in younger leaders struggling to garner the same level of attention, respect, or authority as their senior counterparts, irrespective of their backgrounds or experiences. Senior leaders typically do not engage with or take seriously those who are significantly younger (Yeung & Tung, 1996). During meetings, it is common for senior leaders to dominate discussions, while younger leaders tend to withhold their views, especially if they conflict with those of the seniors (Dorfman & Howell, 1997). This dynamic can hinder open dialogue and the exchange of diverse perspectives (Park & Kim, 2020; Choi, 2014). The emphasis on hierarchical respect reflects broader Confucian values that prioritize seniority and established authority (Kim & Kim, 2010).

In fact, effective leaders are those who exercise more power in the organization, without considering subordinates' inputs to a large extent when making important decisions, yet do take care of followers, establishing a parental relationship (Park, Han, Hwang, & Park, 2019 Vol 22). Moreover, what has also been concluded recently, supports the aforementioned assumptions regarding the preferred styles of leadership in Korea. For instance, the worst leadership style to be practiced in the ROK[1] is namely 'charismatic leadership' which is defined as *the*

---

practice that aims to inspire and develop confidence among followers and 'participative leadership' whose characteristics are based on *consulting with, asking for suggestions, and obtaining information from subordinates for important decisions* (Park & Park, 2018). This is the case as in South Korea, there is a strong focus on collectivism rather than individualism. Emphasizing individual achievements and implementing individual rewards are seen as disruptive to the harmony that is highly valued in Korean culture. As a result, participative leadership, which often emphasizes individual contributions and decision-making, is less effective in South Korea because it conflicts with the cultural emphasis on group cohesion and collective responsibility. From the current knowledge about Korean management and governance, it appears to be crystal-clear the huge influence of paternalistic leadership (Lee, 2001) (Kee, 2008) (Yoon, Shin, Kim& Chai, 2017).

2.2 Paternalistic Leadership

Paternalistic leadership, which combines great discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity, has been found to be prevalent in Chinese and Korean businesses (Farh & Cheng, 2020). Paternalistic leadership, as mentioned earlier, is heavily influenced by Confucian values, which stress the importance of the vertical relationship between senior individuals and subordinates, who, in exchange for loyalty and obedience, receive protection, well-being and advantages (Lee & Miller, 1999). "These factors result in leaders who assume a personal interest in the welfare and development of followers and who emphasize group harmony and smooth, conflict-free interpersonal relations. While harmony (inhwa) is desirable, it is based on inequality among those of differing rank, power, and prestige" (Alston, 1989, p. 29).

The key concepts around this leadership style concern loyalty towards the organization. Loyalty is at the center of this style of leadership, and quite often, leaders tend to value this quality even above competence. A committed personal relationship that goes beyond the professional one is established between leaders and followers, who are expected to share their private life with seniors and are almost obliged to observe any recommendation or request provided by the leader without questioning its appropriateness (Sposato, 2019).

Paternalistic leaders, as the name suggests, traditionally used to be - and still are in Asian societies - old, charismatic men. Despite referring to Asian countries when speaking of paternalistic leadership, it shouldn't be a surprise that examples of paternalistic leaders may be found in famous and successful entrepreneurs from other countries, such as the Indian business tycoon Dhirubhai Ambani, the Italian businessman and former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi as well as the most iconic American founder, Henry Ford.

To sum up, we can state that the typical traits of a paternalistic leader are the following:

- Father-like figure.
- Authoritarian style of leadership.
- The only real decision-maker.
- The power center of the organization.
- The nexus of the organization's information system.
- Demands loyalty above all else.
- Creates a family-like working environment.

---

[1] ROK: Republic of Korea

2.3 Italian Management Style

Although Italian leaders, together with most Western corporations, have been influenced by the American approach to management in recent times (Adler & Boyacigiller , 1991), Italian culture has significantly impacted corporate leadership, advancing its own methods, communication styles and the strategies put in place to better engage with employees, partners and reach organizational objectives (Sarti, 2014).

Despite the limited amount of business literature specifically addressing Italian management and leadership practices, it still emerges quite clearly that paternalistic traits are strongly detectable within the Italian business culture, considering that most of the firms are family-owned and run by male family members (Derr, Roussillon, & Bournois, 2001). Italian leadership style is deeply rooted in the country's historical, cultural, and social context. It emphasizes hierarchical structures, strong family ties, and interpersonal relationships. This leadership approach is shaped by Italy's rich cultural heritage and complex social dynamics, which influence organizational behavior and management practices (Commisceo Global, 2013).

Even though paternalistic leadership is an Asian term that does not appear in Western leadership analyses, it is believed that the same concept goes under a different name; for instance, relationship leadership or Leader-member exchange theories, state that these models of leadership are characterized by mutual trust, loyalty and behaviors that extend outside the employment contract (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000). Scholars have pointed out that this leadership style based on the relationship between leaders and members is fully visible in Italy, considering Organizations such as the Catholic Church and Mafia, who have provided paradoxical examples of this leadership phenomena (Marturano, 2012).

Italian organizations typically feature a strong hierarchical structure. Authority is centralized, and decision-making is often reserved for those at the top of the organizational ladder. This hierarchical nature reflects the Italian cultural norm that leaders are expected to possess greater knowledge and experience than their subordinates, leading to a more directive leadership style. Leaders often adopt a paternalistic approach, demonstrating concern for their employees' personal and professional lives, fostering a sense of loyalty and respect among team members (Commisceo Global, 2013). Evidence from human service organizations in Italy show the importance of how a leader should support employee's personal objectives as well as ensuring a stable working condition, in order to secure organizational success and loyalty by the individuals (Sarti, 2014). Moreover, Italian corporate leaders seem to share a common trait with the Korean seniors: the willingness and the ability to stay in power, controlling the decision-making process. Whether this intention is modest or extreme, it is believed to be really close to the paternalistic leadership characteristics developed in Confucian countries, regarding the climate of control and centralization, with no space for creativity and flexibility by subordinates "who must adapt to the whims of the owner in order to fit" (Derr, Roussillon, & Bournois, 2001, p. 110).

While subordinates may express their opinions, final decisions are typically made by senior leaders in Italy. This top-down approach ensures that all decisions align with the broader strategic vision of the organization. Additionally, Italy's intricate bureaucratic environment requires leaders to navigate a complex web of regulations and familial relationships, significantly influencing business operations (Camuffo & Costa, 1993).

Italian leaders often exhibit a paternalistic leadership style, balancing authority with a personal touch. They demonstrate a moderate tolerance for change and risk, typically embracing innovations only after thorough consideration of potential benefits and risks. This reflects a cultural aversion to failure and its associated embarrassment. Leaders focus on maintaining stability and predictability, which can sometimes slow down the adoption of new ideas but ensures careful and deliberate progress. However, in more recent times, the Italian leadership culture has been slightly shaken by Sergio Marchionne, former businessman and CEO of the merged Fiat SpA and Chrysler Group LLC, whose vision embraced the idea that *il Bel Pease* needed to adapt to a more global competent leadership style to overcome the national crises, as he acknowledged:

"From day one I recognized that Fiat had a leadership problem. Traditionally, all-important decisions in Italian companies are directly made by the CEO. It probably worked fine as a leadership model back in the 1950s, but today it's quite unsustainable. A business as Fiat is far too large and complicated for one man alone to lead. (Marchionne, 2008)

Although FIAT leadership structure (and Italy in general) had the exigency to evolve, according to the Italian Canadian manager, paternalistic leadership features remained vivid within the organization. For instance, Marchionne himself, stressed the importance of a family-oriented environment in the company, declaring that if the people felt a connection with top-managers, a culture aligned around strong common values would better contribute to business success. As he put clearly *"Honoring our responsibilities to our workers is the final piece of the puzzle. A great deal of our success, I think, has come from having a committed workforce. But to earn that commitment, the company has had to give its ordinary folks - not just its leaders - a sense of connection."* (Marchionne, 2008)

Another paternalistic trait transpired by Sergio Marchionne's words, concerns the idea that a leader, a good leader, ultimately makes decisions by himself:

"[...] but I'd been sitting in a room with 20 or so people for three days without getting anywhere, and I knew that we'd get no decision unless I imposed one. When I was much younger, this sort of control used to bother me tremendously. But as I've gotten older - I've been doing this now for 12, 13 years - I've realized there's no other option. That's why choosing the CEO is the most crucial decision a board makes." (Marchionne, 2008)

Thus, while Italian leaders retain ultimate authority, they also value collaboration and teamwork. Team members are encouraged to contribute their ideas, although the leader retains the final say (Commisceo Global, 2013).

2.4 Culture

Having said that, we then realize that paternalistic or relational leadership is deeply rooted in Italian society and organizations, similarly to Confucian's. Yet, these are not the only pieces of evidence about the similarities between Italy and Korea that we could retrieve from current knowledge. Hofstede identified five cultural dimensions that influence leadership, with each country receiving a score for these dimensions on a scale up to 100. These dimensions are crucial for understanding cross-cultural differences in leadership and organizational behavior (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2013). Hofstede's cultural dimensions model is a seminal framework in cross-cultural research, widely used for

its ability to provide structured and insightful comparisons of cultural traits across countries. Despite facing critiques regarding its methodology, assumptions of cultural homogeneity, static nature, and Western-centric bias (Venaik & Brewer, 2013; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2016; Baskerville, 2003), the model remains highly relevant and reliable. The methodological criticisms, such as the initial data collection from IBM employees, raise concerns about sample representativeness and potential biases (Frontiers, 2013). Furthermore, the model's assumption of cultural homogeneity and its static view of culture have been noted as significant limitations, failing to account for regional, social, and temporal variations within nations (Emerald Insight, 2013).

Nevertheless, the model's structured framework for understanding cultural differences has been validated through numerous empirical studies. Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson (2006) provided a comprehensive review and assessment of Hofstede-based research, confirming its relevance and utility. Sondergaard (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of 61 replications, demonstrating consistent findings across various cultural contexts. Similarly, Taras, Steel, and Kirkman (2012) validated the model through a meta-analysis of 598 studies, reinforcing its reliability and applicability. Beugelsdijk, Maseland, and van Hoorn (2015) confirmed the stability of Hofstede's dimensions over time, while Minkov and Kaasa (2022) validated the revised model using World Values Survey items for 102 countries (Frontiers, 2013; Universal Access in the Information Society, 2023).

These validations underscore the empirical robustness of Hofstede's model, making it a valuable tool for cross-cultural analysis in both academic research and practical applications, justifying its selection as a foundational framework in this thesis.

For instance, Hofstede's studies about cultural dimensions show how close the two countries are in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance, and how different in terms of Long-term Orientation, Masculinity, and Individualism (Hofstede, 1984)
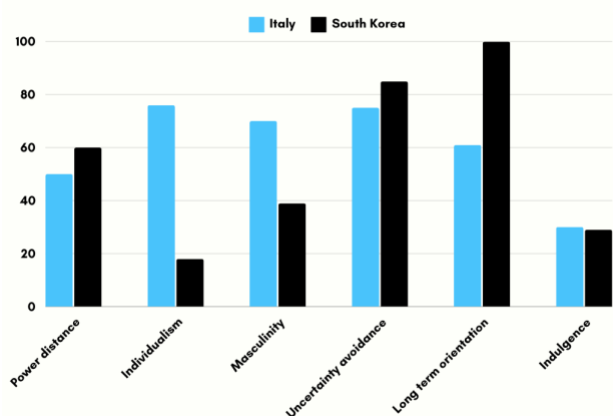

Figure 1. Hofstede Cultural dimension

for Italy and South Korea.

Indeed, Korea was given a score of sixty out of one hundred, while Italy's score was only ten points lower than the Korean one for the dimension of Power distance. Both Italian and Korean subordinates conduct business with senior managers in a relatively distant and formal way. Another relevant dimension for our study is the one called Uncertainty Avoidance. With a score of 75 for Italians and 85 for Koreans, we understand how risk-averse both cultures are, giving the weight of decisions (and

their consequences) to their leaders, which is expected in a paternalistic leadership context.

Although Italian and Korean leadership have been analyzed individually, it is evident that commonalities and differences between these two countries need to be further investigated. Plenty of leadership and organizational behavior theories have been thoroughly discussed in the past. However, the focus on the differences and similarities between the Italian and Korean approaches to corporate leadership and management has received little attention in academic studies. The aim of this paper is to fill in the research gap in the aforementioned fields by understanding the cultural differences between Italy and South Korea, exploring the different communication and leadership styles practiced by Italian corporate leaders in that region and investigating how paternalistic leadership is a common ground for the two nationalities.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative method was chosen to investigate the differences in leadership styles between Italian and Korean managers since it concerns exploratory research. Considering that our topic belongs to leadership and culture, we are more interested in understanding and interpreting the experiences of professional leaders who have a clear picture of their fields of expertise than testing hypotheses. Qualitative research methods, such as those discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), emphasize the importance of capturing the richness and complexity of human experiences. This is particularly relevant in leadership studies, where understanding the subjective experiences of leaders can provide valuable insights into effective leadership practices and cultural influences. To reach our objectives, we utilized a qualitative research approach involving personal interviews with both open-ended and semi-structured questions. These are often referred to as 'qualitative research interviews' (King 2004).

Open ended questions encourage individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences freely, which is essential for capturing the complexity of human behavior and attitudes. One significant advantage of open-ended questions is their ability to generate rich, detailed data that provides a deeper understanding of the research topic (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Unlike closed-ended questions, which limit responses to predefined options, open-ended questions allow respondents to share their perspectives in their own words, leading to more comprehensive insights (Bryman, 2016). This approach helps researchers uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, and attitudes that might not be revealed through more structured questioning (Creswell, 2013).

Moreover, open-ended questions offer flexibility and adaptability in research, allowing participants to introduce new themes and concepts that the researcher might not have anticipated. This exploratory nature can lead to unexpected findings and a more dynamic research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For example, questions like "Can you describe your experience?" or "What are your thoughts on this issue?" invite respondents to share their stories and provide context that enriches the data collected (Patton, 2015).

Using open-ended questions also facilitates a more engaging and interactive interview process. It helps build rapport between the interviewer and the participant, creating a comfortable environment where individuals feel safe to express their true opinions and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This trust is crucial for obtaining honest and authentic responses, which are vital for the validity of qualitative research findings (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). On the other hand, semi-structured

questions were standardized, meaning the same questions were posed to all participants in the same sequence with the opportunity to investigate certain themes further. As mentioned by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2009) "Semi-structured and in-depth interviews provide you with the opportunity to 'probe' answers, where you want your interviewees to explain, or build on, their responses." These questions were carefully crafted to thoroughly address all aspects and the full scope of the research topic. This interview method allowed us to gain a deep understanding of the subject by directly engaging with individuals who were involved in leadership roles at that time of the interview. This helped us comprehend their experiences and perspectives on leading a team or group. Furthermore, during the interviews, our focus was on gathering as much relevant information or data as possible pertaining to the research question.

3.2 Data collection and research instruments

The data collection methods and research instruments used in this study focused on Italian professionals working in South Korea. The primary objective was to understand their managemet experiences and the impact of cultural contexts on their professional lives. The data collection involved purposive sampling to select participants who met specific criteria, ensuring the relevance and depth of the insights gathered. The study targeted Italian professionals working in South Korea. Participants were identified through LinkedIn and Facebook groups specifically for Italians living and working in South Korea. This approach facilitated access to a relevant and engaged sample population. The demographic profile of the interviewees included three men and two women, aged between 28 and 45 years. This diversity helped in capturing a broad range of experiences and perspectives. Ethical approval was a critical component of the research process. Prior to conducting the interviews, ethical approval was obtained during video meetings with each participant. During these meetings, the purpose of the study was explained, and participants were informed about the use of their data for research purposes. All participants provided verbal consent, ensuring that they were aware of the confidentiality of their responses. The data was collected by interviewing 5 Italian managers trough a semi-structured questionnaire via video-meeting. The interviewees were especially asked to talk about their personal and professional experiences, focusing on moments that showed frictions between manager and employee in a Korean working context.

All responses were kept anonymous, and each interview lasted about forty-five minutes to an hour. The interview questions were designed to address and help answer the research problems identified in the literature review. All the questions used in the interviews can be found in Appendix.

3.2.1 Interview criteria

The interviewees selected for the study needed to respect the following criteria:

- Preferably they had 1 year, or more, of corporate experience in South Korea (current or past).
- They have worked in Italy.
- They have worked in medium – big sized organizations or started a business in the Korean market.

These criteria ensured that the participants had sufficient experience in both Italian and Korean professional contexts, enabling a comprehensive analysis of cross-cultural leadership experiences.

3.3 Data Gathering and Analysis Strategy

The interviews were recorded and transcribed with data transcript tool of Microsoft Teams, followed by a manual adjustment for more precise and realistic transcription.

The data analysis for this research was conducted using thematic analysis, a method that is particularly suited for qualitative research (Kiger, Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data, providing a rich and detailed account of participants' experiences (Majumdar, 2019). Thematic analysis was chosen for this study because it offers flexibility and adaptability, making it ideal for exploring the complex and varied experiences of Italian professionals working in South Korea. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a robust method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within qualitative data. It allows researchers to organize and describe data sets in rich detail, facilitating a deep understanding of the research subject. Despite its reliance on the researcher's judgment, which can introduce subjectivity and bias into the analysis (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), it is believed that this method is beneficial for building theoretical frameworks, as it integrates empirical findings with existing theories to enhance academic discourse (Boyatzis, 1998), enabling researchers to both derive themes directly from the data and use pre-existing theoretical knowledge to guide the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Next, the material was analyzed by means of Critical Incident technique (CIT); this analysis is based on the collection and identification of behaviors, occurrences or incidents, which everyone can observe, in order to develop and explain a psychological principle that can be defined as a value or a cultural logic (Flanagan, 1954). Thematic analysis, when applied to CIT data, offers methodological flexibility that is beneficial for researchers. This approach can accommodate various research questions and contexts, making it suitable for diverse disciplines such as healthcare, education, and organizational studies. The adaptability of thematic analysis enhances its utility in qualitative research, allowing for both theory-driven and data-driven insights (Oxford Academic, 2023). When formulating questions, it is crucial to base them on the participants' actual experiences rather than on abstract concepts whenever possible. This approach ensures that the responses are grounded in real-life situations, providing more relevant and meaningful insights (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009)

The practical methodological process included the following steps: the data were put together in excel sheets, as the main goal was to have multiple clashes and critical incidents. The objective was to end up with enough values which determined specific behaviors of the typical Korean manager, according to the point of view of Italian managers working in South Korea. In this way, researchers and Italian managers will be able to recognize such patterns and perceive how to cope with that scenario.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative research, which aimed to investigate the differences and similarities of cultural practices and leaderships styles of Italian and South Koran managers. For detailed research instruments, including the interview questions and coding framework, please refer to the Appendix.

4.1 Differences

This section deals with the differences between the cultural practices and leadership styles of Italian and South Korean managers. By examining key areas that emerged from the

interviews analyzed, such as respect, hierarchy, central decision making, and communication styles, we could identify distinct approaches and behaviors that characterize each culture. These differences highlight the unique ways in which Italians and South Koreans navigate their professional environments, influencing workplace dynamics and managerial practices.

4.1.1 Respect

Respect in South Korean culture is deeply embedded in hierarchical structures and formal interactions, contrasting with the more relaxed and informal approach seen in Italian workplaces. For instance, the practice of "exchanging cards" in South Korea is conducted with a significant degree of formality, as one interviewee noted: "The respect in how South Koreans handle the exchange of business cards with both hands and a bow." This behavior underscores the importance of formal respect and hierarchy, a recurring theme in South Korean professional interactions, also seen in practices like never outright refusing requests (C.S. [2] "never saying no") and the reserved manner in which personal matters are handled at work (C.S. "sharing personal issues"). Another interviewee emphasized this, saying, *"In Korea, it is considered very respectful to never say no directly, which can sometimes be challenging for Italians used to more straightforward communication."*

4.1.2 Hierarchy and central decision making

Hierarchy plays a crucial role in South Korean workplaces, influencing everything from decision-making processes to daily interactions. Italian managers often found the strict hierarchical structure challenging. For example, one interviewee mentioned, "The leader's approach is authoritative, almost dominating, disregarding others' opinions." This reflects a cultural norm where subordinates are expected to follow directives without question, which is slightly different from the more egalitarian and collaborative approach in Italian workplaces, though still characterized by a relatively high degree of hierarchy. As explained by an interviewee *"He has decision-making power over everything. If finance wants to proceed with the payment, but the boss has not approved it, they cannot do it, and it does not go forward. At least with us, there is a minimum of independence, especially when problems need to be solved."* The Korean leader has decision-making power over everything, while in Italy you are trusted to move ahead, especially in cases of problem-solving.

This theme is also evident in the reluctance of subordinates to take independent actions without explicit directions from superiors (C.S. "no independence in the way of working") and the expectation for detailed reporting to leaders (C.S. "reporting to the leader").

Central decision making is a therefore a key characteristic of South Korean leadership styles, where leaders are expected to make final decisions without much input from subordinates. An interviewee highlighted this by saying, *"Leaders make the final decision and subordinates do not have to question the authority."* This centralization is often at odds with the Italian preference for collaborative decision-making, where leaders and subordinates work together to reach conclusions. This difference is also noted

in the expectation that leaders should handle significant decisions on their own (C.S. "leader decides everything") and the overall leadership approach that emphasizes hierarchical control (C.S. "leadership style"). *Another quote illustrates this: "In Italy, we make decisions together with our team, but in Korea, the leader's word is final."*

4.1.3 Work-life balance

Work-life balance in South Korea often skews towards extended working hours and high levels of dedication to the job, sometimes at the expense of personal life. One interviewee observed, *"Working extra hours to appear good in the eyes of the boss is common."* While Italians also may occasionally work over hours to please their employers, these strive for more balance between professional and personal life, valuing their time spent outside of work. This cultural standard is further reflected in the notion that employees should always be willing to take on additional tasks (C.S. "taking on extra responsibilities") and the tendency to work long hours out of a sense of obligation to the company (C.S. "living to work"). Another interviewee noted, *"In Korea, staying late at work is a sign of dedication, whereas in Italy, we prioritize having a healthy work-life balance."*

4.1.4 Social activities after work

Social activities after work are an integral part of South Korean corporate culture, fostering team cohesion and hierarchy reinforcement. As one interviewee noted, *"Going out with colleagues and the boss is a regular practice."* This contrasts with the Italian approach, where social interactions are more selective and typically involve closer personal connections. The significance of these activities is seen in the common practice of participating in social gatherings and team-building events (C.S. "getting drunk together") and the expectation that superiors will cover the costs of such outings (C.S. "the boss pays for employees' dinners out"). Another interviewee highlighted, *"In Italy, we only go out with colleagues we have a personal connection with, while in Korea, it's more about team building and hierarchy."*

4.1.5 Communication style

Communication styles differ markedly between Italians and South Koreans. Italians are known for their direct and expressive communication, by often (over)sharing their opinions openly. Conversely, South Koreans tend to be more reserved and indirect, avoiding confrontational discourse. An interviewee highlighted this by stating, *"Italians always have to point out their opinions, whereas Koreans do not speak up or share their opinions."* This difference in communication is crucial for understanding workplace dynamics; Italians in fact exhibit low conflict aversion, meaning they are comfortable engaging in discussions, even if they might lead to disagreements, especially with their peers or younger collaborators. This is not always the case when it comes to interacting with seniors or older managers. On the other hand, South Koreans have high conflict aversion, generally avoiding discussions at all, which could cause contrasts between colleagues. Another manager shared, *"In Korea, people avoid confrontation to maintain harmony, but Italians are more confrontational and open."*. Additionally, the approach to giving and receiving feedback differs significantly between the two

---

[2] C.S.: Cultural Standard

cultures. Despite what mentioned previously, in Korea feedback seems to be more professional and direct, focusing on improvement, while in Italy, feedback tends to be more indirect and less straightforward, often avoiding direct criticism. As one interviewee mentioned *"Because typically they don't want to let you know everything they think, but when it comes to giving feedback, Koreans tend to give it in a direct and clear manner, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of the employee's work. This can be seen as rigid by Italian standards, but it is a way to ensure continuous improvement in performance, sales, etc. [...] whereas we Italians are not the best at telling you everything straight to your face, when it comes to peer-to-peer feedback? In that case we take a more indirect approach."* It emerges then, that while Italians are more open to discuss and engage in difficult conversations, it is not always the case when providing feedback to each other.

4.1.6 Competences

Competences and the development of skills also show a cultural divide. Italian managers often gain their experience and skills nationally, while South Korean managers have a broader, international exposure. One interviewee remarked, *"Koreans gain experience and skills internationally, enhancing their global competencies."* This focus on international experience is a notable difference and impacts the professional development and competitiveness of employees in both cultures. Italians tend to develop their skills within their own country, while South Koreans actively seek international opportunities to broaden their expertise (C.S. "international experiences"). Another interviewee noted, *"In Italy, we value local experience and networks, whereas in Korea, international exposure is highly prized."*

4.1.7 Personal relationships

Personal relationships in the workplace are more challenging to develop in South Korea compared to Italy. One interviewee mentioned, "*It is not easy to create a friendship on the work floor in Korea."* This contrasts with the Italian culture, where forming personal connections at work is more common and valued. This cultural standard is crucial for understanding workplace interactions and employee satisfaction, reflecting the tendency in South Korea to maintain professional boundaries unless a deeper, genuine friendship develops (C.S. "personal relationships on the work floor"). However, building trust and loyalty within teams can significantly enhance employee commitment and performance. In South Korea, while it may be challenging to initially form personal relationships at work, once established, these relationships tend to be deep and long-lasting, contributing to a strong sense of loyalty and commitment. Emphasizing trust and loyalty can help bridge the initial gap, encouraging more open communication and collaboration.

4.1.8 Money attachment

Money attachment reflects cultural attitudes towards wealth and financial stability. South Koreans have a strong respect for money, often prioritizing financial success and stability. An interviewee noted, *"Koreans are very attached to money,"* indicating a cultural emphasis on economic achievement. This is less pronounced in Italy, where money is important but balanced with other aspects of life, as mentioned by the same interviewee: *"In Italy, while money is important, we also value other aspects of life such as family and personal fulfillment."* The cultural

norm in South Korea places significant value on financial prudence and the accumulation of wealth as a measure of success (C.S. "money attachment").

4.2 Similarities
This section explores the similarities between Italian and South Korean cultural practices and leadership styles. Despite the geographical and cultural distance, certain shared experiences and values, such as the importance of family in business decisions and the common identity of being peninsular nations, create a foundation for mutual understanding and collaboration. These similarities provide insights into how both cultures can find common leadership ground, fostering stronger professional relationships and effective cross-cultural management.

4.2.1 Gender based trust disparities

Gender roles and the perception of trust in the workplace show cultural disparities. In South Korea, people have more confidence in the abilities of men rather than women, as one interviewee observed, *"It is more likely to trust a man over a woman"*. This gender bias impacts professional dynamics and career advancement, contrasting with the Italian workplace, where there is a more balanced approach to gender equality. The trust disparity can influence the opportunities available to women and the expectations placed upon them in professional settings (C.S. "men are trusted more than women").

Similarly, in Italy, gender disparities persist in management, leadership, and decision-making contexts. Women are underrepresented in top management positions and often face significant pay gaps compared to their male counterparts. According to the Rome Business School, while women constitute a significant portion of the workforce and are often more educated than men, they earn less and are less likely to hold leadership positions. Specifically, women in Italy earn approximately 14% less than men for comparable work, and they hold only about 32% of leadership positions despite their higher educational attainment (Rbs, 2023).

Moreover, societal norms and historical factors play a role in perpetuating these disparities. Traditional patriarchal values have historically relegated women to domestic roles, impacting their participation in the workforce and their career progression. These norms continue to influence the labor market, with women more likely to work part-time or in lower-paying sectors. As highlighted by the European Institute for Gender Equality, these deep-rooted cultural expectations contribute to the ongoing segregation of the labor market and the significant pay gaps observed (Anderson, 2014).

4.2.2 Family business

The intersection of family and business reflects cultural attitudes towards work and personal life. In South Korea, there is a significant overlap, with family considerations often influencing business decisions. For instance, one interviewee noted, "Employers support women in maternity leave by giving extra days," highlighting the integration of family needs into business practices. Similarly, in Italy, family is also very important and influences business decisions significantly. This cultural standard of accommodating personal circumstances within professional settings is evident in both cultures, where personal

and family-related matters are given considerable importance in the workplace. The flexibility provided for employees to handle family-related matters, such as "maternity leave," showcases the strong family-oriented values shared by both Italian and South Korean workplaces. Another interviewee added, *"In Italy, balancing work and family life is crucial, and this is reflected in how companies support their employees.",* showing how both culture praise this concept within a working context.

4.2.3 Peninsula formation

The geographical characteristic of being a peninsula is a unique commonality that creates a sense of shared experience between South Koreans and Italians. One interviewee, when talking about a first meeting with a Korean company, explained, *"The first thing they said is we are a peninsula and so are you. We have had the same problems and opportunities as you have had in Italy. So, they start from this premise. We are both more isolated; the advantage is that you are isolated. Therefore, potentially protected from enemy attacks. Whoever is isolated must fend for themselves, if you are isolated, there is nothing to do. However, there is still a small misfortune that to the North, the only point where we are connected to the world is North Korea. And here, isolated, he says you are the only point where you are connected to one of the few points connected. There is Germany/Austria where in the past you had your historical problems, the wars, so they say it. We know that with Italians we can work in the right way, precisely because at a cultural level we start from a common base. And this concept of the Peninsula has remained impressed."* This shared geographical identity fosters a mutual understanding and creates a foundation for effective collaboration. Both countries have historically navigated the challenges and benefits of their peninsular status, influencing their cultural and business practices. The sense of isolation and the necessity to be self-reliant are common experiences that shape the way Italians and South Koreans approach problem-solving and external relations. Another interviewee echoed this sentiment, saying, *"Being a peninsula has made both Italians and Koreans adaptable and resilient, always finding ways to connect with the outside world despite our geographical constraints."* This shared cultural base contributes to smoother interactions and deeper mutual respect in business contexts.

The findings from this research highlight significant differences and a few similarities in cultural and leadership practices between Italians and South Koreans. These factors affect various aspects of professional life, from communication and decision-making to work-life balance and social interactions. Understanding these cultural standards is crucial for improving cross-cultural management and fostering better collaboration between Italian and South Korean professionals.

5. DISCUSSION

This study has provided an in-depth comparative analysis of the cultural and corporate leadership traits of Italy and South Korea, investigating the prevalence and impact of paternalistic leadership in both contexts, focusing on the following research question and three sub-questions:

To what extent do the Italian and Korean leadership styles differ?

- *How do Italian employees and managers in South Korea cope with the existing cultural differences in leadership style?*

- *What are the similarities and differences between Korean and Italian leadership style?*
- *To what extent is the paternalistic leadership style a common ground that can be mutually understood and effectively applied by both Korean and Italian managers?*

Through the findings, several key insights have emerged; Italian managers in South Korea often face challenges adapting to the highly formal and hierarchical Korean business environment. Conversely, South Korean employees appreciated the family-like atmosphere fostered by Italian leaders, which aligns with their cultural emphasis on loyalty and harmony.

5.1 Theoretical implications

The study contributes to the broader literature on leadership by deepening the understanding of paternalistic leadership within different cultural frameworks. In South Korea, paternalistic leadership is deeply rooted in Confucian values, emphasizing hierarchy, loyalty, and a father-like approach to leadership. In contrast, Italian leadership, while also displaying paternalistic traits, is influenced by a mix of historical, cultural, and familial factors. This research underscores the importance of considering cultural context when examining leadership styles and their effectiveness. Moreover, the study aligns with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, particularly in terms of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Both Italy and South Korea score high on these dimensions, reflecting their preference for hierarchical structures and risk-averse decision-making processes. These theoretical insights can help scholars and practitioners better understand the interplay between culture and leadership.

The study also revealed that while both cultures exhibit paternalistic leadership traits, their manifestations differ significantly. In South Korea, this leadership style is deeply rooted in Confucian values, emphasizing a father-like approach, loyalty, and a clear hierarchy (Ahlstrom & Chen, 2010). This is consistent with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, where both Italy and South Korea score high on power distance and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1984). In Italy, paternalistic traits are influenced by historical, cultural, and familial factors, with a focus on mutual trust and loyalty within organizational relationships (Sarti, 2014).

The study investigated the extent to which the paternalistic leadership style can be mutually understood and effectively applied by both Korean and Italian managers. The findings, supported by the theoretical framework and empirical data, suggest that while paternalistic leadership is prevalent in both cultures, its application and understanding are deeply rooted in their respective historical and cultural contexts. In South Korea, paternalistic leadership is heavily influenced by Confucian values that emphasize hierarchy, loyalty, and a father-like approach. This leadership style is characterized by a high degree of formality, respect for authority, and centralization of decision-making. Korean managers are expected to provide guidance and support to their subordinates, much like a parent would, creating a family-like atmosphere within the organization. This approach fosters loyalty and harmony, crucial elements in Korean corporate culture. On the other hand, Italian paternalistic leadership, while sharing some similarities with the Korean model, is shaped by a mix of historical, cultural, and familial factors. Italian managers also emphasize trust and loyalty, but their approach tends to be less formal and more relational. The

Italian leadership style often involves a more collaborative decision-making process, where subordinates are encouraged to express their opinions and participate in discussions. This reflects the Italian cultural norm of valuing interpersonal relationships within a hierarchical structure.

While it has been concluded already that hierarchical structures and centralized decision-making are prominent in both South Korean and Italian organizations and that South Korean leadership is characterized by a high degree of formality and power distance, with leaders making final decisions without much input from subordinates (Hoftesede 1980), (Shin, 1998; Park & Park, 2018) this research adds practical insights into the challenges Italian managers face when adapting to the stricter hierarchical structures in South Korea. The requirement for detailed reporting and the reluctance of Korean subordinates to act independently highlight the differences in implementation. This practical perspective is less covered in the existing literature.

When it comes to work-life balance and the role of social activities in professional settings, they differ across cultures. South Koreans often work extended hours, prioritizing dedication to their job, sometimes at the expense of personal life (Park & Park, 2018). Italian culture values a balance between professional and personal life, with more selective social interactions (Commisceo Global, 2013). Our research highlights the cultural expectations surrounding work-life balance and social activities. In South Korea, socializing with colleagues after work is common to foster team cohesion. In contrast, Italians are more selective with their social interactions, typically involving closer personal connections. This adds a practical perspective to the understanding of how cultural norms shape social activities and their impact on team dynamics and employee satisfaction.

Regarding communication styles, it is known that Italians are known for direct and expressive communication, often engaging in open discussions and debates. South Koreans, in contrast, are more reserved and indirect, avoiding confrontational discourse (Chamorro & Sanger, 2016; Park & Koo, 2018). This research provides a comparison of these communication styles: Italians exhibit low conflict aversion, meaning they are comfortable with discussions that may lead to disagreements. South Koreans, however, have high conflict aversion and generally avoid discussions that could cause conflict. Additionally, feedback in Korea is more constructive and direct, while in Italy, it tends to be more indirect and less straightforward. These insights enhance the understanding of communication dynamics in cross-cultural settings.

Lastly, the development of personal relationships in the workplace varies between cultures. It was already known that In South Korea, professional boundaries are typically maintained unless deeper, genuine friendships develop (Park & Park, 2018). In Italy, forming personal connections at work is more common and valued (Warburton, 2022). Our research emphasizes the challenges and strategies for building trust and loyalty within teams. In South Korea, personal relationships in the workplace are harder to develop but significantly enhance loyalty and commitment once established. In Italy, fostering personal connections supports a cohesive and supportive work environment. These insights provide practical recommendations for enhancing team dynamics and employee satisfaction through cultural understanding.

Moreover, understanding these relationship-building and trust dynamics with South Korean team members and suppliers is critical to the business process. Relationship-building and many formal business activities often occur after regular working hours. Given Italy's high score in Individualism (76 vs. 18), Italians generally prioritize their personal lives over socializing with colleagues outside of work (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2013). Additionally, Italy's lower score in Long-term Orientation (61 vs. 100) indicates that Italians value their free time highly (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2013). Italians should be mindful of these cultural differences and be prepared to adapt accordingly. Understanding and adhering to local customs and norms is essential for developing trust and gaining acceptance from South Korean counterparts.

This research indicates that cultural awareness and adaptation are key to managing international projects effectively. For instance, cultural intelligence can significantly enhance communication and collaboration within multicultural teams (Earley & Ang, 2003). Moreover, understanding high-context and low-context communication styles, as described by Hall (1976), can prevent misinterpretations, and improve interactions in diverse environments. Incorporating strategies from cross-cultural management literature can lead to better project outcomes and foster a more inclusive workplace (Thomas & Peterson, 2017).

For Italian managers, practical implications include recognizing and respecting Korean hierarchical structures, adapting to indirect communication styles, and participating in social activities to build strong business relationships. Suggestions such as presenting business cards with both hands, being patient with decision-making processes, and engaging in after-work socializing are vital for fostering effective cross-cultural interactions.

In summary, this study underscores the importance of cultural awareness and adaptability in cross-cultural leadership. By understanding and integrating these cultural nuances, Italian managers can enhance their effectiveness and foster more harmonious and productive business relationships in South Korea. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on cross-cultural management and highlights the need for further studies to explore these dynamics in even greater depth.

5.2 Practical recommendations

Working on international projects involves collaborating with individuals from various regions, each bringing unique languages and cultural backgrounds. This diversity affects communication, attitudes, behaviors, work practices, decision-making processes, and ultimately, the project's performance (Nicholas & Steyn, 2012). Recognizing and adapting to these cultural differences is crucial for success in an international setting, requiring openness and flexibility (Battistella et al., 2023)

For Italian managers working in South Korea or collaborating with Korean clients and suppliers, it is essential to understand and adapt to Korean business etiquette and social norms. Here are some practical suggestions based on the findings and cultural insights:

- **Hierarchy and respect:** in South Korea, respecting the hierarchical structure is essential. When interacting with senior colleagues or clients, it is important to display a reserved formality initially. One participant noted, "leaders make the final decision, and

subordinates do not question the authority," which emphasizes the importance of recognizing and adhering to the hierarchy. Italian managers should recognize and respect the hierarchical nature of Korean organizations, ensuring clear communication and decision-making protocols that align with local practices.

- **Decision making:** being patient with the decision-making process, should be taken into account when dealing with Korean companies, as they value collective harmony and thorough deliberation. Decisions may take longer than in Western contexts, therefore it is not recommended to push for immediate answers.

- **Meeting etiquette:** when meeting for the first time, it is recommended to have business cards ready. Presenting and receiving business cards with both hands, and taking a moment to read each card carefully shows respect and attentiveness to the Korean counterparts.

- **Communication style:** Italian managers should be aware of the indirect communication style prevalent in South Korea, being mindful of non-verbal cues to maintain harmony (gibun) in interactions.

- **Building trust and loyalty:** emphasizing trust and loyalty within teams can enhance employee commitment and performance, reflecting the paternalistic values common in both cultures.

- **Socializing and drinking:** participating in social activities, especially drinking, is crucial for building strong business relationships. Italian professionals need to be aware that going out to eat or drink after work foster closer ties, as it is during these informal settings that deeper business relationships are formed.

5.3 Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations worth mentioning. The research was constrained by a limited timeframe, which affected the depth of the literature review and the scope of empirical data collection. Interviews were conducted within two specific periods: May to October 2022 and January to March 2024. While this approach allowed for a more comprehensive analysis by capturing changes and developments over time, it also introduced certain constraints. The discontinuity in data collection may have impacted the consistency and comparability of the responses, as external factors influencing the participants could have varied between the two periods. Despite this limitation, the interviews were carefully analyzed to ensure consistency and reliability. Initially, the discontinuity in data collection posed a challenge, but this was addressed through rigorous cross-referencing and validation techniques. By methodically comparing responses and contextual factors across the two periods, the study was able to maintain a high level of analytical rigor. This approach helped mitigate the potential impacts of temporal variations and ensured that the findings remained robust and credible.

Furthermore, the sample size was relatively small, comprising five Italian professionals working in South Korea. This limits the generalizability of the findings. However, despite the small sample size, the quality of the sample is acceptable since all the interviewees respected the criteria set for this study. Each participant had relevant experience and insights, providing valuable data that contributed to a deeper understanding of the cultural and leadership dynamics explored in this research.

Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research, while providing in-depth insights, may not capture the full range of experiences and perspectives present in the broader population. The context-specific nature of the interviews also means that the findings may not be entirely applicable to other settings. Future research could benefit from incorporating a larger, more diverse sample and employing mixed method approaches to triangulate the findings. Building on the findings and limitations of this study, several avenues for future research are suggested. Expanding the comparative framework to include other Confucian and Western cultures could provide a more comprehensive understanding of paternalistic leadership across different contexts. Moreover, incorporating quantitative methods could enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more robust analysis of the relationships between cultural dimensions and leadership styles. Furthermore, future research could focus also on gender dynamics, investigating the role of gender in leadership within these cultural contexts. This could provide a deeper understanding of how paternalistic leadership intersects with gender norms and expectations. Lastly, the impact of globalization on leadership in Asian countries could be taken into consideration. De facto, exploring how globalization influences leadership styles and practices in both cultures could offer insights into the adaptability and evolution of traditional leadership models.

6. REFERENCES

Adler, N. j., & Boyacigiller , N. (1991). The Parochial Dinosaur: Organizational Science in a Global Context. *The Academy of Management Review, Vol. 16, No. 2*, 262-290.

Ahlstrom, D., & Chen, S.-j. (2010). Managing in ethnic Chinese communities: Culture, institutions, and context. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 27(3)*, 341-354 .

AIRE. (2019). *Anagrafe degli Italiani residenti all'ester*. Retrieved from AIRE: http://ucs.interno.gov.it/ucs/multidip/index.htm

Alston, J. P. (1989). Wa, Guanxi, and Inhwa: Managerial principles in Japan, China, and Korea. *Business Horizons*, 26-31.

Anderson, M. (2014). European Institute for Gender Equality. European Union Regulations, European Encyclopedia of Law. https://europeanlaw.lawlegal.eu/european-institute-for-gender-equality/

Baskerville, R. F. (2003). Hofstede never studied culture. *Accounting, Organizations and Society,* 28(1), 1-14.

Battistella, C., Bortolotti, T., Boscari, S., Nonino, F., & Palombi, G. (2023). The impact of cultural dimensions on project management performance. International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 32(1), 108–130. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijoa-11-2022-3498

Beugelsdijk, S., Maseland, R., & van Hoorn, A. (2015). Are scores on Hofstede's dimensions of national culture stable over time? A cohort analysis. *Global Strategy Journal, 5*(3), 223-240.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589-597.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Brower, H. H., Schoorman, D. F., & Tan, H. (2000). A model of relational leadership: The integration of trust and leader–member exchange. *The Leadership Quarterly, Vol. 11, Issue 2*, 227-250.

Camuffo, A., & Costa, G. (1993, January 15). *Strategic Human Resource Management — Italian Style*. From MIT Sloan Management Review: https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/strategic-human-resource-management-italian-style/

Choi, J. (2014). The Korean leadership style: Cultural influences and implications. Journal of Leadership Studies, 8(2), 12-25.

Chamorro, T., & Sanger, M. (2016). *What Leadership Looks Like in Different Cultures*. Retrieved from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2016/05/what-leadership-looks-like-in-different-cultures

Commisceo Global. (2022). *Cross Cultural Management Guide for Italy*. From Commisceo Global: https://www.commisceo-global.com/resources/management-guides/italy-management-guide

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Derr, B., Roussillon, S., & Bournois, F. (2001). *Cross-cultural Approaches to Leadership Development.* London: Quorum Books.

Dorfman, P. W., Howell, J. P., Hibino, S., Lee, J. K., Tate, U., & Bautista, A. (1997). Leadership in in Western and Asian Countries: commonalities and differences in effective leadership processes across culture. *Leadership quartile, Vol. 8, No. 3*.

Earley, P. C., Jr., & Ang, S. (2003). Cultural intelligence: individual interactions across cultures. In Studies in Intelligence (p. 379). Stanford University Press. https://www.cia.gov/resources/csi/static/Individual-Interactions-Across-Cultures.pdf

bA Cultural Analysis of Paternalistic Leadership in Chinese Organizations. *Management and Organizations in the Chinese Context*, 84–127.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin, 51*(4), 327-358.

GLOBE. (2020). *GLOBE*. From GLOBE: https://globeproject.com/results/clusters/confucian-asia%3Fmenu=list.html#list

Hall, E. T. (1976). Beyond culture. New York Anchor Press/Double day. - References - Scientific Research Publishing. (n.d.). https://www.scirp.org/reference/ReferencesPapers?ReferenceID=1021357

Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values.* SAGE.

Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values. Sage
　　　　Publications.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2013). Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. McGraw-
　　　　Hill.

Kee, T.S. (2008). Influence of Confucianism on Korean Corporate Culture.

Kiger, M.E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher,*
42, 846 - 854.

Kim, Y. H., & Kim, M. S. (2010). Influence of Confucian ethics on organizational communication in South Korea.
　　　　Journal of Business Ethics, 91(1), 81-94.

King, N. (2004) 'Using interviews in qualitative research', in C. Cassell and G. Symon (eds) Essential Guide to
Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research. London: Sage. pp. 11–22.

Kirkman, B. L., Lowe, K. B., & Gibson, C. B. (2006). A quarter-century of Culture's Consequences: A review of
empirical research incorporating Hofstede's cultural values framework. *Journal of International Business Studies,*
37(3), 285-320.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.).
SAGE Publications.

Lee, J., & Miller, D. (1999). People matter: commitment to employees, strategy and performance in Korean firms.
　　　　Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 20, 579-593.

Lee, J. (2001). Confucian Thought Affecting Leadership and Organizational Culture of Korean Higher Education.

Majumdar, A. (2019). Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research. *Advances in Business Information Systems and*
Analytics.

Marchionne, S. (2008). *Fiat's Extreme Makeover.* Retrieved from Harvard Business Review:
　　　　https://hbr.org/2008/12/fiats-extreme-makeover

Marturano, A. (2012). *Italy on Leadership.* Retrieved from Global Edge: https://globaledge.msu.edu/global-
　　　　resources/resource/4131

Minkov, M., & Kaasa, A. (2022). Do dimensions of culture exist objectively? A validation of the revised Minkov-
Hofstede model of culture with world values survey items and scores for 102 countries. *Journal of International*
Management, 28(4), 100971.

McKinsey & Company. (2014). Many companies are finding successful ways to overcome supply chain
　　　　challenges as they enter Asian market. *CSCMP's Supply Chain Quarterly.*

Nicholas, J. M., & Steyn, H. (2012). Project management for engineering, business, and technology. In *Routledge*
eBooks. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080967059

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the
trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*, 1-13.

Oxford Academic. (2023). Handbook of Methodological Approaches to Community-Based Research: Qualitative,
Quantitative, and Mixed Methods.

Park, H., & Park, C. (2018). Foundation of leadership in Asia: Leader characteristics and leadership styles review
　　　　and research agenda. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management volume*, 697–718 .

Park, S., Han, S., Hwang, S., & Park, C. (2019 Vol 22). Comparison of leadership styles in Confucian Asian
　　　　countries. *Human Resource Development International*, 91-100.

Park, H., & Kim, K. (2020). The impact of hierarchical organizational culture on the creativity of employees:
　　　　Focusing on Korean companies. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 41(3), 215-233.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE
Publications

Pizzinato, M. (2020). *Analysis of Cross-Cultural Experiences by Italian Expats Working for Korean*
　　　　Organizations.

Ramamurti, R. (2012). WHAT IS REALLY DIFFERENT ABOUT EMERGING MARKET
　　　　MULTINATIONALS? *Global Strategy Journal*, 41-47.

Rome Business School (RBS). (2023, October 31). *Gender gap, diversity and inclusion in work in Italy and*
　　　　around the world. The experience of Doctors Without Borders. Rome Business
　　　　School. https://romebusinessschool.com/blog/gender-gap-diversity-and-inclusion-in-work-in-italy-and-
　　　　around-the-world-the-experience-of-doctors-without-borders/

Sarti, D. (2014). Leadership styles to engage employees: evidence from human service organizations in Italy.
　　　　Journal of Workplace Learning, 202-216.

Shin, Y. (1998). The Traits and Leadership Styles of CEOs in Korean Companies. *Korean Management Style and*
　　　　Strategies, 40-48.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.

Sposato, M. (2019). Understanding paternalistic leadership: a guide for managers considering foreign assignments. *Strategy & Leadership, Vol. 47*, 47-53. Retrieved from emerald: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/SL-05-2019-0066/full/pdf?title=understanding-paternalistic-leadership-a-guide-for-managers-considering-foreign-assignments

Statista. (2021). *Top 50 countries in the Globalization Index 2021*. Retrieved from Statista: https://www.statista.com/statistics/268168/globalization-index-by-country/

Taras, V., Steel, P., & Kirkman, B. L. (2012). Improving national cultural indices using a longitudinal meta-analysis of Hofstede's dimensions. *Journal of World Business, 47*(3), 329-341.

The World Bank. (2021). *The World Bank In Republic of Korea*. Retrieved from The World Bank: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/korea/overview#1

Toyryla, L. (2023, June 21). *Korean Business Etiquette – Culture and Practices in the Workplace*. Retrieved from 90 Day Korean: https://www.90daykorean.com/korean-business-etiquette/#what-is-gibun)

Trezza, C. (2000). Korea, Italy Boast Growing Cooperative Relations. *Korea Times*.

Vaia. (2024). *Gender pay gap Italy*. From Vaia: https://www.vaia.com/en-us/explanations/italian/italian-social-issues/gender-pay-gap-italy/

Venaik, S., & Brewer, P. (2013). Critical issues in the Hofstede and GLOBE national culture models. *International Marketing Review, 30*(5), 469-482.

Wang, c., & Madson, N. H. (2013). *Inside China's Legal System.* Chandos Publishing.

Warburton, K. (2022). *Italian Business Management Style*. Retrieved from Global Business Culture: https://www.worldbusinessculture.com/country-profiles/italy/business-management-style/

Yeung, I. Y. M., & Tung, R. L. (1996). Achieving business success in Confucian societies: The importance of guanxi (connections). Organizational Dynamics, 25(2), 54-65.

Yoon, S.W., Shin, J., Kim, S., & Chai, D.S. (2017). Effective Leadership and Leadership Development in South Korea: Lessons Learned from Two Large Conglomerates.

7. APPENDIX

7.1 Interviews questionnaire

ITALIAN CONFUCIANISM – Interviews questionnaire

ET: 45-60 minutes

Introduce yourself and the Topic.

Ask permission to make a tape recording (so that this interview will be faithfully documented and transcripted).

The interview is confidential and the literal content will not be shared with colleagues or supervisor. The data may be used for scientific papers.

1.   How long have you been working for this Italian/Korean company? What kind of work do you do?

(I understand that you have regular contact with Korean colleagues. How often? What does the contact consist of (telephone, e-mail, in person)? What do you discuss together? What is your position and what is the position of the Korean person (s) (rank, division of tasks)? In which language do you speak with Korean people? Is the communication good? How would you describe the working atmosphere? Do you think the cooperation is good or can it be improved? Do you think personal relationships are good or can they be better?

2.   I would like to talk with you about your experiences with Korean people. How are your experiences with them in general? What do you think are the most striking differences between Italians and Koreans?

Do you have an example that may illustrate this?

(When he gives a concrete example of something which happened on the workfloor, i.e. a critical incident)

2.1 How did this happen? (detailed description of the circumstances)

2.2 Did you like it or not? Why?

2.3 How did you respond?

2.4 How did it end?

2.5 Why do you think the Dutch colleague behaved that way?

2.6 Do you have any more similar examples?

3.   What are those characteristics that you admire or respect about Korean people, that are not evident among Italian people

4.   If you had to share a situation where you were truly surprised about a behaviour of a Korean colleague on the work floor, what would that be?

5.   Have you ever experienced a disagreement with your Korean colleagues? What happened? How did they engage or finish the discussion?

6.   What do they think about italian people?

7.   Have you ever had a conflict with a Korean colleague?

8.   Have you ever had other problems with Korean colleagues?

9.   How would you describe the relationship between leaders and subordinates or team members in South Korea? How does that differ from Italy?

10.   In your experience, what are the biggest differences and similarities between the Italian and Korean working culture?

11.   When giving a feedback, how do Korean manager behave?

12.   In tough situations or moments, how do Korean and Italian differ when it comes to motivating collaborators or employees?

13.   A good manager: How should he behave? Do Italians and Koreans differ in this respect, or they share a similar leadership style?

14.   A good colleague: How should he behave? Do Italians and Koreans differ in this respect?

15.   A good employee: how should he behave? Do Italians and Korean differ in this respect?

7.2 Coding table (excel)

Coding_file

09072024_coding
table_BrandoMalta

7.2.1 Coding table 1 x interview 1

Inte rvie w nr	Trans cript page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
1	8	1	Exchanging cards	La prima cosa che noti che si nota con i coreani è il rispetto. Del rispetto che tu devi portare e di come ti poni davanti a loro. Questa è la cosa, diciamo fondamentale, perché se diciamo non c'è un po questo tipo di approccio, tu puoi avere anche il prodotto più interessante del mondo, ma non va da nessuna parte [...] E quando dico questo progetto l'avrei già visto, già notato, ma dalle cose più semplici, come scambio biglietto da visita. Noi in Italia e adesso una cosa che ho imparato viaggiando in casi come questo avviene poi anche un po in altri paesi asiatici. Tempo di Corea. Se io che ti sto dicendo che chi solo è la mia faccia e il mio nome, il mio è la mia storia, quindi viene dato in una maniera molto formale. Di solito si dà con due mani. In Italia, tutti intorno sembra di scambiarsi le figurine. No, allora, in Korea la prima cosa ci si saluta. Il momento importante è la presentazione. Ci si alza in piedi, si scambia qualche scambio a due mani. Di solito un biglietto da visita già rivolto nel verso giusto al tuo interlocutore, con inchino. Quindi questa cosa qua è diciamo l'abc può sembrare banale, però per loro è la cosa più fondamentale.	Professionals exchange business cards and promptly store them in their pockets	Professionals offer business cards with a bow and two hands, keeping them visible and close to their agenda
	9	2	Interaction with foreigners	c'è proprio un discorso di gerarchie da rispettare [...] . Mi è capitato situazioni dove ero alla Hyundai, puoi immaginare il livello, ed eravamo io con due persone della Hyundai con le quali parlavo inglese e il terzo, che era quello più anziano, non parlava l'inglese, parlava solo coreano, quindi io parlavo con l'inglese in inglese, e lui poi traduceva in coreano. Questa cosa per un paio di ore di incontro. Un paio d'ore ci siamo andati a pranzo di pranzo e ci ha seduti a mangiare. Il responsabile mi si è rivolto a me direttamente in inglese e parlava inglese. Questo avviene spessissimo, anche durante il pranzo.	Leaders interact directly with externals and subordinates, regardless of their importance or level of trust.	Leaders interact through their assistants, reserving direct interaction for important or trusted individuals
	11	3	Leadership role in the company	di solito al manager più anziana che il mondo cerchi dal punto di vista anagrafico per loro è fondamentale perché per loro il posto di un anziano è la persona matura e con coscienza è capace	Hierarchy determined by competence	Hierarchy determined by age
	11	4	Leader-subordintaes relationship	mentre l'aiutante è piu un allievo che aiuta il capo, e questo va assolutamente rispettato,. Quindi ci sono, diciamo questi tipi di attitudini, comportamenti che sono veramente fondamentali perché altrimenti rischia anche di non sedersi al tavolo	Leaders make subordinates responsible for tasks in their area of epxertise	Leaders treat assistants as students who need to learn
	14	5	peninsula - manners - culture	Certo, la prima cosa che ha detto è noi siamo la penisola e siamo anche noi. Abbiamo avuto gli stessi problemi e le stesse opportunità che avete avuto in Italia. Quindi loro partono da questo presupposto. Siamo entrambi piu isolati, il vantaggio è che sei isolato. Quindi anche potenzialmente da attacchi nemici. Chi è isolato deve arrangiarsi da solo, se sei isolato, non c'è niente da fare. Invece c'è ancora una piccola sfiga che al Nord, dove l'unico punto dove siamo collegati con il mondo è c'è la Corea del Nord. E qui, isolati, lui dice voi l'unico punto con quale siete collegati è uno dei pochi punti collegati. C'è la Germania/Austria dove in passato avete avuto i vostri problemi a livello storico, le guerre, quindi loro lo dicono. Noi sappiamo che con gli italiani possiamo lavorare nella maniera corretta, proprio perché a livello culturale partiamo da una base comune. E questa cosa qua il concetto della Penisola è rimasto impresso.	n/a	n/a
	15	6	Following Leader's decisions	Quindi quello che decide quello che è alto della piramide è colui che ha deciso. E quindi così basta eseguire quello che è stato deciso. Questo avviene anche in Cina, dove non tendono a mettere in discussione quello che è stato deciso, comeanche in Giappone. In cina è una cosa piu dittatoriale in Corea piu democratica. C'è molto questo concetto di servilismo, è la parola corretta.	Subordinates give their reccomendations to help the leader making a decision	Subordinates do not quesion leader's decision, but just execute
	17	7	Living to work	per loro i lavoro viene prima di tutto loro! Provengono da un passato abbastanza recente, anni 70 e 80, dove non c'era nulla da mangiare. Oggi si trovano tra le 10 potenze mondiali e si sono fatte un mazzo cosi per diventarlo. Per arrivare dove sono, hanno lavorato giorno, notte, notte e giorno, sette giorni su sette senza risparmiarsi. E oggi del lavoro c'è ancora bisogno, h24 e non si risparmiano. C'è ancora un po filosofia giapponese in questo. Ce in 20 anni, questi han fatto quello che glia ltri hanno fatto in 100 e si vede, vivono per lavorare, per fare business, per una posizione sociale e migliorare la societa in genere.	Italians often work extra hours, as they are afraid to lose their job	Koreans tirelessly work extra hours, to gain social status and appear good in the eyes of the boss

Inte rvie w nr	Trans cript page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
	19	9	Eating & practicing sport together	Noi spesso ci dobbiamo portare fuori clienti a cena o giocare a golf e spesso ci dicono di lasciarli vincere ahahaha Diventa quasi scherzoso. È come se noi giocassimo a calcetto con altre aziende, ce per noi è assurda questa cosa. [...] Qua noi abbiamo guocato a golf spesso, è veramente parte della cultura, tant'è vero che spesso capita ci sono alcuni affari che devono ancora essere conclusi, si va a fare la bella partita a golf, una bella bevuta alla fine si firmano i contratti.	Leisure activities with colleagues are seldomly orzanized	Leisure activities are frequently organized to enstregth business relationships with colleagues or partners
	22	10	Never saying no	Loro non ti dicono mai di NO. Per esempio, se io chiedo"vuoi andare a mangiare una pizza? " è più facile che ti dicano sì. Poi magari cancellano l'appuntamento o si inventano una scusa all'ultimo e questo avviene anche nel lavoro. Quindi è difficile che dicano di no. E poi magari ti rendi conto che in realta la cosa a cui dicono sì non andava bene, e il contratto non si chiude, non va in porto. [...] E E E la cosa è abbastanza difficile da gestire. è la cosa più difficile da decifrare, da interpretare e da codificare. Loro sono sempre molto educati, gentili, che si inchinano, ed ecco il loro sì, significa tipo "si può", "si va bene" "Si, ti seguo" ma non vuol dire sì in modo assoluto. [...] È molto strano per noi comprendere questo concetto, ma è modello in Asia. Considera che un collega cinese mi ha spiegato che in Cina la parola NO non esiste, ce non gliela insegnano proprio a scuola. Per loro il NO non è contemplato, esiste solo il SI.	They try to avoid it, but can say NO	They never say NO out of politeness
	28	11	Competence	Loro sono persone molto preparate, qualificate, anche a livello scolastico. E gente che copre queste posizioni. Mi sono sempre trovato gente che ha fatto esperienze internazionali della madonna. Quindi tu parli col gente dell'azienda che magari ti dicono di 15 anni di lavorare in California! Io sono stato 8 anni a lavorare in Germania e stati uniti, si sono fatti il mazzo. E una volta che han capito, una volta che hanno appreso in giro per il mondo, dopo ritornano in Corea, vanno a casa loro e se lo fanno per loro, perché un po c'è, lo faccio. Gente comunque molto, molto preparata e che mi da l'impressione che non sta lì a caso, anche perché di questi ha fatto quello che gli altri ha fatto in 100. [...] in italia, invece non è cosi, esperienze internazionali sono limitate e capita di interfacciarsi con persone che non dovrebbero nanche essere lì, non so se mi spiego..	Managers appointed on the basis of knowledge and connections	Managers appointed on basis of skills and international experiences
	34	12	Eating together, both at home and to do business	Loro c un po questa tradizione e cultura del cibo di rispettare, perche fa parte di molti aspetti del vita, dalla famiglia, al fare business per esempio Quindi anche questa cosa qua parlando con loro, ci accomuna molto.	Eating together is common practice with friends and family	Eating together is common between colleagues

15

7.2.2 Coding table 2 x interview 2

Interview nr	Transcript page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name (LABEL)	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
2	2	1	leader figure	la figura del capo e' autoritaria, ha un approccio diretto e quasi dominante direi, in cui il capo prende decisioni finali e impone il proprio volere senza considerare troppo in realta le opinioni degli altri	Italian leader considers others opinions	Korean leader pushes his own visions
	2	2	leader decides everything	lui ha potere decisional su qualunque cosa. se finance vuole procedere con il pagamento, se il capo pero' non ha approvato loro non loro posso fare e non si procedere.	Departments are trusted to go ahead with prcoedures	Departments cannot go ahead with procedures withouth leader's approval
	3	3	holidays leave	a dicembre mi ha fatto andare in italia per 2 settimane in ferie (12 giorni totali) cosi potevo vedere la mia famiglia, che non la vedevo da mesi a causa del covid	Leader doesn't grant 2 weeks holidays over christmas that easily	Leader grants 2 weeks holidays abroad over christmas
	4	4	The boss pays for employees dinners out	si esce a cena insieme[...] e il capo paga I pasti, paga il caffe, paga alle cene, perche ci tiene che	It is rare to go out with the boss out of work	When out with them team, the boss takes care of the costs for meals or activities
	4	5	maternity leave	di base il capo e' appunto molto bossy tipo e autoritario appunto, pero per esempio una dipendente che e' andata in maternità, lui l'ha tratta benissimo...ma si per esempio la possibilita di lavoare da remoto anche oltre I 90 giorni di maternity leave	Maternity leave is considered a challenging aspect for the employer	Employer supports women in maternity leave by giving extra days
	5	6	Peninsula	Siamo tutti e due penisole	n/a	n/a
	7	7	no independence in the way of working	E capitato volessi acquisire piu indipendendenza nel mio lavoro, ma il capo mi ha detto no, siamo qua per collaborare tutti insieme	Employess can work independetly	Leaders doesnt grant permission to work independently
	7	8	reporting to the leader	Il capo è supremo, bisogna dirgli tutto, perche è lui che decide, nel bene e nel male. Ad Esempio una volta ho avuto un probema con un colega per una questione di fatture e pagamenti. Avevo trovato un modo di risolvere il problema fra noi due e invece lui no, bisognava fare il report per iscritto, e aspettare il capo che dicesse la sua per decidere come procedere	Employee reports to leader important things only (macro-management)	Employee has to report everything to leader (micro-management)

Interview nr	Transcript page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name (LABEL)	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
	7	8	reporting to the leader	Il capo è supremo, bisogna dirgli tutto, perche è lui che decide, nel bene e nel male. Ad Esempio una volta ho avuto un probema con un colega per una questione di fatture e pagamenti. Avevo trovato un modo di risolvere il problema fra noi due e invece lui no, bisognava fare il report per iscritto, e aspettare il capo che dicesse la sua per decidere come procedere	Employee reports to leader important things only (macro-management)	Employee has to report everything to leader (micro-management)
	7	9	leader like a teacher	mi ero anche un po agitata, perche sembra appunto che devi stare attenta a quello che fai, altrimenti la maestra ti sgrida, ma stiamo scehrzando?	The employee is not a student, but a professional	The employee must behave and follows leader's guidleines like a student
	9	10	men are trusted more than women	no vabbe, se fai bene mi dicono anche brava, pero comunque si percepisce la differenza tra uomo e donna, I uomo viene ascoltato piu facilmente ancora	There's no much difference between men and women	It is more likely to trust a man over a woman
	10	11	working over hours	costetta a rimanere fino a tardi per mostrare al capo che ci tieni alla azienda e che sei produttiva	Italians often work extra hours, as they are afraid to lose their job	working extra hours, to appear good in the eyes of the boss
	11	12	going out together after work	tra colleghi, si si esce insieme, pero perche si sta con il capo, e si e un po costretti per fargli piacere	going out only with colleagues who you have a friednly connection with	Going out with collagues and the boss
	12	12	personal relationships on the workfloor	loro sono molto chiusi in ogni caso ed è difficile fare amicizie con coleghi coreani	common to create a friendship on the workfloor	not so easy to create a friendship on the workfloor

7.2.3 Coding table 3 x interview 3

Interview nr	Transcript page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
3	8	1	work environment	Per mia esperienza sicuramente il clima poco flessibile, molto impostato e a volte poco sincero... costruito. Mentre nelle piccole aziende italiane si diventa anche amici, o si può scherzare col capo, qui assolutamente no.	The environment is informal and more friendly	The environment is formal and rigid
	11	2	Taking on extra responsibilities	Mi viene in mente quella volta in cui mi è stato chiesto di fare una cosa per cui non ero stata preparata, in quanto non compete ad una segretaria e non a me nello specifico (l'universita si occupa anche delle pratiche per mandare in Italia studenti), io ho fatto presente che non sapevo fare quella cosa, quindi temevo di mettere mano alla cosa, sono passata per quella che non voleva lavorare e ho dovuto chiedere scusa	rejecting extra responsibilities is not well seen but accepted	rejecting extra resposnibilities is considered being lazy
	11	3	hierarchy	I superiori non si sfogano su quelli sotto di loro nella "casta" lavorativa, come in Italia, c'e' sempre del rispetto da portare, da entrambe le parti.	Seniors are used to vent their frustration on subordinates	Seniors don't disrespectfully vent frustration on subordinates
	15	4	relationships with clients	una caratteristica che mi ha sorpreso dei coreani sul posto di lavoro, soprattutto con fornitori o clienti e' il modo di trattarti. Sono molto carini e sempre pronti a farti sentire speciale e rispettosi, con parole molto gentili e anchepiccolini regalini, mai troppo costosi per paura che l'altro non possa accettarlo. In italia invece non c'e questa prassi, tranne per i clienti piu importanti, piu grandi.	Suppliers give gifts to bigger clients only	Suppliers make clients happy with kind words and little gifts
	17	5	way of talking	Loro pensano che qunado parliamo tra colleghi siamo troppo rumorosi ahaha e espansivi, ma che siamo anche molto calorosi e riusciamo a creare un clima caloroso.	Italians speak loud and energetically	Koreans speak softly

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Inte rvie w nr	Trans cript page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
	17	5	way of talking	Loro pensano che qunado parliamo tra colleghi siamo troppo rumorosi ahaha e espansivi, ma che siamo anche molto calorosi e riusciamo a creare un clima caloroso.	Italians speak loud and energetically	Koreans speak softly
	19	6	personal relationships on workfloor	Non costruiscono davvero relazioni, legami sul posto di lavoro, ma anche esternamente è difficile se non conoscono la persona dall'infanzia. Ci sono tanti tabu o argomenti come la sessualita o cose personali che non si possono nemmeno menzionare con un coreano, a meno che tu non sia veramente in grande amicizia appunto.	Colleagues can quikly get personal and become friends	Colleagues don't get personal, unless it's true friendship
	20	7	Sharing personal issues	Per loro e' molto importate essere rispettosi e non portare problemi personali sul lavoro, ne con i colleghi ne con i superiori ovviamente , sottolineo che questa cosa è molto molto importante anche per i coreani.	Talking about personal issues on the workfloor	Not talking about personal issues on the workfloor
	22	8	Attachment to money	Anche se hanno sempre rispetto per la comunita, pensano molto a loro stessi, e tanto ai soldi, forse troppo.	Not so attached to money	Very attached to money
	24	9	Following leader's instructions	Per noi Italiani ovviamente e' importnate seguire le direttive dei superiori, ma con la libertà di dire la tua, sempre nel rispetto. Qui in Corea non e' proprio così, devi seguire le direttive, punto.	Subordinates follow leader's guidelines, but have the freedom to add their own input	Subordinates follow leader's instructions literally

7.2.4 Coding table 4 x interview 4

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Inter view nr	Tran script page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
4	1	1	Management style	la mia posizione appunto è quella dell'amministratore delegato. Lascio ai manager una quasi totale discrezione, quindi sono loro che fanno le assunzioni, i licenziamenti. Io mi limito soltanto a definire le general policies del ristorante, cioè le politiche di orientamento più o meno, mission, vision, queste cose qui. Ecco, non vado sul micromanagement. Quello lo fanno loro. E ti dico che questa cosa è abbastanza forte perché è tipico di un capo coreano, si immischia un po' in tutto, cioè sta lì a calcolare il granello di parmigiano	Italian managers tend to step away from micromanagement	Korean managers get involved in small tasks completion
	3	2	Going out together after work	Una differenza che ho visto con le altre aziende, dove invece fanno sempre, escono insieme, fanno molte attività di team building, nella mia questo a me sarebbe sinceramente piaciuto, io non ho mai spinto per farlo, però non ho nemmeno avvertito l'esigenza e la voglia da parte di chi ci lavora di farlo.	going out only with colleagues who you have a friednly connection with	Going out with collagues and the boss
	4	3	communications difficulties	la comunicazione con i coreani non è mai efficace, loro non si capiscono nemmeno tra di loro. È un fatto abbastanza famoso, adesso a te ti farà ridere, ma è così. Se due coreani si parlano per chiarire qualcosa, anche la cosa più semplice, ci mettono tre ore per capirsi l'uno con l'altro, proprio perche nessuno vuole esporsi troppo o sembrare maleducato. Quindi immagina un po' inglese. [...] Alla fine le cose vengono chiarite, però ci vuole più tempo rispetto ad una comunicazione che intercorrerebbe tra italiani o tra europei.	Italians like being confrontational and discuss	Koreans have difficulties in understanding each other as they don't like being confrontational
	4	4	Boss tells what to do	comunque è diversa dall'atmosfera tipica di un'azienda coreana dove c'è il capo coreano che un po' schiavizza il personale.	Italian boss doesn't "enslave" subordintaes	Korean boss "enslave" subordintaes
	5	5	Following companies directions	Le differenze tra italiani e coreani? Questa è abbastanza facile. Il coreano esegue alla lettera quello che gli dici, l'italiano invece fa di testa sua. Ecco, questa è la differenza fondamentale [...] Guarda, faccio un esempio, ma ce ne sono almeno 10 di esempi del genere. I coreani che fanno le pizze vanno nella scuola di pizza. Nella scuola di pizza gli insegnano che la pizza è tonda, quindi loro stendono la pizza e la infornano. Quando il pizzaiolo fa la pizza, stende la pizza fino a formare un cerchio perfetto, cioè ci mettono un'ora e mezza, perché gli hanno detto che la pizza deve essere tonda. Se tu prendi un pizzaiolo napoletano, la pizza non è mai tonda, a volte è quasi quadrata, perché il principio è stendere l'impasto. Poi può uscire tonda, può uscire triangolare, può uscire esagonale, ottagonale, mentre il coreano è come se fosse programmato per farla tonda e quindi io per esempio al mio staff ho dovuto dire di non preoccuparsi della regolarità della circonferenza della pizza.	Subordinates follow leader's guidelines, but have the freedom to add their own input	Subordinates follow leader's instructions literally
	6	6	productivity	Tutto essere veloce, tutto subito, tutto immediato e rapido, efficiente.	Employees need to have a good work/life balance	Employees are stressed out to be more producitve

7.2.5 Coding table 5 x interview 5

Interview nr	script page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
5	2	1	Communication style	Una delle differenze più evidenti tra italiani e coreani riguarda l'approccio alla comunicazione. Ad esempio, durante una riunione di vendita, ho notato che i miei colleghi coreani erano restii a esprimere apertamente le loro opinioni sulla strategia di vendita proposta. Questo è in netto contrasto con l'approccio italiano, dove ci si aspetta un dibattito aperto e schietto durante le riunioni.	Italians always have to point out their opinions	Do not speak up or share their opinions
	2	2	conflict aversion	Dopo una discussione più approfondita, è emerso che i miei colleghi coreani avevano delle riserve riguardo alla fattibilità di una nuova strategia che volevamo applicare localmente. Penso che i colleghi coreani si siano comportati in quel modo perché preferiscono evitare conflitti diretti e mostrare rispetto verso il loro superiore gerarchico, che in questo caso ero io come manager del dipartimento di vendite.	They share inputs with the leaders	They want to avoid discussions and conflict against the leaders
	3	3	giving up a promotion	Una situazione in cui sono rimasto sinceramente sorpreso dal comportamento di un collega coreano è quando uno dei miei collaboratori ha rinunciato a una promozione durante un periodo di difficoltà personale di un suo famigliare. In Italia, potrebbe essere visto come una mancanza di ambizione, ma ho imparato a rispettare la priorità data ai rapporti interpersonali e familiari nella cultura coreana.	Giving up a promotion is seen as lack of ambition	Giving up a working promotion is well accepted by the company and colleagues
	4	4	leader-subordinate relationship	Ma guarda in Corea, la relazione tra leader e subordinati è caratterizzata da un forte rispetto per l'autorità e un'attesa di guida, di direzioni, di istruzioni proprio, che devono essere super chiare, da parte del leader. Ciò si differenzia dall'Italia dove le relazioni possono essere più informali e tranquille anche se vogliamo, dove si c'e gerarchia, pero c'e' anche uno scambio di idee and inputs	Subordinates and leader exchange ideas together	Subordinates just need guidelines to follow from the leader
	4	5	Leadership style	Lo stile di leadership dei coreani è spesso basato sulla gerarchia e sulla centralizzazione delle decisioni. Gli esempi includono l'aspettativa che il leader prenda decisioni cruciali e che i subordinati seguano le istruzioni senza troppe domande. [...] Questo riflette la forte influenza della cultura confuciana, dove il rispetto per l'autorità è fondamentale.	Leaders make a final decision together with collaborators	Leaders make the final decision and subordinates do not have to question the authority

Interview nr	script page	CI nr	Cultural standards Name	Critical Incident (CI) / quote	Italian Cultural Standard short definition - the essence of the behaviour	Korean Cultural Standard - short definition - the essence of the behaviour
	5	6	Giving feedback	Questa e' una bella domanda, perche se di solito non vogliono proprio farti sapere tutto quello che pensano, quando si tratta di business i coreani tendono a darti dei feedback in modo diretto e chiaro, sottolineando sia i punti di forza che i punti deboli del lavoro del dipendente. Questo può essere visto come rigido dagli standard italiani, ma è un modo per garantire un miglioramento continuo delle performance, delle vendite eccetera[...] ma si noi italiani non siamo proprio i migliori ha dirti in faccia tutto tutto no? La preniamo un poi più alla larga.	Italians go the long way around	They respectfully give direct feedback, highlighting both positive and negative aspects
	6	7	Motivating subordinates	In situazioni difficili, i coreani tendono a enfatizzare il senso di dovere verso l'azienda e l'importanza del raggiungimento degli obiettivi aziendali per motivare i collaboratori. Gli italiani, d'altra parte, possono fare appello alla creatività e alla flessibilità per superare le sfide.	They rely on people's creativity	They are goal-oriented and focus on the attachment to the company
	6	8	conflict management	Un buon collega dovrebbe essere collaborativo, affidabile e comunicativo. Le differenze tra italiani e coreani possono emergere nell'approccio al comunicare con glia altri e anche nella gestione dei conflitti, dove noi siamo un po piu testardi, mentre loro sono piu piaccioni quasi, o comunque come detto in precedenza, tendono a dirti si e accettare quello che arriva.	italians tend to be more stubborn	Koreans suborditaes tend to accept and compromise
	7	9	Going out together after work	Una cosa un po diversa dalla nostro modo di fare che mi ha sorpreso tanto all'inizio è come ci tengono ad andare fuori a cena, piuttosto che giocare a golf, con il capo. Fa un po ridere però è proprio parte della vita aziendale, spesso per dare il contentino al capo o farsi vedere bello insomma ci siamo capiti.	going out only with colleagues who you have a friednly connection with	Going out with collagues and the boss
	7	10	International experiences	quello che anche mi ha sorpreso dei coreani è il livello di competenze specifiche che hanno a disposizione. Uno skillset incredibile, grazie anche ad esperienze in aziende internazionali in giro per il mondo	italians gain experience and skills nationally	Koreans gain experience and skills internationally

7.2.6 Coding table 6 x Table summary

	A	B	C
1	**Cultural Standards**	**C.S. Names**	**Number of interviewees mentioning this cultural standard**
2	respect	Exchanging cards	2
3		Never saying NO	
4		relationship with clients	
5		sharing personal issues	
6	hierarchy	Leader-subordintaes relationship	5
7		Following Leader's decisions	
8		no independence in the way of working	
9		reporting to the leader	
10		leader like a teacher	
11		work environment	
12		hierarchy	
13		Following leader's instructions	
14		Management style	
15		Boss tells what to do	
16		Following companies directions	
17		leader-subordinate relationship	
18	central decision making	Leadership role in the company	3
19		leader figure	
20		leader decides everything	
21		Leadership style	
22	Work-life balance	Living to work	3
23		working over hours	
24		Taking on extra responsibilities	
25	social activities after work	Getting drunk together	4
26		Eating & practicing sport together	
27		The boss pays for employees dinners out	
28		going out together	
29		Going out after work	
30		Going out after work	

	A	B	C
1	**Cultural Standards**	**C.S. Names**	**Number of interviewees mentioning this cultural standard**
31	communcaition style	Interaction with foreigners	4
32		way of talking	
33		communications difficulties	
34		Communication style	
35		conflict aversion	
36		Giving feedback	
37		Motivating subordinates	
38		conflict management	
39	competences	Competence	2
40		international experiences	
41	family / business	Eating together, both at home and to do business	3
42		Holidays leave	
43		maternity leave	
44		giving up a promotion	
45	Personal relationships	personal relationships on the workfloor	2
46		personal relationships on the workfloor	
47	Money attachement		1
48	men are trusted more than women		1