How do Mediterranean managers fill in their leadership role in the Netherlands?

Bicultural management style of Turkish and Moroccan migrant managers

Master of Science Business Administration Thesis

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Abstract

In recent years, heightened migration has increased cultural diversity in Western European societies. This demographic shift has impacted the workforce, making bicultural leadership styles increasingly relevant as immigrants bring diverse perspectives into professional settings. While previous research has examined cultural tensions and adaptation of ethnic minorities in operational roles Waldring, Crul, and Ghorashi, 2014), limited empirical attention has been given to how bicultural individuals lead. This study aims to fill this gap by providing in-depth empirical insights into how Mediterranean managers, specifically of Turkish and Moroccan descent, fill in their leadership roles in the Netherlands. Drawing on 16 semi-structured interviews with Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch managers, this qualitative study applies the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to explore how cultural values such as respect, authority, and community orientation interact with Dutch workplace expectations of consensus, autonomy, and direct feedback. The findings reveal that these managers develop a bicultural leadership style, blending Mediterranean trait with Dutch norms of egalitarianism and open communication. Notably, the study challenges traditional acculturation models by demonstrating that adaptation does not occur uniformly but varies by characteristic and situation. Mediterranean managers show high adaptability, yet selectively retain core values rooted in their cultural upbringing. This research contributes to understanding the complexity of bicultural leadership and underscores the need for inclusive frameworks that account for cultural nuance in leadership behaviour.

Keywords: Mediterranean leadership, bicultural management, Turkish-Dutch managers, Moroccan-Dutch managers, cultural adaptation, Critical Incident Technique (CIT), we-culture vs. I-culture, Dutch organizational culture

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1. Introduction

1.1 Preface

As Western societies grow increasingly multicultural, understanding both the similarities and differences between cultural groups becomes essential for building inclusive and effective institutions. Literature in the fields of cross-cultural psychology and international business underscores that cultural awareness enhances communication, teamwork, and innovation (Triandis, 1995; Johnson, Lenartowicz, and Apud, 2006). This is particularly relevant in the workplace, where cultural diversity not only shapes interpersonal interactions but also impacts leadership and organizational performance. According to Rock and Grant (2016), diverse teams are more innovative and quicker in problem-solving than homogenous teams, highlighting the potential of multicultural synergy when well-managed. In increasingly diverse labour markets like the Netherlands, cultural differences often manifest most clearly in professional settings, where members of both majority and minority groups must collaborate. Earlier studies, such as those by Berger, Essers, and Himi (2017), have shown that Moroccan employees in Dutch organizations experience tensions between their cultural values and those of the dominant workplace culture. These tensions become even more pronounced in leadership contexts, where expectations around hierarchy, communication, and decision-making styles can differ significantly between cultural backgrounds (House, Quigley, and De Luque, 2004; Hofstede, 2001). Importantly, members of second and third generation migrant communities are no longer confined to operational roles but are also advancing into leadership positions (Waldring, Crul, and Ghorashi, 2014). Research by Lakshman (2013) and Mody (2014) suggests that bicultural individuals often develop hybrid leadership approaches, integrating values and behaviours from both heritage and host cultures.

In this thesis, the term Mediterranean managers refers specifically to Dutch professionals of Turkish and Moroccan descent, who share a set of cultural characteristics commonly associated with the broader Mediterranean region. While the Mediterranean encompasses a wide range of countries, from Southern Europe to North Africa and parts of the Middle East, this research narrows its focus to Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch managers for both empirical and conceptual reasons.

To begin with, individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent form the two largest and most established non-Western migrant communities in the Netherlands (Crul, Heering, & Salmenhaara, 2014; Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2020). Their significant presence not only provides accessible access to participants but also positions them as a strategically relevant case group for exploring the complexities of bicultural leadership. Research has shown that many second-generation individuals from these communities are now advancing into managerial roles, making it

timely to study how they navigate leadership within the Dutch organizational environment (Waldring, Crul, & Ghorashi, 2014). Furthermore, previous studies demonstrate that Turkish and Moroccan managerial behaviour reflects cultural values that align with key Mediterranean leadership traits, such as hierarchical orientation, collectivism, relational emphasis, and paternalistic tendencies (House et al., 2004; Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002; Öner, 2012). For instance, Turkish managers often maintain strong familial bonds and favour directive, control-oriented leadership styles (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002; Öner, 2012). Moroccan managers, on the other hand, tend to show high uncertainty avoidance and respect for hierarchy, while also adapting to Dutch norms such as individualization and egalitarianism through education and workplace exposure (Pels, 2003; Berger et al., 2017).

Although the cultural traits examined in this thesis are not exclusive to Turkey or Morocco, they reflect wider Mediterranean patterns that transcend national borders. As one of the thesis supervisors suggested, the cultural and leadership dimensions explored in this study operate at a sociocultural level that is broad enough to represent a shared Mediterranean leadership style. Thus, while the research focuses on two specific ethnic groups, the findings may offer insights applicable to similar populations across the Mediterranean basin.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine how Dutch managers with a Mediterranean background fulfil leadership role in the Netherlands, and how their cultural upbringing shapes managerial behaviours, including decision-making, authority structures, and interpersonal dynamics. By investigating their leadership strengths and the challenges they face in adapting to the Dutch professional context, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how bicultural identity influences leadership practices in multicultural organizational environments (Aycan, 2006; Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007).

1.2 Research question

The purpose of this research is to find out how Dutch managers with a Mediterranean background fill in leadership roles in the Netherlands. As a result, the following research question is proposed:

- How do Mediterranean managers fill in their leadership role in the Netherlands?

To fully address the above research question, the following sub questions are going to be addressed:

1. To what extent is their leadership influenced by their (parents') homeland culture?
2. To what extent is their leadership influenced by their Dutch background?
3. What do they consider to be the biggest challenges for leading in the Netherlands and how do they deal with them?

1.3 Academic Relevance

Hardly any research has been done on migrant leadership in the Netherlands, particularly on leadership by people with a Mediterranean cultural background. Therefore, this thesis tries to fill in this gap by investigating whether these managers, from a Mediterranean origin, operationalise their leadership in the habitual Dutch manner or in the tradition of their forefathers. Aside from that, cultures are compared to determine how migrant managers mix Dutch and migrant leadership characteristics. Furthermore, this thesis explores which Dutch leadership traits are viewed as the most challenging for these managers to adjust to.

1.4 Practical relevance

The purpose of this research is to provide practical information on how managers with a migration history can successfully fill in a leadership role in the Netherlands, evaluating the qualities they can bring in from their culture of origin as well as the obstacles that they may encounter in a Dutch context. The results may provide useful information for migrant leaders themselves or for those who are preparing themselves for a leadership role, as well as for their colleagues and HR mangers. This is beneficial for the collaboration and working relationships between these managers and their co-workers who do not share the same culture. The mutual understanding and cooperation between diverse cultural customs will be considerably smoother if information about these factors is provided.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the theories and literature pertinent to the research topic, examining the various approaches and existing knowledge related to cultural differences and leadership styles. This framework also identifies gaps in the current research, providing a foundation for the study.

2.1 Defining culture

In order to fully grasp how cultural background influences leadership behaviour, it is essential to clarify what is meant by culture in the context of this study. Culture is a broad and often abstract concept that has been described in many different ways. As early as 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn compiled hundreds of definitions, showing that while interpretations vary, common elements often recur: culture is not inborn but learned, it is passed down across generations, it involves shared meanings and behaviours, and it typically applies to people as part of a group.

This thesis focuses on bicultural leadership in a professional context, particularly among Dutch managers with Turkish or Moroccan roots. Therefore, it adopts a definition of culture that is both sociological and practical in nature. As described by Enklaar (2021), culture can be understood as "*patterns in thought and behaviour that are shared by a particular group and carry meaning for its members*" (p. 102). This definition is highly relevant to this research, as it acknowledges that people are shaped from an early age by their cultural environment and that these learned patterns influence their views on leadership, communication, and authority. In Mediterranean cultures, such as those of Turkey and Morocco, leadership is often associated with characteristics like hierarchical structure, collective responsibility, and strong interpersonal involvement (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002; Pels, 2003). These differ significantly from the Dutch workplace, which tends to favour flat hierarchies, independence, and directness (Hofstede, 2001; Enklaar, 2021).

However, as Pinto (2007) highlights, cultural background does not explain every aspect of human behaviour. Traits such as temperament, adaptability, intelligence, or social style often stem from individual personality rather than cultural norms. This research acknowledges that leadership behaviour emerges from both cultural values and individual differences.

In summary, this thesis approaches culture as a set of socially learned ideas and behaviours that help explain how individuals interpret their environment, particularly in professional roles. By focusing on the intersection of Mediterranean cultural values and Dutch organizational expectations, the research explores how bicultural managers navigate their leadership roles in an intercultural context.

2.2 Cultural Frameworks

Understanding how culture influences leadership behaviour requires drawing on well-established theoretical frameworks that highlight differences in communication styles, authority dynamics, and group orientation. Two foundational models in the field of cross-cultural studies are Hall's context theory (1966) and Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980, 2001), both of which remain highly relevant to research on multicultural leadership.

2.2.1 Hall

Hall's (1966) high- and low-context communication theory distinguishes between cultures that rely on implicit, nonverbal cues (high-context) and those that favour explicit, verbal expression (low-context). Mediterranean societies typically high-context cultures, where meaning is often conveyed through tone, body language, and shared assumptions rather than direct speech. In contrast, Dutch culture is categorized as low context, where communication tends to be more literal, direct, and transparent. These contrasting styles of communication have direct implications for leadership, particularly in how managers provide direction, offer feedback, and resolve conflicts.

2.2.2 Hofstede

Hofstede's (1980, 2001) model expands on these differences by identifying measurable cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions are especially useful for this study because they offer insight into culturally driven leadership preferences. Mediterranean cultures score higher on power distance and collectivism, favouring hierarchical structures and group loyalty, whereas the Netherlands scores lower on power distance and higher on individualism, emphasizing equality, independence, and personal responsibility. These opposing tendencies create cultural tension for bicultural leaders operating within Dutch organizational norms.

2.2.3 Globe study

The GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) further builds on Hofstede's work by identifying culturally preferred leadership traits across regions. Within Mediterranean contexts, the GLOBE findings highlight traits such as authority, assertiveness, loyalty, and relational sensitivity as dominant leadership characteristics. These are highly relevant to second-generation Turkish and Moroccan managers in the Netherlands, whose leadership approaches are still influenced by the cultural values of their parents' homelands.

2.2.4 Bridge Model

To help navigate these differences, Azghari's (2005) Bridge Model offers a practical approach to improving cross-cultural communication. He distinguishes between "active" cultures, such as the Netherlands, where action is expected to follow words, and "passive" cultures, such as many Eastern and Mediterranean societies, where intentions and relationships carry greater weight than direct action. Azghari's three-step model emphasizes the identification, expression, and comparison of cultural values as a method for fostering mutual understanding in diverse settings. This model is especially helpful for bicultural managers who must mediate between differing cultural expectations.

2.2.5 Awareness models

Finally, contemporary leadership research emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence and emotional awareness. According to Wildman and Griffith (2014), effective global leaders must recognize how culture influences trust, communication, and performance within teams. Handin and Steinwedel (2006) describe leadership development as a reflective process in which managers challenge their assumptions and become more attuned to cultural dynamics. Similarly, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) advocate for the cultivation of mindfulness, a heightened awareness of one's own behavioural tendencies and those of others, as essential for navigating multicultural work environments.

In conclusion, these theoretical frameworks, ranging from foundational models like Hall and Hofstede to applied models like Azghari and Wildman, provide a robust foundation for examining how bicultural Mediterranean managers adapt their leadership styles within the Dutch professional context.

2.3 Biculturalism and Leadership Adaptation

Biculturalism is increasingly important for managers operating in multicultural environments. Individuals with a bicultural identity navigate leadership by integrating norms and values from both their heritage culture and the dominant culture. This dual cultural orientation is highly relevant for this research, as it explores how bicultural Mediterranean managers in the Netherlands shape their leadership styles by balancing collectivist, hierarchical traditions with Dutch egalitarian and consensus-driven practices. As Mody (2014) highlights, bicultural managers often rely on what she terms "attributional knowledge", the ability to interpret behaviour within the correct cultural context, rather than through one's own cultural lens. This cognitive skill allows leaders to build trust, prevent miscommunication, and adapt their approach to the needs of diverse teams. Such adaptability is essential in the Dutch professional environment, where cultural expectations around autonomy and communication often contrast sharply with Mediterranean norms.

In addition, trust dynamics in intercultural teams' present challenges for bicultural leaders. As Wildman and Griffith (2014) explain, building trust across cultures requires managing relationships between in-groups and out-groups, an especially relevant task for Mediterranean managers, who often find themselves mediating between their ethnic background and Dutch workplace expectations. This study therefore situates biculturalism not only as a personal identity but as a professional competence with direct implications for leadership.

2.4 Dutch Leadership

To understand the contrast with Mediterranean leadership styles, it is essential to describe the characteristics of Dutch leadership culture.

Enklaar (2021) describes the most essential aspects that can influence the success of a person with a migratory background in the Netherlands. It explains why some immigrants and natives are successful while many others are not in the Netherlands. It also covers the flip side, what circumstances hindered the people who struggled in a host country. Employees in the Netherlands are primarily expected to take initiative and carry out the tasks for which they hold responsibility, without needing constant supervision. Additionally, the manager's priority is to facilitate the employees' task performance, not to constantly direct them. In addition, the Dutch manager seeks consensus with the staff before making a choice. On the other hand, Mediterranean leadership is characterized as a We-culture where the leadership approach is directive rather than seeking consensus. In this type of leadership, the manager instructs a team by exactly telling them what to do rather than facilitating their task execution. Another key trait of Dutch managers is their task-oriented approach, which is characterized by fairness and care. They strive to maintain balanced

relationships with employees, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect and that personal well-being is considered alongside task performance (Enklaar, 2021, p. 133). This relational focus stands in contrast to the more directive and hierarchical leadership styles often found in Mediterranean cultures, where managers take a more authoritative role in directing team activities.

De Waal et al. (2012) describe the characteristics of high performing managers in the Netherlands. By applying profiles that can be described by a four-dimensional factor structure that includes management behaviours, environmental factors, personal traits, and organizational demands. The results show that Dutch employees find "being honest" and "giving recognition for good work" to be the most important traits of excellent leaders.

According to De Waal Dutch people find "respecting the self-esteem of others" and "seeking consensus with colleagues" to be the most important personal traits. However, the personal qualities of morality, reliability and excellent communication skills are also important.

2.5 Mediterranean Leadership Culture

In Mediterranean societies such as Turkey and Morocco, leadership is traditionally associated with hierarchy, loyalty, and strong interpersonal relationships. The GLOBE project (House et al., 2004) characterizes Mediterranean leadership as high in in-group collectivism and power distance, with leaders seen as authority figures who guide and protect their teams. In Turkey, leadership tends to be assertive and centralized, shaped by cultural norms emphasizing respect for elders and family-based structures. Kabasakal and Bodur (2002) highlight the prevalence of paternalistic leadership, where managers maintain control while showing personal care for their subordinates. Öner (2012) supports this view, finding that Turkish managers are directive in decision-making but still attentive to the well-being of their teams. This view is further supported by Aycan et al. (2006), who identify Turkish leadership as deeply rooted in paternalism, combining strong authority with moral responsibility and protective behaviour toward subordinates. These characteristics contrast with the Dutch emphasis on decentralized decision-making and employee autonomy, highlighting the cultural tension that bicultural leaders often must reconcile.

Moreover, Turkish leadership culture often blends elements of both authoritarianism and compassion. Leaders are expected to be decisive, yet also emotionally invested in their team members' personal and professional development. This aligns with the concept of "servant-paternalistic" leadership described by Öner (2012), where control and care coexist. This dual expectation requires Turkish-origin managers in the Netherlands to continuously negotiate how much authority to assert without contradicting Dutch norms of flat hierarchy and open dialogue.

In Morocco, similar values around hierarchy and collectivism persist, though socialization is increasingly influenced by Dutch institutions, such as schools and workplaces (Pels, 2003). Moroccan managers may struggle with the clash between traditional authority structures and the egalitarian norms promoted in Dutch society. This dynamic is particularly evident in leadership behaviour, where expectations around obedience and control are sometimes at odds with Dutch preferences for participative management.

Pels (2003) also highlights how Moroccan families emphasize discipline, obedience, and respect for elders, values that are often mirrored in managerial behaviour, such as a strong emphasis on order, structure, and accountability. By taking an emic perspective, Pels explores how these values are understood and passed on from within the cultural logic of Moroccan families themselves. These values can lead Moroccan-origin managers to adopt a more rule-driven and protective leadership style, especially when managing diverse teams or addressing performance issues. However, this protective stance can sometimes be misinterpreted in Dutch work culture as controlling or inflexible.

In both Turkish and Moroccan contexts, personal relationships and emotional closeness are important aspects of effective leadership. Managers are often expected to act as mentors or parental figures who provide guidance beyond task performance. This culturally embedded expectation can create a sense of loyalty and commitment among employees but may also challenge the more formal, role-based relationships common in Dutch organizations.

In summary, Mediterranean leadership is characterized by a complex interplay of authority, care, group solidarity, and interpersonal connection. For bicultural managers operating in the Netherlands, these characteristics present both strengths and challenges, requiring them to selectively adapt or retain certain behaviours in response to their work environment.

2.6 Influence of Family and Socialization on Leadership

Family structures play a central role in shaping leadership behaviour among bicultural Mediterranean managers. As Triandis (1995) and Pels (2003) explain, social norms around hierarchy, discipline, and responsibility are internalized early in life through family interactions. In both Turkish and Moroccan households, respect for elders and centralized authority are dominant values, often transferring to professional settings.

De Valk (2007) found that Turkish and Moroccan youth in the Netherlands maintain stronger family ties and parental influence compared to their Dutch peers. This socialization leads to leadership styles that reflect familial values: care for the group, moral responsibility, and a duty to protect. Even as these managers adapt to Dutch norms, their leadership behaviours remain grounded in culturally specific experiences shaped by upbringing.

This phenomenon can be better understood through the lens of intergenerational transmission. As Kagitcibasi (2007) argues, values and behaviours learned in early family life are passed down across generations, shaping core beliefs and social expectations. In bicultural contexts, this transmission results in hybrid leadership models that incorporate both traditional and contemporary influences. Moreover, bicultural managers often internalize multiple cultural models of behaviour, a concept described by Markus and Kitayama (1991) as "internalized cultural models." These models provide cognitive frameworks through which individuals understand their roles, relationships, and leadership responsibilities. The influence of family-based hierarchies in childhood often shapes internal leadership models, which persist even when individuals adapt behaviourally to Dutch organizational norms. Additionally, the way in which authority is modelled and maintained within Mediterranean families creates expectations of how leaders should act in times of conflict or uncertainty. For example, children raised in environments where obedience and discipline are central values may later reproduce similar patterns in their own leadership by emphasizing control, responsibility, and loyalty. These ingrained expectations, while often subconscious, influence how bicultural managers define authority, loyalty, and care within professional teams.

This can result in a leadership style that blends emotional closeness with a strong sense of moral accountability, especially when managing teams with members from similarly collectivist or relational cultures. However, when interacting with colleagues from more individualistic or egalitarian backgrounds, such as native Dutch employees, these same behaviours may be misinterpreted as overbearing or micromanaging. This dynamic reinforces the need for cultural intelligence and reflective practice in leadership development.

Crul and Heering (2008) and Crul and Doomernik (2006) further emphasize how second-generation migrants develop hybrid identities, navigating between cultural loyalty and professional advancement. Their studies show that while many second-generation Turks and Moroccans succeed in education and the labour market, they do so by balancing integration with the retention of cultural values. This balancing act directly informs their leadership strategies and reflects a deeper negotiation between inherited values and external expectations.

2.7 Comparison Moroccan and Turkish culture

Turkish and Moroccan cultures share similarities in their norms and gestures, while also exhibiting unique characteristics (Sabahat, 2014). Family values hold great importance in both cultures, with the family unit playing a central role and exerting influence. In both Turkish and Moroccan families, the elderly members are revered and respected. Nevertheless, Turkey scores a significantly higher score on the leadership trait of team orientation in the Globe Project (2004) data. Team-oriented leadership is consistent with the family and in-group-oriented societal culture that is dominant in these societies. Parallel with the family and in-group collectivism that is prevalent in the Arabic cluster, leaders are expected to be team integrators and to engage in collaborative team-orientation. They use consultation and diplomacy to hold the group together and create a feeling of belonging to the group in Turkey (Kabasakal and Bodur, 1998). Among the different leadership styles, team-oriented and charismatic are perceived to be most effective in the Middle East cluster. Turkey performs far better than Morocco in terms of charismatic leadership as well. This indicates that charismatic leaders who are also thought to be successful in the Middle East region are given more weight in Turkish leadership. Future-focused and visionary, charismatic leaders are confidence-boosting, positive, passionate, motivating, and inspirational. They are selfless and willing to take chances. They possess traits of honesty and integrity, are logical and decisive, and behave in a way that is performance oriented. Despite these differences, both Turkish and Moroccan cultures emphasize close personal interactions, with Turks standing close during conversations and Moroccans engaging in meaningful conversations during greetings. Eye contact is considered important in Turkish culture as a sign of sincerity, while in Moroccan culture, bid farewell is given individually to each person upon leaving a gathering.

In summary, Turkish and Moroccan norms and gestures reflect the significance of family, but they also exhibit distinct customs and practices that contribute to the richness of each culture.

2.8 Research Gap

While there is a lot of research on culture and leadership in general and a significant amount of research on migrants in Dutch organisations, specifically focusing on their involvement in operational roles rather than leadership positions, this study investigates how migrants demonstrate leadership and the extent to which they adhere to the principles and norms of their own culture, there is still much to learn about Mediterranean migrant leadership in the Netherlands. By studying this topic, a better understanding of leadership in different cultures can be gained and the gap in existing research can be filled in. Exploring Mediterranean leadership in the Netherlands will help understand the difficulties faced by leaders from Mediterranean backgrounds in a different culture. It will show how they adapt their leadership style, communicate effectively, and work well with people from different cultures. This will help to create inclusive work environments and improve cross-cultural collaboration.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

As this thesis is about understanding how Mediterranean managers fill in leadership roles in the Netherlands, data must be gathered in order to create a new hypothesis. This can be accomplished by employing an inductive qualitative technique. It can use this strategy to proceed from individual observations to broader generalizations and (new) ideas. This approach is better suited for in-depth examinations of complicated cultural issues (Saunders, 2009). It has the significant advantage of allowing the researcher to be flexible because the researcher is not required to follow pre-determined information and can produce fresh ideas. On the other hand, the time required to undertake this type of research is a general disadvantage of this strategy.

3.2 Data collection

Research involving human participants can encompass a wide range of methodologies and approaches. In scientific research that relies on human participation to gather data for analysis, there may be potential conflicts between the interests of the participants and those of the researcher, as well as considerations regarding the overall value of the study. Therefore, a thorough ethical evaluation is crucial to ensure that the rights and welfare of the participants are protected. Prior to commencing data collection, this study has been submitted to the Ethics Committee BMS at the University of Twente for ethical review. The Ethics Committee is carefully evaluated the study for authorization, and after the ethical approval had been obtained, the researcher proceeded with recruiting participants and gathering data. For this research, a total of 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how Dutch managers with a Mediterranean background fulfil leadership role in the Netherlands. These interviews were evenly divided between two cultural groups: 8 interviews took place with managers of Moroccan descent, and 8 with managers of Turkish descent. To capture a broad spectrum of experiences, these managers were selected from both the private and public sectors, ensuring a well-rounded perspective on leadership across different organizational settings.

To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, real names will be replaced with codes, starting with M (Moroccan) or T (Turkish). This measure not only protects the anonymity of the respondents but also enhances the quality and integrity of the research by enabling participants to speak candidly about their experiences without concerns about personal identification. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed for in-depth analysis, contributing to a deeper understanding of how bicultural managers from Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds navigate leadership roles within the Dutch cultural and organizational landscape. See Table 1 for an overview of all participants.

No.	Document	Gender	Nationality	Age	Created by
1	Interview 1 – T1	male	Turkish	42	Thomas Aksu
2	Interview 2 – T2	male	Turkish	50	Thomas Aksu
3	Interview 3 – T3	male	Turkish	45	Thomas Aksu
4	Interview 4 – T4	male	Turkish	39	Thomas Aksu
5	Interview 5 – T5	male	Turkish	43	Thomas Aksu
6	Interview 6 – T6	female	Turkish	52	Thomas Aksu
7	Interview 7 – T7	female	Turkish	37	Thomas Aksu
8	Interview 8 – T8	male	Turkish	39	Thomas Aksu
9	Interview 9 – M1	male	Moroccan	44	Thomas Aksu
10	Interview 10 – M2	female	Moroccan	49	Thomas Aksu
11	Interview 11 – M3	male	Moroccan	38	Thomas Aksu
12	Interview 12 – M4	male	Moroccan	47	Thomas Aksu
13	Interview 13 – M5	male	Moroccan	42	Thomas Aksu
14	Interview 14 – M6	female	Moroccan	36	Thomas Aksu
15	Interview 15 – M7	female	Moroccan	37	Thomas Aksu
16	Interview 16 – M8	female	Moroccan	46	Thomas Aksu

Table 1: Demographic data interviewees
∗ T1 up to T8 included stands for Turkish Interviewee one etc. M1 up to M8 included stands for Moroccan interviewee one etc.

3.3 Research instrument

A semi-structured interview style was selected, as it allowed for loosely framed questions, giving respondents more opportunities to fully express themselves, which aligned with the needs of this thesis (Longhurst, 2010). The open-ended questions enabled the researcher and participants to delve further into the areas of interest (Adams, 2016). To preserve confidentiality and encourage interviewees to express themselves openly, strict anonymity was guaranteed. In the final thesis, their real identities were replaced with fictitious names for all 16 participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into text in a Word document in order to maintain the quality of the data.

3.4 Data Analysis

Once the data had been gathered, it was analyzed using an inductive qualitative research methodology, with the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) serving as the primary method (Flanagan, 1954). CIT was employed to collect and analyse specific critical incidents or narratives shared by the interviewees, focusing on key moments, decisions, or behaviours that shaped their leadership experiences. This method enabled a comprehensive understanding of significant events that revealed how Dutch managers with a Mediterranean background navigated their leadership roles. After the interviews were transcribed, CIT was used to systematically examine these critical incidents, identifying recurring patterns or themes that emerged across the participants' responses. Thematic analysis was performed through the application of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), which served as the central approach for identifying and analyzing key patterns in the data. CIT allowed for the identification of meaningful incidents that could be linked to broader research questions, providing deep insights into how cultural background influenced leadership. The thematic analysis followed the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), enabling a detailed, yet flexible exploration of the data. By focusing on these critical incidents, the research recognized key themes that consistently arose in the data, allowing for a structured but flexible interpretation of the participants' experiences. This approach ensured a nuanced understanding of how Dutch managers of Moroccan and Turkish descent fulfilled their leadership roles within the context of Dutch organizational culture.

4. Findings

4.1 General Findings and Observations

One important finding from the study is that Dutch managers with Moroccan and Turkish roots who work for Dutch companies demonstrate many similarities in their professional approach. Interviews reveal that both groups are highly integrated into the Dutch corporate environment, generally aligning their behaviour with expected workplace norms. They adapt well, exhibiting comparable leadership and communication styles that reflect the Dutch business culture. During the research, it became clear that there is no distinct "Turkish" or "Moroccan" management style. Instead, both groups generally share similar methods and ways of thinking when it comes to managing in the Dutch business context. Any differences observed in managerial behaviour were not linked to ethnic background but rather to individual experiences, personality, and workplace circumstances. While the term "Mediterranean managers" may describe their shared cultural themes, the variations in their management styles were found to be personal rather than culturally driven. Overall, both Turkish and Moroccan managers integrate effectively into Dutch business culture, with distinctions arising at the individual rather than group level. They adjust their communication methods, leadership strategies, and decision-making processes to fit the regimented structure of Dutch companies. While they retain some Mediterranean management topics, their professional behaviour largely aligns with Dutch business standards. The main distinctions between their Dutch counterparts are not related to their compliance with workplace regulations but rather to differences in norms, referring to their way of thinking and perspectives. These differences stem from cultural backgrounds and shape how they perceive leadership, authority, and decision-making.

These differences become particularly evident in certain work environments, especially in situations where managers must make strategic decisions or respond to challenging circumstances. These challenges often involve high-pressure situations. In these moments, the influence of their cultural perspective becomes clear, as their approach may differ from Dutch norms.

4.2 Adjustment of expectations

The experiences of Turkish and Moroccan managers in Dutch corporate environments reveal a complex interplay between cultural expectations from their own group and workplace realities. While these managers bring strong leadership topics influenced by Mediterranean traditions, they must navigate a professional landscape that emphasizes adaptability, collaboration, and structured decision-making. Below will first be described the Mediterranean managers' behaviours, beginning with adaptability and flexibility, where managers learn to balance their cultural leadership styles with Dutch workplace expectations After this some aspects of their authority and leadership approaches are examined, highlighting differences in perceptions of authority, control-oriented leadership, resistance to feedback, and the crucial role of respect.

The research also delves into guidance and mentorship, emphasizing the importance of leadership as a guiding force within teams. Problem-solving and communication are explored, particularly the reliance on non-verbal cues in contrast to the direct communication style prevalent in Dutch workplaces. Finally, relationship and community orientation sheds light on the communal leadership approach of Turkish and Moroccan managers, where strong personal engagement fosters workplace cohesion.

The following sections present the main findings of this study, structured around recurring themes that emerged from the interviews with Moroccan and Turkish-Dutch managers (see Table 2).

Theme	Description	Key Interview Example
Integration into Dutch Business Culture	General convergence of Turkish and Moroccan managers with Dutch norms; individual differences more than ethnic.	Interviewee 12 – M4
Adaptability to Dutch Work Culture	Managers adjust leadership styles, embrace openness, equality, and collaborative communication.	Interviewees 12 – M4, 1 – T1
Flexibility with Structure	Balance between Dutch structure and Mediterranean improvisation; strategic flexibility with planning.	Interviewees 4 – T4, 10 – M2
Authority	High importance placed on authority; decisive leadership with respect for higher authority figures.	Interviewees 11 – M3, 8 – T8, 15 – M7, 3 – T3
Control Orientation	Maintaining control over decisions; proactive problem-solving to ensure outcomes match expectations.	Interviewees 16 – M8, 4 – T4
Resistance to Feedback	Criticism often perceived personally; cultural emphasis on status affects feedback acceptance.	Interviewees 14 – M6, 7 – T7, 5 – T5
Respect	Respect is foundational; hierarchical but mutual, applied in professional and personal settings.	Interviewees 13 – M5, 2 – T2, 15 – M7
Advocacy	Managers act as protectors and mentors; shield team from external pressure, support development.	Interviewees 7 – T7, 14 – M6
Non-Verbal Communication	Use of gestures, tone, and body language as part of culturally embedded communication style.	Interviewees 1 – T1, 10 – M2, 5 – T5
Community Focus	Strong group orientation; prioritization of collective success and team cohesion.	Interviewees 8 – T8, 12 – M4, 5 – T5

Table 2: Overview of Findings Themes

These themes reflect how bicultural leaders experience and enact their roles within the Dutch work context. Topics such as adaptability, authority, control, feedback, communication, and relationship orientation are explored in depth. Each theme is illustrated with concrete examples from the interviews, highlighting both the cultural values that inform leadership behaviour and the strategies managers use to navigate between their heritage and the expectations of Dutch organizational culture.

4.3 Adaptability and Flexibility

4.3.1 Adaptability to Dutch Work Culture

Adaptability refers to how Mediterranean managers adjust to the Dutch work culture, not only by changing their leadership style but also by adopting the Dutch mindset around equality, structure, and open communication. Adaptability, as highlighted in the interviews, is highly valued and viewed as essential for professional success. Most managers demonstrated a balance between integrating Dutch business practices and retaining their Mediterranean management topics, adapting dynamically to varying contexts. Key aspects of adaptability included adjusting communication styles, adopting direct feedback approaches, and embracing consensus-driven decision-making. For example, managers reported learning to involve their teams in discussions while maintaining decisiveness when necessary. In the interviews, this was discussed as follows:

"In the Netherlands, leadership is seen more as collaborative, where everyone has a say. That was an adjustment for me that I had to get used to. I actually wanted to grow toward being a manager to make my own decisions about my work, but until I became a manager at all, I automatically adapted over the years. As my experience grew, I gradually gained more control, but also the realization that control is more distributed than I had predicted. And just when I started working in the Netherlands, I still had an image of, I want to be the big boss in charge. That image did not fit the reality of the Dutch way of working ''.

(Interviewee 12- M4)

The interviewee had to adjust his expectations of leadership because he discovered that, in the Netherlands, leadership is about shared decision-making and collaboration rather than hierarchical decision-making.

''When asked if I would be the same manager in Turkey that I am now? To be perfectly honest, I doubt it. This is because I believe that as an employee with responsibilities that affect several people, you also need to be able to develop your vision and thinking beyond your comfort zone. In my opinion, this is essential to be able to appropriately integrate the company's values and norms into your actions during your career. In a Turkish company, I would most likely have done this very differently. I probably would have been more guided by the values and norms I received from home, partly because of the cultural similarities that play a greater role there.''

(Interviewee 1- T1)

The interviewee emphasized that he had to adapt his leadership style and step outside his comfort zone in order to effectively integrate Dutch corporate culture and values into his way of working.

4.3.2 Flexibility with Structure

The topic flexibility with structure highlights the ability of Mediterranean managers to adapt their leadership approaches while maintaining a clear framework. It reflects the balance Mediterranean managers must find between the Dutch preference for detailed planning and their own cultural tendency toward spontaneous improvisation. Dutch workplaces emphasize structured processes, clear schedules, and predefined strategies, whereas Mediterranean management often relies on adaptability and quick decision-making in response to changing circumstances.

Managers consistently noted that while Dutch workplaces value flexibility, they also emphasize structured processes and clear expectations. This is demonstrated by interviewees four and ten:

"During a large project with a tight deadline, I noticed that my Dutch colleagues had trouble with the spontaneous adjustments I made when new priorities appeared. I realized I had to change my approach. Instead of making last-minute changes verbally, I made a detailed schedule with room for alternative options when unexpected tasks arose. For example, when a vendor delayed their portion of the project, I quickly adjusted the schedule, but kept the team informed through the schedule rather than simply announcing a change. This approach provided the structure they needed while allowing me to remain flexible in managing the project. It wasn't about changing my instincts, but about presenting them in a way that better matched their expectations."
(Interviewee 4 - T4)

"One example where I didn't work on behalf of protocol because it wasn't practical, I can explain to you. For a large national client, we were doing the audit of all finances, where my team were scheduled for three weeks on this client, then it should be completed, and then to deal with a new client. Unfortunately, the client kept failing to provide fully requested documents, causing the team to lose a lot of time due to all sorts of half-work that just could not be completed. This is when I, as manager, decided to pause this customer, having already anticipated this behind the scenes by contacting the customer scheduled next. When I had received everything that was needed, my team was not yet scheduled on the new customer but under my direction we worked on it in advance so that we as a team would not end up in time and stress. The responsibility was mine and fortunately it worked out well, otherwise I was allowed to report to the business partner (supervisor of managers)."
(Interviewee 10 - M2)

4.4 Authority and Structure

4.4.1 Authority

Due to cultural norms that place a strong emphasis on leadership and respect for authority, Mediterranean managers attach great importance to exercising authority, both in their personal and professional lives. These managers often display decisive behaviour and leadership qualities in their work to reinforce their authority. They believe that having power is essential for maintaining order, resolving conflicts, and leading their teams effectively. This is often reflected in their tendency to take charge in difficult situations and to give clear instructions, which strengthens their role as leaders. This was also confirmed in the interviews:

''During a conflict with a supplier I immediately took the decision to take action. At one point during a meeting, I said quite clearly: "We don't do business with parties who place themselves above us. Equal cooperation, or no cooperation at all." And I said it in a tone that left no room for discussion. I remember there was a moment of silence on the other end of the line.
Since then, the contact has become much more formal. They no longer dare to put demands on the table that deviate from the standard. The relationship has remained professional, but I felt that my position had been restored. And that was more important than closing a deal at any cost."
(Interviewee 11 - M3)

"A while ago during a project meeting, I noticed that certain tasks kept getting left unfinished even though we had already discussed several times who was responsible for what. Then I stopped the meeting and said: 'This is no longer acceptable. You pick up the communication with the client, you finish the report before Friday, and you make sure all the figures are correct.' I immediately made decisions because the team needed direction. In such moments I think it is important as a leader to stand up and not wait for everyone to agree, sometimes you just have to decide and follow through."
(Interviewee 8 - T8)

Mediterranean managers have a complex attitude towards authority: they like to exercise authority themselves, but at the same time show great respect for higher authority. Although they hold authoritative roles as managers, they place high value on the opinions and decisions of those with more experience or of older age. This respect stems from cultural beliefs that emphasize reverence for elders and superiors, especially in professional contexts. For example, Mediterranean managers readily accept advice or decisions from higher-level officials when the situation calls for it, as they see showing respect for authority as a sign of cultural connection and integrity. This balance between exercising authority and showing respect is also reflected in their personal lives, where

"Last month, we had a disagreement in the management team about a new workflow. I personally thought the plan wouldn't work effectively and had some serious concerns. But when our regional director, who's been with the company for over 30 years, pushed for it, I didn't insist. I just told my team we'd go ahead and make it work. Later, I did adjust a few things quietly to suit our way of working better."
(Interviewee 15 – M7)

authority often extends into family and community structures. At home, Mediterranean managers frequently take on a leading role, while still showing deference to older family members. This cultural balance between their professional and personal roles influences their leadership style, allowing them to lead with confidence while remaining respectful when appropriate. Interviewee three described this as follows:

"During my cousin's wedding, the seating in the hall was a topic of discussion, especially since the families turned out to be slightly larger than anticipated. With us, the seating arrangement is very important. As an example, you cannot put your youngest uncle in the front row, and behind that, for example, your oldest uncle. Apart from that, you can also have to deal with elderly people who are not best friends. To put them together at the table can then be somewhat awkward. My father, and at the same time my cousin's oldest uncle, immediately took responsibility for ensuring that everyone in our family got a place he considered appropriate. He went with my mother to visit the future bride and groom and told them how the chairs should be arranged, along with my uncle and aunt, of course. I had every intention of saying something, thinking he doesn't need to get in the middle of this, but before I could add anything, he was already on his way there. Even if I had judged it differently, I was aware that there was no point in discussing it."
(Interviewee 3 - T3)

The interviewee's story clearly illustrates how Mediterranean managers strike a balance between exercising authority and showing respect for it in their daily lives. The father's actions demonstrate a natural inclination to take the lead in situations where leadership is expected, particularly within the family. At the same time, the interviewee's hesitation to contradict his father reflects a strong respect for age and cultural traditions. This combination of asserting authority and showing deference is characteristic of Mediterranean managers in the workplace. They lead with determination but also know when to defer to someone with more experience or a higher position.

4.4.2 Control Oriented

The findings show that Mediterranean managers place great importance on maintaining control in their role, even as they adapt to the Dutch work culture. One aspect of this is their preference to personally oversee important decisions to ensure that the final outcomes align with their own vision. This viewpoint was illustrated by interviewee sixteen as follows:

"When we work on client site, I expect that when we are talking to the client, the entire team on site proactively participates, there are usually 4 to 5 of us. So, this includes not only finishing the division of labour, but also looking at so-called WCGW (What Can Go Wrongs) to ask critical questions to the customer. All the answers and supporting information from those interviews are then summarized in the process descriptions and I as manager then distribute further work resulting from that."
(Interviewee 16 - M8)

The remarks of the Moroccan interviewee show that, despite the emphasis on teamwork and proactive participation during client visits, the manager ultimately retains authority over the key decisions that need to be made. While the team is actively involved in identifying potential risks and gathering information, the manager takes the lead in summarizing the findings and assigning tasks based on the results. This demonstrates that, even within a collaborative working approach, the manager ensures that final decisions align with their vision and contribute to achieving goals in a structured way. Another important observation is how these managers deal with unexpected challenges. In situations of uncertainty, they often take immediate action to regain control, personally stepping in to resolve critical issues. This proactive approach highlights their need to quickly stabilize situations, reinforcing their leadership role and ensuring outcomes remain within their expectations. This behaviour underlines the importance Mediterranean managers place on maintaining control, even in dynamic and collaborative environments.

"We had a sudden delivery problem last quarter, one of our main suppliers pulled out without notice. Instead of waiting for the procurement team to sort it out, I called a few contacts myself, even stayed late for two nights to secure a backup. It wasn't ideal, but I couldn't just sit and hope it would fix itself."
(Interviewee 4 – T4)

4.4.3 Resistance to feedback

The findings show that Mediterranean managers often display resistance to criticism, especially when it is direct or perceived as a threat to their authority. This reluctance stems from a tendency to take feedback personally, as criticism is often seen as an attack on their competence or leadership. As interviewee fourteen explained it:

''Ultimately, anyone can make decisions that were not the most effective, but sometimes others also need to realize that as a manager, you don't have a free hand, but rather have to deal with multiple factors such as budgets and interests or guidelines of the company. Then, if a decision does not necessarily favor others, they should, in my opinion, ask for context before criticizing. Eventually that explanation will come, but I know from experience that some people are already very quick to criticize."
(Interviewee 14 - M6)

"During an evaluation interview, my supervisor said that my way of communicating was sometimes perceived as too direct by the team. That hit me because I try my best precisely to act clearly and responsibly. I also said, 'I've been leading this team for years, and everything is going well. Why is this suddenly a problem now?' To me it felt as if my competence was being doubted, whereas I always make sure that everything runs well."
(Interviewee 7 - T7)

The example of the Turkish manager clearly illustrates how Mediterranean managers tend to take criticism personally. The feeling that their competence or authority is being questioned plays a significant role in this. This personal approach can make it difficult to accept feedback objectively, as the focus is more on how the criticism affects their position than on the content itself. This emotional response stems from the cultural emphasis on status and respect within their managerial role. Additionally, the status of the person delivering the feedback greatly influences how it is received. Mediterranean managers, who often view their position as one of elevated status, tend to struggle with direct criticism from team members or subordinates. This dynamic can create tension in workplaces where a democratic feedback culture is expected, as such criticism may be perceived as disrespectful or inappropriate. Interviewee five elaborated on this with the following statement:

''I had a team member who had worked with us for years and had a permanent contract. Yet I noticed that he probably wanted to take a new step in a different direction. This caused him to start speaking out more quickly and more often on points or practices he disagreed with, which is fine in itself. But at one point this happened at multiple meetings, and often he directed his criticism directly at me as a manager. I couldn't accept that, because it only causes unrest within the team if someone is always negative when something doesn't fit his

street. Expressing an opinion about your manager is always allowed, but I expect it in a reasonable way at a

reasonable time and not several times in a meeting with the whole team."

(Interviewee 5 -T5)

4.4.4 Respect

Respect is a central characteristic for Turkish and Moroccan managers, deeply rooted in cultural norms that emphasize reverence and recognition of authority. The findings show that respect functions as a cornerstone in both their professional and personal lives, influencing their relationships and leadership style.

In the workplace, Turkish and Moroccan managers place great importance on mutual respect as the foundation for effective collaboration. This respect is often hierarchical in nature, reflecting cultural values where authority figures are held in high regard. Managers expect their decisions to be acknowledged and carried out without open resistance, as questioning authority is often perceived as undermining their position. At the same time, these managers strive to show respect to their employees by being fair, expressing appreciation for their efforts, and encouraging loyalty. For these managers, respect is a mutual process, though often shaped by the hierarchical relationships within the organization.

Situations in which subordinates display disrespectful behaviour, especially in public can lead to tension, as this goes against the cultural and professional standards, they hold dear. A clear example of this was described by interviewee thirteen; the situation unfolded as follows:

"During an important meeting, with external partners also present, a younger colleague interrupted me in the middle of my story and said, 'We tried this before and it didn't work then either. Why should we make the same mistake again?' That moment felt like a slap in the face to me. You don't say something like that in public, especially in front of people from outside the company. I thought: if a junior contradicts me so openly, what kind of signal are you sending about my leadership? That undermines not only respect, but also my credibility."

(Interviewee 13 - M5)

Additionally, interviewee two also highlights that mutual respect in communication is very important within Mediterranean culture. The interview revealed the following:

"When I was not a manager, I worked with a colleague who was also of foreign origin. Our manager, who was about the same age as my colleague, clearly had a problem with his attitude because my college refused to do certain work that he did not like. Instead of addressing him, he kept coming to me with comments such as: "Tell your colleague to be on time" or "Can you please point out that he needs to address his work?". I noticed that approaching him was uncomfortable, and that he was trying to convey the message through me. I then did that once or twice in front of the manager until I pointed out to him that he should leave me alone and be a manager and responsible for a reason. I didn't do that lightly but because of the reason that it was inappropriate towards the colleague but also inappropriate to throw me between the two. You treat me well, I treat you well too."
(Interviewee 2 - T2)

In their personal lives, respect plays an equally important role, especially within the family. Turkish and Moroccan managers grow up in environments where respect for elders and authority figures is instilled from an early age. This often translates into a strong adherence to hierarchical family structures, where decisions are typically made by the eldest members, such as parents or older relatives. This cultural emphasis on reverence and respect for authority continues in their role as managers, where they strive to uphold the same level of responsibility and fairness that is expected from respected figures within the family. This perspective was illustrated as follows by interviewee fifteen:

"At home, it was always clear that no matter how well you get along with your parents, some topics are simply not discussed. For example, as a daughter, you know exactly how your parents feel about something like marriage, and it's not the intention to question that view. For example, it would be incredibly rude to my parents if I had a relationship with no intention of getting married and starting a family."
(Interviewee 15 -M7)

4.5 Guidance and Advocacy

4.5.1 Advocacy

The interviews reveal that advocacy is regarded as a highly valued trait among Mediterranean managers. Almost all interviewees demonstrated its importance through their actions. For these managers, mentorship goes beyond professional support; it reflects a deeply rooted cultural value in which the team is seen as an extension of the family. This parental approach influences how they engage with their team members, with an emphasis on teaching, caring, and protecting.

At the same time, their protective nature becomes clearly visible in how they shield their teams from external demands or conflicts. Whether it involves taking responsibility for setbacks or fighting for resources, they act as a buffer so that their employees can focus on their work without unnecessary stress. This dual role as teacher and protector highlights the deep personal involvement Mediterranean managers have with their teams. Interviewees three and fourteen shared the following examples:

"I remember when I was leading the team for only six months, a guy on my team received an e-mail from a colleague on another team at another location. I and the manager above me were in the cc. The e-mail was about his actions, even though he had only been with us as a working student for a few months. The fact that this colleague wanted to confront him directly and brought in his managers without any consultation bothered me greatly. I immediately sent an email back stating that the work student is my responsibility and that she should not interfere. In the end, it was even about something small that the work-study student could not even have known about."

(Interviewee 7 - T7)

"Just before a deadline, it turned out that a team member had forgotten an important part due to a misunderstanding. The client immediately reacted with irritation. I then took responsibility myself and called the customer to explain that it was my fault. Then I stayed with the team until late to straighten it out. To me, that's what leadership is: protecting your team, seeing mistakes as learning opportunities, and standing up together."

(Interviewee 14 - M6)

4.6 Problem-Solving and Communication

4.6.1 Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication emerged as a prominent trait among Mediterranean managers, with Turkish and Moroccan respondents reporting very similar results. In these cultures, non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice are of great importance and often carry meaning that goes beyond words. The respondents emphasized how these subtle forms of communication are essential in their societies, where reading between the lines and understanding unspoken messages are considered valuable skills. Interviewees one and ten shared the following examples:

"During an important meeting with a client, I noticed one of my team members tapping his pen nervously all the time and occasionally making brief eye contact with me. He didn't say anything, but I sensed from his posture and gaze that something was wrong. I decided to briefly pause the meeting and take him aside. He then indicated that the customer made wrong assumptions about our delivery time, but he did not dare to bring this up in the group."
(Interviewee 1 - T1)

"During a team meeting, a colleague proposed a new work schedule. As he spoke, I said little, but I lightly slid my hand under my chin and turned my wrist slightly outward, a gesture that in our culture often indicates, 'I don't know yet, I have doubts.' To outsiders, that might just seem like a neutral stance, but my colleagues, who understand my background, caught it immediately. They knew I wasn't entirely convinced. Later, over coffee, someone came back to it in a cautious way. That's how it is with us: a lot of the real communication happens non-verbally, or outside the formal setting."
(Interviewee 10 - M2)

According to the interviews, this emphasis on non-verbal communication often contrasts with behaviours in Western organizations, where explicit and direct verbal communication is the norm. The interviews showed that cultural differences in communication styles can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. Mediterranean managers expect their team members to pick up on subtle cues, such as a pause or a change in tone, and adjust their behaviour accordingly. When these expectations are not met, it can lead to frustration or a sense of disconnection. Similarly, Western colleagues may perceive the reliance on non-verbal cues as vague or confusing, as they are more accustomed to direct expressions of intent. A clear example of this was shared by interviewee five:

"Almost none, but the last thing that occurred was a certain kind of irritation with me after I had scheduled a colleague on a client and that colleague in question started sighing somewhat conspicuously just after I walked away. Such gestures, if you ask me, don't belong in the workplace. And the great thing was that that person was not aware of any harm".

(Interviewee 5 - T5)

4.7 Relationship and Community Orientation

4.7.1 Community Focus

The interviews reveal a strong sense of community orientation among Mediterranean managers, which aligns with the cultural characteristics of a "we-culture." This group-oriented perspective places collective success above individual achievements and influences how these managers approach leadership and collaboration. The interviews show that Mediterranean managers place great importance on creating a sense of togetherness and connection within their teams. They often prioritize group goals and ensure that decisions and efforts benefit the whole rather than focusing on individual contributions. Interviewee eight illustrated this well by consistently using terms like "we" and "us" instead of "I" or "they":

"Our team is really my pride and joy and performs great. I always emphasize the competition between the provincial divisions and the challenges in which we have to excel. Last year we won a nice bonus as a result, and we are still in the lead this year as well. This would never be possible if we did not operate together as one team. Everyone contributes to this success, and that makes us stronger."

(Interviewee 8 - T8)

"During an important project, I tried from the beginning to create an atmosphere as if we were one family. Not 'every man for himself,' but really together. I often say, 'We're all in the same boat, so we row together.' I made sure we ate together, consulted informally over a glass of tea, and that everyone felt heard. If someone was left behind, we helped that person move forward - because if one person is left behind, it affects all of us. That sense of belonging is more important to me than who does exactly what."
(Interviewee 12 - M4)

Their leadership style reflects this community-oriented approach. Mediterranean managers generally aim to create an inclusive work environment in which everyone feels like a part of the team. This focus on the collective can strengthen collaboration and loyalty, as employees see their role as essential to the team's overall success.

"During a busy period where multiple deadlines overlapped, I noticed that some team members' workloads were running high. Normally I am quite strict when it comes to getting work done on time, but I knew this was largely due to the peak season. To ease the pressure and ensure quality, I decided to delegate my own managerial duties and took on some team tasks myself. The team greatly appreciated this, and it created a strong kind of sense of trust within our group."
(Interviewee 5 - T5)

4.7.2 Personal Engagement

The interviews show that Mediterranean managers take a highly personal approach, based on mutual trust and respect. This style goes beyond the professional boundaries typically seen in Western management methods and emphasizes building meaningful relationships that also include personal circumstances. Mediterranean managers find it important to get to know their employees not just as workers, but as individuals. They take the time to show genuine interest in their team members' personal lives, such as their families, hobbies, or personal challenges.

Trust and respect are at the heart of this approach. By offering sincere care and support when needed, they build a foundation of trust that strengthens collaboration and motivation. Interviewees ten and six provided the following examples:

"Without going too much into the private lives of my colleagues, I can indicate how it was. Of course, as a manager you can also come across such things, especially if they affect your working hours, for example. Sometimes it is nice to be able to talk face to face with someone you trust. Of course, I don't want to come between people or circumstances, but I am always there when colleagues need me. The most remarkable thing that happened is that a few years ago a colleague came to work while her grandmother was in the hospital with a serious condition. I gave her a few days off, but she came to the office early anyway. I asked after how things were going and noticed that she was still upset about it. When I noticed that, I took her out to lunch and then told her it would be best for her to be with her family before she regretted it. You never know when it will be the last time".

(Interviewee 10 - M2)

"With us, it's not just about work. If someone on my team is dealing with something personal, whether it's a sick parent, a child who needs extra care, or just stress at home, I want to know. Not to interfere, but to be able to support. The other day I noticed that a colleague was quieter than usual. I invited him for a short walk and just asked how he was really doing. When he told me what was going on, I immediately said, 'Take the time you need. Work will come later.' That is normal for me. We are colleagues, but also people. And just as we take care of each other at home, we do the same at work. That's the only way to build real cooperation: with trust, humanity and respect."

(Interviewee 6 - T6)

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This master's thesis explores how Mediterranean managers shape their leadership roles within the Dutch work environment. Using qualitative empirical data, the study deepens existing theories on leadership in a multicultural context. More specifically, the research demonstrates that the way Mediterranean managers lead is influenced by their cultural background, with certain aspects of their leadership style differing from what is typical in Dutch organizational culture. This led to the following central research question: "How do Mediterranean managers shape their leadership roles within the Dutch work context, while navigating cultural differences with Dutch colleagues?" This chapter discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, as well as the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the literature on cultural adaptation and leadership by offering practice-based insights into how managers with a Mediterranean background shape their leadership styles within the Dutch work context. While previous studies often focused on broad cultural group differences, this research provides a more detailed understanding of how bicultural managers of Moroccan and Turkish descent engage with dominant Dutch organizational values. The findings confirm and deepen the theoretical foundations outlined earlier, especially those related to cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001), Mediterranean leadership characteristics (House et al., 2004), and bicultural identity integration (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). In line with Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions, the results show that Mediterranean leaders tend to score high on power distance and uncertainty avoidance. This is evident in their preference for control and a hierarchical worldview. At the same time, this study demonstrates that such cultural traits are not static. Managers adapted their styles toward more egalitarian, consensus-based, and transparent approaches (Enklaar, 2021), aligning with the low power distance and individualistic norms of Dutch organizational culture. The findings also reflect the leadership profile described in the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004), where Mediterranean leaders are characterized as directive, relational, and in-group oriented. These traits remained visible in the form of concern and care for subordinates but were combined with behaviours that fit Dutch expectations. This supports the theoretical notion that leadership schemas are culturally rooted yet contextually adaptable.

Theories on Bicultural Identity Integration (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) and Mody's (2014) work on bicultural leadership offer a relevant lens. The managers displayed a high degree of integration: they compartmentalized and blended aspects of both cultural backgrounds without major internal conflict. Core values such as respect, authority, and community were retained, while direct communication, participatory decision-making, and horizontal feedback were gradually adopted. These findings confirm Mody's view that bicultural leaders can switch between cultural frames depending on the situation. In contrast to Hofstede's (2001) static view of acculturation, this study aligns more closely with Enklaar's (2021) and Van der Steeg's (2024) dynamic model of cultural adaptation. Adaptation does not occur uniformly but rather progresses per characteristic. Behavioural adjustments such as involving employees in decisions tend to develop faster, while deeper values such as hierarchy or group loyalty persist longer. This supports the idea that leadership development is layered and highly context sensitive. The study also expands on Kabasakal and Bodur's (2001) research on paternalistic leadership. Managers in this study showed a parental approach to leadership, offering protection, guidance, and emotional support. At the same time, they aligned this with Dutch values like transparency and relational equality. This illustrates that paternalistic leadership can be compatible with Dutch workplace culture when applied intentionally and reflectively. Another key finding is the managers' sensitivity to feedback. Feedback from subordinates was often perceived as a challenge to authority, which contrasts with the Dutch ideal of open, horizontal feedback (Enklaar, 2021; Wildman & Griffith, 2014). This underlines the importance of awareness and intercultural coaching in navigating different feedback expectations. These insights also align with Azghari's (2005) bridge model, which emphasizes the need for guided adaptation between dominant and minority norms in professional contexts.

This study shows how the theoretical insights outlined in the framework clearly manifest in practice. The cultural dimensions, leadership models, and identity theories previously discussed were all reflected in how the managers shaped their roles. Thus, the findings confirm the validity of these theories while also adding nuance: cultural adaptation is not a linear process but one that unfolds per value, per situation, and in response to personal and professional context.

5.3 Practical implications

In addition to its theoretical contributions, this study also offers important practical implications for both Mediterranean and native Dutch employees in multicultural work environments. These insights contribute to improving intercultural collaboration, preventing miscommunication, and fostering mutual understanding in the workplace. First, the study shows that Mediterranean managers are capable of effectively adapting their leadership style to the Dutch work context, provided they can retain certain core values. These core values include the importance of clear hierarchical relationships, mutual respect (especially toward authority and age), a strong sense of responsibility toward the team, and the value placed on personal engagement in work relationships. They also emphasize loyalty, group harmony, and protecting their team members from external pressures. Organizations can learn from this that supporting bicultural leadership capabilities is essential for creating an inclusive and effective work environment. Topics such as hierarchical expectations, dealing with feedback, and the role of respect within team dynamics are particularly relevant.

The table below offers practical advice for native Dutch colleagues and supervisors to collaborate more effectively with Mediterranean managers. Each topic is accompanied by a brief explanation and targeted recommendations, based on the key cultural insights from this study (see Table 3).

Topic	Explanation	Advice for Dutch colleagues / supervisors
Hierarchical Expectations	Mediterranean managers often value clear authority structures, where leadership is associated with responsibility and decision-making. Managerial decisions are typically respected without open contradiction.	Be cautious with direct contradiction or overly informal tone towards authority figures. Acknowledge someone's role and experience explicitly and allow room for hierarchical decision-making without immediately challenging it.
Role of Respect in Team Dynamics	Respect is experienced personally. Showing attention to someone's background, family, or personal situation is seen as genuine engagement and builds trust.	Show interest in the person behind the colleague, for example by asking about their family or wellbeing. Value informal conversations as part of trust-building and teamwork.
Control	In Mediterranean cultures, managerial control is often seen as normal or even necessary. It shows involvement. In the Netherlands, this may be interpreted more as distrust.	Understand that additional control from Mediterranean colleagues doesn't necessarily mean distrust, but rather a sense of responsibility. Communicate openly about expectations and autonomy to avoid misunderstandings.
Adaptability	Mediterranean managers show strong adaptability by adjusting to Dutch work structures while preserving cultural traits. They adapt communication, leadership, and decision-making styles.	Recognize their flexibility and support balancing formal procedures with cultural practices. Help them find a middle ground between directness and relational sensitivity.
Mentorship and Protection	Mentorship is deeply rooted in Mediterranean cultures. Managers often	Appreciate their protective nature but also encourage team members' autonomy. Set

	see their team as family and shield them from external pressures.	clear agreements on responsibilities and create space for shared leadership.
Non-Verbal Communication	Non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, posture, and gestures carry meaning beyond words.	Pay attention to body language and subtle signals. If in doubt, ask explicitly about their meaning, as subtlety often conveys more than spoken words.
We-Culture and Group Orientation	Success is experienced as a group. Loyalty and solidarity are valued more than individual performance.	Highlight team results and encourage collective decision-making. Be aware that individual recognition may be secondary to group harmony.
Personal Engagement	Great attention is paid to the wellbeing and personal life of team members. Work and private life are often intertwined.	Show genuine interest in colleagues' personal lives. Respect boundaries, but acknowledge that trust often grows through human connection.
Resistance to Feedback	Direct criticism is often seen as a personal attack, especially if public or confrontational.	Give feedback in a relational and constructive manner. Use context and appreciation before naming improvement points. Avoid public critique.

Table 3: Practical advice table

Second, the findings provide valuable input for leadership development and training programs focused on diversity and inclusion. Special attention can be given to how Mediterranean leaders handle unexpected situations, make decisions, and guide their teams. Their natural tendency toward mentorship, combined with a strong sense of community, can serve as a powerful model for connective and people-centered leadership. Third, this study emphasizes that Mediterranean leaders are constantly navigating a balance between their cultural background (the "we-culture") and the more individualistic Dutch organizational culture. This can create tension in areas such as autonomy, communication, and division of roles. Raising awareness of these cultural friction points, and facilitating dialogue and reflection, can contribute to a more inclusive workplace culture where cultural differences are seen not as obstacles, but as added value.

5.4 Limitations and future research

One important practical limitation of this study is that it relies solely on self-reported data collected through semi-structured interviews. This method is inherently sensitive to social desirability and recall bias, even though it provides rich, in-depth insights into participants' experiences. Given the researcher's role as the interviewer, participants may have presented themselves in a more favourable light or selectively remembered certain events. As a result, some behaviours, or experiences, especially those involving conflict, hierarchy, or sensitive topics may have been underreported or reframed. This limitation could affect the neutrality and completeness of the findings. To overcome this, future research should consider adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative interviews with other techniques such as participant observation or anonymous surveys. These additional data sources would allow for cross-validation and provide a more comprehensive and objective picture of Mediterranean leadership practices within Dutch organizations. Another significant limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size. Only eight participants of Moroccan descent and eight of Turkish descent were interviewed. While these semi-structured interviews provide valuable insights, the numbers are relatively low for reaching theoretical saturation. Saturation refers to the point at which no new information or themes emerge from additional interviews (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). Due to the limited number of respondents, there is a risk that certain perspectives or experiences may have been overlooked, which could affect the completeness and generalizability of the findings.

6. Conclusion

This research examined how Mediterranean managers with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds navigate leadership roles in Dutch organizations. The study found that these managers develop a bicultural leadership style, blending elements of their Mediterranean "we-culture" with the Dutch "I-culture" workplace expectations. One of the most important findings is the contrast and interaction between these two cultural models. Mediterranean managers are strongly shaped by values such as loyalty, respect for hierarchy, group solidarity, and personal engagement. These traits lead them to see their teams as extensions of the family, to take on protective roles, and to prioritize collective success. In contrast, the Dutch work environment emphasizes autonomy, equality, direct feedback, and consensus in decision-making. The managers in this study showed a high level of adaptability. They learned to adjust their communication, become more open to shared leadership, and incorporate Dutch organizational norms without fully abandoning their own cultural foundations. However, moments of cultural friction still arise, particularly in areas like authority, feedback, and control. Ultimately, this study shows that Mediterranean managers do not simply assimilate into the Dutch style but instead construct a hybrid leadership model. By balancing both cultural frameworks, they act as bridges in diverse teams, strengthening intercultural collaboration. These findings highlight the value of bicultural leadership and offer practical insights into how cultural diversity can enhance leadership, team cohesion, and workplace inclusion.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix I: Interview questions

Background and Demographics

1. Can you tell me about your cultural background and how long you have lived in the Netherlands?

2. How did your upbringing in a Mediterranean family influence your values and beliefs?

3. What is your current position, and how long have you been in a leadership role?

Cultural Influence on Leadership

4. How do you perceive the influence of your Mediterranean background on your leadership style?

5. In what ways do your parents' cultural values influence your approach to leadership?

6. Can you provide examples of how your cultural background has shaped your decision-making process?

7. How do you balance the cultural expectations from your Mediterranean background with the Dutch workplace culture?

Adaptation to Dutch Culture

8. How do you perceive the Dutch approach to leadership compared to that of your cultural background?

9. Have you had to adapt your leadership style to fit in with Dutch organizational culture? If so, how?

10. What challenges have you encountered in integrating into the Dutch workplace as a leader with a Mediterranean background?

11. Can you describe a situation where you had to modify your leadership approach to align with Dutch cultural norms?

Leadership Practices

12. How do you typically handle conflicts within your team? Does your cultural background influence this approach?

13. How do you ensure effective communication with your team members, considering the cultural differences?

14. What role does family influence play in your leadership style and decision-making processes?

15. How do you manage relationships and build trust with your team in a multicultural environment?

Bicultural Identity

16. Do you identify more with Dutch leadership practices or those from your Mediterranean background? Why?

17. How do you manage the expectations from both cultures in your professional life?

18. How does your bicultural identity impact your ability to lead diverse teams?

Challenges and Barriers

19. What specific challenges have you faced as a Mediterranean leader in the Netherlands?

20. How do you address potential biases or stereotypes that may arise due to your cultural background?

21. Can you share an experience where you felt your leadership was misunderstood due to cultural differences?

Integration and Innovation

22. Have you been able to integrate aspects of Mediterranean leadership into Dutch practices? If so, how?

23. How do you use your bicultural background to innovate within your organization?

24. How do you ensure that your leadership style is inclusive of both Mediterranean and Dutch cultural values?

Leadership Development and Reflection

25. How do you reflect on and develop your leadership skills, considering your cultural background?

26. Have you sought mentorship or guidance on navigating leadership within a different cultural context? If so, how has it helped you?

27. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths as a leader with a bicultural background?

Organizational Impact

28. How do you think your leadership style impacts the performance and morale of your team?

29. How do you perceive the acceptance of your leadership style within your organization?

30. What advice would you give to other Mediterranean managers who are new to leadership roles in the Netherlands?

8.2 Appendix II: Interviewees Overview Table

No.	Document	Gender	Nationality	Age	Created by
1	Interview 1 – T1	male	Turkish	42	Thomas Aksu
2	Interview 2 – T2	male	Turkish	50	Thomas Aksu
3	Interview 3 – T3	male	Turkish	45	Thomas Aksu
4	Interview 4 – T4	male	Turkish	39	Thomas Aksu
5	Interview 5 – T5	male	Turkish	43	Thomas Aksu
6	Interview 6 – T6	female	Turkish	52	Thomas Aksu
7	Interview 7 – T7	female	Turkish	37	Thomas Aksu
8	Interview 8 – T8	male	Turkish	39	Thomas Aksu
9	Interview 9 – M1	male	Moroccan	44	Thomas Aksu
10	Interview 10 – M2	female	Moroccan	49	Thomas Aksu
11	Interview 11 – M3	male	Moroccan	38	Thomas Aksu
12	Interview 12 – M4	male	Moroccan	47	Thomas Aksu
13	Interview 13 – M5	male	Moroccan	42	Thomas Aksu
14	Interview 14 – M6	female	Moroccan	36	Thomas Aksu
15	Interview 15 – M7	female	Moroccan	37	Thomas Aksu
16	Interview 16 – M8	female	Moroccan	46	Thomas Aksu

Table 1: Demographic data interviewees

∗ T1 up to T8 included stands for Turkish Interviewee one etc.

M1 up to M8 included stands for Moroccan interviewee one etc.

8.3 Appendix III: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study

How do Mediterranean managers fill in their leadership role in the Netherlands?

Principal Investigator

Thomas Aksu, MSc student

International Business Administration – International Management and Consultancy

University of Twente

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Purpose of the Research

This Master's thesis aims to explore how Mediterranean managers (specifically with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds) shape and experience their leadership roles within Dutch organizational settings. As the Netherlands becomes increasingly multicultural, understanding how bicultural managers navigate their leadership between different cultural frameworks becomes more relevant. This study contributes to both academic and practical knowledge by identifying cultural patterns and challenges in leadership across cultures.

Description of Participation

As a participant, you will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview, lasting approximately 60 minutes. The interview will focus on your personal and professional experiences as a Mediterranean manager working in the Netherlands. In particular, the interview will cover your leadership approach, your cultural background, and how you experience leadership in the Dutch context.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

Use of Data

The collected data will be used solely for the purposes of this master's thesis in International Business Administration (specialization in International Management and Consultancy) at the University of Twente. The findings may be published in academic reports or presentations, but your identity will remain confidential.

Confidentiality and Data Management

All data will be anonymized. Real names and identifying details will not appear in the final thesis or any future publications. Recordings will be temporarily stored on a password-protected laptop and deleted after transcription. Transcripts will be securely stored and deleted after the thesis is completed.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the interview or refuse to answer any questions at any time, without needing to give a reason. You may also request to review the interview questions beforehand.

Consent

By signing below, you acknowledge that:

- You understand the purpose of the study and what participation involves
- You agree to the recording of the interview
- You consent to the use of the anonymized data for academic purposes only
-

I give my consent to participate in this study and to the recording of the interview.

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Participant Name:

Date:

Researcher Name:

Date:

8.4 Appendix IV: Overview Findings Themes

The following sections present the main findings of this study, structured around recurring themes that emerged from the interviews with Moroccan and Turkish-Dutch managers (see Table 2).

Theme	Description	Key Interview Example
Integration into Dutch Business Culture	General convergence of Turkish and Moroccan managers with Dutch norms; individual differences more than ethnic.	Interviewee 12 – M4
Adaptability to Dutch Work Culture	Managers adjust leadership styles, embrace openness, equality, and collaborative communication.	Interviewees 12 – M4, 1 – T1
Flexibility with Structure	Balance between Dutch structure and Mediterranean improvisation; strategic flexibility with planning.	Interviewees 4 – T4, 10 – M2
Authority	High importance placed on authority; decisive leadership with respect for higher authority figures.	Interviewees 11 – M3, 8 – T8, 15 – M7, 3 – T3
Control Orientation	Maintaining control over decisions; proactive problem-solving to ensure outcomes match expectations.	Interviewees 16 – M8, 4 – T4
Resistance to Feedback	Criticism often perceived personally; cultural emphasis on status affects feedback acceptance.	Interviewees 14 – M6, 7 – T7, 5 – T5
Respect	Respect is foundational; hierarchical but mutual, applied in professional and personal settings.	Interviewees 13 – M5, 2 – T2, 15 – M7
Advocacy	Managers act as protectors and mentors; shield team from external pressure, support development.	Interviewees 7 – T7, 14 – M6
Non-Verbal Communication	Use of gestures, tone, and body language as part of culturally embedded communication style.	Interviewees 1 – T1, 10 – M2, 5 – T5
Community Focus	Strong group orientation; prioritization of collective success and team cohesion.	Interviewees 8 – T8, 12 – M4, 5 – T5

Table 2: Overview of Findings Themes

8.5 Appendix V: Practical Advice Table

The table below summarizes key findings from the interviews and offers practical advice for Dutch colleagues and supervisors. It is based on recurring themes shared by Mediterranean managers.

Topic	Explanation	Advice for Dutch colleagues / supervisors
Hierarchical Expectations	Mediterranean managers often value clear authority structures, where leadership is associated with responsibility and decision-making. Managerial decisions are typically respected without open contradiction.	Be cautious with direct contradiction or overly informal tone towards authority figures. Acknowledge someone's role and experience explicitly, and allow room for hierarchical decision-making without immediately challenging it.
Handling Feedback	In Mediterranean cultures, feedback is often given gently and with sensitivity to relationships. Direct and confrontational criticism may be perceived as disrespectful or embarrassing.	Deliver feedback with nuance and empathy. Start with positive recognition (e.g., 'What went well...') before calmly addressing areas for improvement. Avoid harsh or public criticism.
Role of Respect in Team Dynamics	Respect is experienced personally. Showing attention to someone's background, family, or personal situation is seen as genuine engagement and builds trust.	Show interest in the person behind the colleague, for example by asking about their family or wellbeing. Value informal conversations as part of trust-building and teamwork.
Control	In Mediterranean cultures, managerial control is often seen as normal or even necessary. It shows involvement. In the Netherlands, this may be interpreted more as distrust.	Understand that additional control from Mediterranean colleagues doesn't necessarily mean distrust, but rather a sense of responsibility. Communicate openly about expectations and autonomy to avoid misunderstandings.
Adaptability	Mediterranean managers show strong adaptability by adjusting to Dutch work structures while preserving cultural traits. They adapt communication, leadership, and decision-making styles.	Recognize their flexibility and support balancing formal procedures with cultural practices. Help them find a middle ground between directness and relational sensitivity.
Mentorship and Protection	Mentorship is deeply rooted in Mediterranean cultures. Managers often see their team as family and shield them from external pressures.	Appreciate their protective nature but also encourage team members' autonomy. Set clear agreements on responsibilities and create space for shared leadership.
Non-Verbal Communication	Non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, posture, and gestures carry meaning beyond words.	Pay attention to body language and subtle signals. If in doubt, ask explicitly about their meaning, as subtlety often conveys more than spoken words.
We-Culture and Group Orientation	Success is experienced as a group. Loyalty and solidarity are valued more than individual performance.	Highlight team results and encourage collective decision-making. Be aware that individual recognition may be secondary to group harmony.
Personal Engagement	Great attention is paid to the wellbeing and personal life of team members. Work and private life are often intertwined.	Show genuine interest in colleagues' personal lives. Respect boundaries, but acknowledge that trust often grows through human connection.
Resistance to Feedback	Direct criticism is often seen as a personal attack, especially if public or confrontational.	Give feedback in a relational and constructive manner. Use context and appreciation before naming improvement points. Avoid public critique.

Table 3: Practical advice table