Leadership in Russia:

A qualitative comparison between leadership styles in Russia and in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT,

This research aims at understanding the current leadership styles in Russia and in the Netherlands and making a cross-cultural comparison between them. First, existing literature was analyzed. Then, five Russian employees working in the Netherlands were interviewed and asked about potential clashes experienced with their Dutch colleagues. These disagreements help understand different cultural standards, via the method of the Critical Incident Technique. As a result, Dutch leadership style, Workplace environment, Differences compared to work experience in Russia and Cultural norms were the main identified themes. Findings show that the participants view Dutch leadership style as the most convenient and there is an overall positive sentiment towards working in the Netherlands compared to Russia. The results show both confirmation and contradictions of previous studies. All these cultural standards can be used by Russian employees and Russian leaders to better understand Dutch leadership and excel in the Dutch workplace.

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Keywords

Culture, Employees, Leadership, Managers, Russia, The Netherlands.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current evolving and changing business world leadership is key to achieving substantial results (García-Morales et al., 2008). Leadership helps set the direction, inspire, and motivate employees, and drive organizational performance (Mastrangelo et al., 2014). Nowadays leadership falls more and more into the spotlight given the globalization trends of companies worldwide (Fry & Egel, 2021). Increased globalization in companies refers to the growing trend of businesses expanding their operations and presence beyond their domestic markets to tap into international markets (Buckley & Ghauri, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial for managers working abroad to adapt their leadership styles to the cultural differences of their employees (Hanges et al., 2016). According to Hundschell (2022), there is a positive correlation between subordinates' work engagement and their perception of leader cultural gap bridging behavior. For example, this behavior seems to have an indirect positive effect on the level of relationship conflict in the multinational teams.

Given the importance of managers' adaptive cultural behaviors, this research focuses on the Russian employees working in the Netherlands and how they experience the Dutch leadership style. The comparison between Russia and the Netherlands was chosen because the existing literature mainly focuses on entrepreneurial autonomy (Van Gelderen et al., 2020c), but not on the leadership styles comparisons. Indeed, whilst some scientific research about the effects of leadership on organizational performance in Russian companies (Elenkov, 2002b) exists, still there seems to be a scarcity of research of Russian employees in the Netherlands and how they perceive Dutch leadership and Dutch management styles. Yet, this is interesting to explore further since such research can help Russian expats understand the work culture in the Netherlands better and be aware of various leadership styles used by Dutch managers. Therefore, this thesis focuses on exploring the Dutch leadership style as perceived by Russian employees working in the Netherlands using the critical incidents technique (CIT).

Furthermore, earlier research concluded that Russian leadership is predominantly transactional (Ardichvili, 2008), but more recent papers state that there is a trend of going from transactional to transformational leadership style (Van Gelderen et al., 2020). Considering that highly skilled immigrants are in demand across Europe (Voicu & Vlase, 2014), Dutch firms should strive to understand the leadership styles that are required and that these employees are accustomed to, to attract Russian employees and prevent them from seeking employment elsewhere in Europe.

2. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Therefore, considering what mentioned above, the main objective of this research is to investigate which cultural differences in management and more precisely leadership do Russian employees in the Netherlands experience and what type of critical incidents these employees deal with

on the work floor. Additionally, to increase the visibility of this cultural aspect, the cross-cultural analysis between Russia and The Netherlands will be performed. After the study on the perception of Dutch leadership by Russian employees in the Netherlands, these experiences will be compared to their perception of Russian leadership style.

Thus, the subsequent research question is formulated:

"What cultural differences do Russian employees in the Netherlands experience between Dutch and Russian leadership styles?"

To help further develop the main research question the following sub-questions were added:

1. *What critical incidents do Russian employees in the Netherlands experience in dealing with their boss?*
2. *What different cultural standards are involved?*
3. *How do Russian employees cope with these different standards?*

2.1 Theoretical and practical implications

This research aim is to contribute to the literature on the comparison between Russian and Dutch entrepreneurial autonomy by providing new insights into the leadership styles differences that Russian employees experience in the Netherlands. Furthermore, this research has academic significance in cross-cultural management by investigating how cultural factors may affect leadership. With the growing trend of globalization, it is essential for managers to have the capability to lead across diverse cultural environments. The analysis of this study on leadership styles in Russia and the Netherlands can offer useful insights into the influence of cultural factors on leadership practices. Additionally, given that there is a research gap on this subject, the study may uncover new findings that may be found useful for future research, as well as for developing effective cross-cultural leadership practices.

The practical contribution of this research is focused on providing clear understanding of cultural differences in leadership styles that Russian employees face working in Dutch companies. Accordingly, this understanding can help Russian employees themselves to identify and deal with said differences to become more successful in their careers. Knowledge of the Dutch cultural standards and their leadership styles should enable the Russian expatriates to understand their Dutch managers and fellow employees better and avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Additionally, the key findings of this research can be used by Dutch Human Resources (HR) managers to help them understand what kind of leadership Russian employees are used to, how they can improve work satisfaction and motivate Russians to perform on higher levels. This research provides practical implications for both Russian employees to better adjust to the Dutch leadership style and for Dutch companies to understand and effectively attract Russian employees.

The upcoming sections of this research paper will introduce the theoretical framework that emphasizes various aspects like leadership styles, cultural background based on Hofstede dimensions, cross-cultural leadership, and multicultural leadership. Subsequently, the paper will delve into the methodology, encompassing the research design, data collection, research instrument, and data analysis. Furthermore, the findings will be presented, followed by a discussion on the revealed insights. The final sections of this paper will address its limitations, provide recommendations for future work, and conclude the overall study.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Leadership across countries

The perception of leadership varies across cultures, and leaders must adapt their styles and behaviors to be effective in different cultural contexts (Hanges et al., 2016). The historical and political context of a culture can also influence perceptions of leaders, with some terms carrying negative connotations due to past experiences (Dickson et al., 2012). For example, where a culture has previously experienced oppressive leadership or authoritarian regimes, terms connected to those leadership styles may be regarded negatively. The way people in that culture interpret and assess leaders can be influenced by their collective memory of historical events and the prevailing political climate. In highly hierarchical cultures, leaders who contribute positively to society may be revered and emulated, while more egalitarian cultures give less emphasis to the role of leaders. In individualistic cultures, the success or failure of an organization is often attributed to the top leader, while in collectivistic cultures leadership is more distributed among the group and leaders are accountable for well-being of the grouo members on top of the organization results. (Assmann & Ehrl, 2021). For example, individualistic cultures like the United States reacted more positively when they rated their managers as displaying more transactional contingent reward leadership, while collectivistic cultures such as Japan or China indicated stronger patterns for transformational leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2007). In collectivistic cultures, leader may selectively utilize the skills of followers and distribute elements of the leadership role among these followers as the situation demands (Friedrich et al., 2014).

Furthermore, according to Hundschell (2022), there is indeed a positive correlation between subordinates' work engagement and their perception of leader cultural gap bridging behavior. This suggests that leaders who can navigate cultural differences and foster an inclusive work environment can have a positive impact on their subordinates' work engagement and productivity. Hence, it is important for leaders to correctly identify cultural differences between their employees to increase their productivity Hundschell (2022), Given the significant difference between cultural scores of Russia and The Netherlands on the Hofstede dimensions (Hofstede, 2010), as well as the lack of research, it is then interesting to explore how leadership differs in these two countries.
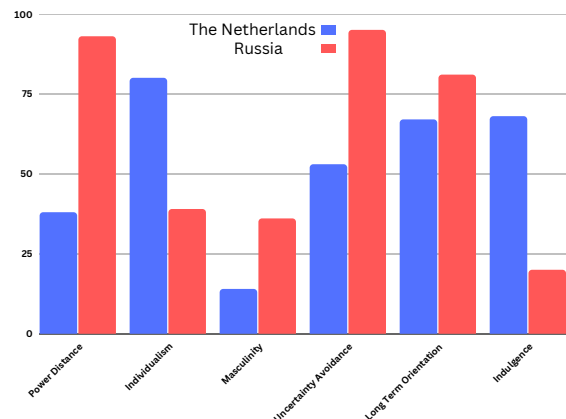
3.2 Hofstede's dimensions on….

Figure 1. Comparison of The Netherlands and Russia based on the dimensions of Hofstede.

One of the most known research projects on cultural differences and their implications on work performance was made by Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist. Hofstede and colleagues (2010) developed six cultural dimensions to help explain the differences in employee's culture, attitudes, and beliefs.

Power Distance refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is allocated unequally. Hofstede claims that Russia (93) has a way higher power distance than the Netherlands (38) (Hofstede, 2022). Russia's score indicates that it is a hierarchical society where power is concentrated at the top. On the other hand, the Netherlands's low score shows that is it a more egalitarian society where power is more evenly distributed. This would imply that Russian employees have a more tolerant attitude toward inequality than Dutch employees. As an illustration, this should lead to the Russian worker being significantly less independent, fewer equal rights being granted to employees, and the power structure being highly more centralized than it is in the Netherlands. Another possible outcome would be Russians expecting a stronger leadership role than the Dutch.

Another important dimension is Individualism. Russia has a low individualism score of 20, which means that it is a collectivist society where people prioritize the interests of their family, clan, or organization over their individual needs. In contrast, the Netherlands has a high individualism score of 80, indicating that it is an individualistic society where people value independence, personal achievement, and self-expression (Hofstede, 2010),

The masculinity/femininity dimension refers to the degree to which a society values traditional masculine or feminine qualities. Russia has a score of 36 on masculinity, which means that it is a society that values competitiveness, assertiveness, and material success. In contrast, the Netherlands has a low score of 14, indicating that it is a more feminine society that values caring for others, quality of life, and work-life balance (Hofstede, 2010), This can indicate that Russian employees prefer individual incentives more than caring

for others on the work floor or finding the right work-life balance.

The next two dimensions are Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-Term Orientation. The scores of both countries are not widely different, however, it is still worth mentioning these dimensions. Uncertainty Avoidance dimension indicates the degree to which individuals in a culture feel comfortable or anxious when faced with ambiguous situations and their level of acceptance towards uncertainty. Russia scored 95 in this dimension, meaning that Russian people are very risk averse and do not accept change straight away. The Netherlands has a score of 53, which shows that they are less strict about the rules and more open to unorthodox ideas. The second dimension of Long-Term Orientation is a cultural dimension that examines the extent to which a society values long-term planning, perseverance, and a focus on the future. Both Russia (81) and The Netherlands (67) have similar scores, which indicate that both cultures have a strong propensity to save and invest, preserve in achieving results and adapt their traditions to changed conditions.

The Dutch society scores high on indulgence, the extent to which people in a society indulge in pleasures and gratifications. That means that it is a society that values individual freedom, enjoyment of life, and self-expression. Russia, on the other hand, has a low indulgence score of 20, which means that it is a society that values restraint, discipline, and conformity to social norms (Hofstede, 2010).

Overall, Russia and the Netherlands differ significantly on all six dimensions, with Russia being a more hierarchical, collectivist, masculine, risk-averse, traditional, and restrained society, while the Netherlands is a more egalitarian, individualistic, feminine, open-minded, future-oriented, and indulgent society.

3.3 Characteristics of Russian employees

According to Efendiev et al. (2014), the high power-distance culture in Russia has a background influence on the lower participation rates of Russian employees in decision-making. However, this paper also indicates a phenomenon of cultural convergence in foreign-owned companies in Russia where the low power-distance culture of owners and top management leads to higher employee motivation and proactivity in decision-making. Furthermore, Russian employees in foreign-owned companies perceive their workplace as more democratic compared to domestic companies. When talking about current leadership styles in Russia, Ardichvili (2008c) states that Russian managers used transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles, with transactional contingent reward leadership being the most prevalent. Transactional contingent reward leadership emphasizes exchanges between leaders and followers through the use of rewards and punishments is known as transactional contingent reward leadership. As they define tasks and performance standards and tie them to specific rewards or penalties, leaders establish clear expectations and goals (Xenikou, 2017). The study has implications for developing leadership training programs

in Russia and transferring Western training and development approaches for future developments.

3.4 Leadership in Russia vs. The Netherlands

Van Gelderen and colleagues (2020b) conducted research on the comparison between entrepreneurial autonomy of Russian and Dutch managers. Their work focused on how autonomy was experienced, the factors that could affect it, and the actions taken to attain and retain it in Russia and the Netherlands. The results of their research reveal that entrepreneurial autonomy is a significant motivator and source of satisfaction for business managers, who take steps to protect and enhance it.

Enklaar (2007) outlines several key elements of Dutch values, which are characterized by twelve distinct principles that provide guidance to individuals. The first aspect is salvation, which emphasizes making choices that lead to a positive future. Guilt entails acknowledging mistakes and taking personal responsibility for them. Compassion is demonstrated through helping others, being truthful, and expressing genuine emotions—a highly valued trait in Dutch culture. Hard work is esteemed, and orderliness and neatness are considered crucial, as the absence of rules would result in chaos. The concept of utility underscores the importance of ensuring that every action serves a purpose. Planning is highly regarded, and individuals are expected to adhere to their plans and be reliable. Self-discipline is valued, emphasizing moderation and self-control, as well as the ability to harmonize and peacefully resolve conflicts. Equality is deeply ingrained in Dutch culture, with everyone being treated as equals. Lastly, self-determination highlights the principle that individuals should have the freedom to decide for themselves what they desire.

In his article on effects of leadership on organizational performance in Russian companies the author, Elenkov et al. (2014), described the main effects of different leadership styles on organizational performance of Russian companies. The study showed that transformational leadership had a direct and favorable effect on the organizational performance of Russian firms, even after accounting for the influence of transactional leadership. Furthermore, managers who exhibited more transactional-leadership qualities made a positive contribution to achieving organizational goals. This study highlights that transformational and transactional leadership behaviors can coexist in Russian managers, complementing each other. (Elenkov, 2002).

Another paper by Gratchev (2006) summarized the findings on organizational leadership in Russia from the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) cross-cultural research program. The researcher discusses the factors of effective leadership, universal leadership attributes, culture-contingent leader characteristics, and the influence of culture on leadership in a transitional society. The paper provides a framework for comparing Russian organizational leadership to other countries, based on culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories (CLT).

The findings from the program position self-sacrifice, modesty, people-orientation - the characteristics of a servant leader – as not meeting the expectations of an effective leader in the view of Russian employees. However, decisiveness, result orientation, accountability, and vision are valued in a leader by Russian employees. On the other hand, The GLOBE study identifies the leadership style for the Netherlands as participative or democratic. This means that, compared to Russian leaders, Dutch leaders tend to involve their subordinates in the decision-making process to a much higher scale and value their input. They promote a culture of collaboration and consensus-building and encourage individual autonomy and initiative within the framework of organizational goals. The participative style is consistent with the Dutch culture's emphasis on equality, individualism, and consensus-oriented decision-making, which is different from the typical Russian organizational leadership.

Finally, after discussing the present scientific findings and existing sources, it can be seen that there are gaps in the literature on the topic of leadership styles and their differences when comparing Russia and the Netherlands. Thus, this research was conducted to fill that gap and provide more context for both Dutch managers and Russian employees and working in the Netherlands.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

Since this empirical research involves investigating various aspects related to people's lives, beliefs, experiences, behaviors, emotions, as well as organizational functioning, cultural phenomena, and employee manager relations, an inductive qualitative approach is chosen. Indeed, according to Azungah (2018), using an inductive qualitative approach can be beneficial when researching human resources practices, namely, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, rewards management, employee communication and diversity management. Quantitative approaches, on the contrary, are generally used to develop predictions, find causational relationships, and generalize data to find a trend (Gelo et al., 2008).

4.2 Data collection

The data for this research was collected through interviews with Russian employees, who have been working in The Netherlands for at least one year. This time frame was chosen in order to avoid participants doing an internship, but to focus more on people with a regular job in a Dutch company. There was no strict requirement for the type of employment of interviewees, however, having a direct manager or being in a managerial position was given priority. The researcher used social media networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn to find and contact the interviewees, Russian nationals currently working in a Dutch company. Data was collected through virtual semi-structured interviews, carried out in Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Furthermore, the Ethics Committee of the BMS faculty from the

University of Twente gave approval to process the interviews.

A total number of five interviewees participated in this research. All five interviewees had to meet the following requirements:
- They should be working in The Netherlands for at least 12 months.
- They should have finished an intermediate and/or higher education.
- The Russian interviewees should have been integrated and in collaboration with their Dutch colleagues to ensure interactions with the Dutch leadership and discover cultural differences.

Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select participants based on the criteria mentioned above. This allowed the researcher to interviewee people that are most relevant to the main research objectives.
Table 1 presents a general overview of the interviewee demographics, including their age, level of education and gender.

Interviewee #	Gender	Age	Education
1	F	25	Higher education (Bachelor degree)
2	F	46	Higher education (Masters degree)
3	M	32	Higher education (Masters degree)
4	M	24	Higher education (Masters degree)
5	F	27	Higher education (Bachelor degree)

Table 1. Demographics of the interviewees

4.3 Research instrument

As the main research instrument to gather information for this research, semi-structured interviews are used. This implies that there is a predetermined format for the questions and topics that will be explored, but with open-ended questions to encourage further dialogue. The structured interview tool was not chosen because it has the drawbacks such as limited flexibility and lack of depth ("Structured Interviews," n.d.), instead the semi-structured tool was used. In this research it is vital that interview participants can elaborate on their answers and go into details when sharing their experiences. The interviewee is given ample opportunity to share their experiences using their own words, rather than simply providing one-word answers. According to (Adams, 2015c), semi-structured interviews are highly equipped for a number of valuable tasks, especially when multiple open-ended questions require further clarification or follow-up queries. However, one of the drawbacks using semi-structured interviews is that participants may provide answers that they believe align with socially desirable responses instead of their own thoughts (Longhurst, 2009). To avoid this issue, the interviews were conducted in a one-on-one setting via video

conferencing, using the Russian language by the Russian researcher.

By employing a general interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions (see Appendix A for the interview protocol), the interviewee was requested to provide standard examples, referred to as critical incidents, that showcase the cultural distinctions between Russian and Dutch leadership styles. The purpose of this approach was to accumulate a comprehensive collection of detailed stories regarding typical Dutch leadership. Occasionally, interviewees chose to present broad statements and jumped from one occurrence to another without specificity. Consequently, the researcher made sure to ask probing questions to bring out detailed descriptions of situations. The average duration of the interview was between 60 to 80 minutes. The maximum duration of each interview did not exceed 1.5 hours. The interviews were recorded using the online platforms and then transcribed via transcribing software. To transcribe the interviews, the audio recordings made in Zoom and Microsoft Teams were converted into written text using a specific speech recognition software. Given the possibility of inaccuracies in the transcription process, the author reviewed, edited, and enhanced the original transcripts. Being a proficient English speaker and a native Russian speaker, the author translated the relevant portions of the texts and quotations required for the analysis into English. Subsequently, the author reviewed and evaluated contents of the interviewees' texts and quotes. To ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees, their personal names and the names of their respective companies will not be disclosed in this study.

4.4 Data analysis

Conducting cross-cultural research with the critical incident technique involves identifying and analyzing specific events or incidents that are representative of cultural differences or similarities between two or more cultures. This approach allows researchers to gather detailed and specific data that can be used to better understand cultural phenomena. The critical incident technique involves collecting data through interviews or observations, identifying the critical incidents that reflect cultural differences, and analyzing these incidents to identify patterns or themes that shed light on cultural differences or similarities (Shattuck & Woods, 1994). This technique can be particularly useful in this research because it allows researcher to gather data that is specific to the Russian and Dutch leadership styles and to identify the underlying cultural values and beliefs that shape employee's behavior.

This analysis enables the creation of patterns or themes derived from the data to address the research question. The initial stage involves getting acquainted with the data by reading it through several times. Following this, the coding phase commences, during which the relevant segments (i.e., critical incidents) of the text are identified and marked with a specific color. In the third stage, these coded passages are grouped together in an Excel sheet and classified according to topics or themes. The identified themes are then meticulously scrutinized, described, and given appropriate names (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

In addition, this research paper incorporated the structure from Gioia et al. (2012). Gioia et al. (2012) proposed a framework for conducting thematic analysis that has been widely used. Initially, 1st order concepts were generated from the interview data, representing the initial codes derived from relevant quotes. These concepts were then organized into 2nd order themes, which involved creating larger categories based on similar codes. The final step involved further refining the 2nd order themes into what Gioia et al. (2012) referred to as "aggregate dimensions," which are comprehensive themes consisting of smaller themes and codes. By utilizing the data structure proposed by Gioia et al. (2012), researchers are able to visually represent the data and illustrate the process of transforming raw data into overarching themes.

5. RESULTS

This chapter focuses on presenting the findings of the study investigating cultural and leadership differences between Russians and Dutch managers. The aim of this chapter is to provide insights into answering the main research question: "What cultural differences do Russian employees in the Netherlands experience between Dutch and Russian leadership styles?". Through the thematic analysis of the transcriptions, a range of codes and second-order themes emerged, providing insights into the main research question and sub-questions. These findings shed light on the perceived differences in leadership between Russia and the Netherlands and how participants' cultural background and values contribute to their experiences. Four overarching aggregated dimensions were identified, as depicted in Figure 2, namely Dutch Leadership Style, Workplace Environment, Differences compared to work experience in Russia and Cultural norms. Each of these themes encompasses various second-order themes that offer a nuanced understanding of the topic. This section also presents all the findings derived from the data analysis, accompanied by selected quotes extracted from the transcripts to enhance the connection between the results and participants' experiences.

5.1 Dutch leadership style
The first aggregated dimension that was identified and is related to answering the research question is represented by Dutch leadership style, with four main 2nd-order themes. The most predominant findings from the thematic analysis regarding the characteristics of Dutch leadership from the eye of Russian employees are represented by collaborative decision-making process, constant feedback, hierarchy, and motivation.

5.1.1 Collaborative decision-making process

Dutch work culture tends to emphasize collaborative decision making, where Dutch managers value the input and perspectives of team members when making decisions. They strive for consensus and believe in involving relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process. This approach encourages diverse viewpoints and promotes a democratic work environment. Dutch professionals often engage in open discussions, debates, and brainstorming sessions to reach collective decisions that reflect the input of the team. One of them underlined: "When we have meetings at work it is absolutely normal that a junior position employee can criticize an idea presented by our department manager. At first, I was very surprised, because in Russia all the decisions are already made by the managers, and it is not up to debate. However, I find the Dutch way more effective, because it allows everyone to voice their opinion and sometimes there is a brilliant idea" (interviewee no. 5). The surprise of one of the interviewees is understandable, because Russian professionals generally place importance on respecting the expertise and authority of those in higher positions. This hierarchical approach can create a sense of order and efficiency in decision making, as it streamlines the process and ensures a clear chain of command. But at the same time, it decreases the creative thinking inside the company, and this can demotivate the employees.

5.1.2 Constant Feedback

Feedback was a recurring topic among the participants, and one individual expressed appreciation for the consideration and value given to employee feedback: "It is evident that Dutch managers take into account the feedback you provide, and you can observe its impact" (interviewee no. 2). Another participant mentioned that, despite Dutch people being more direct in their feedback, in international work teams, international members have also adopted this feedback approach. They stated, "Some individuals who used to be very straightforward are now more forgiving, while those who were hesitant in giving feedback are now more direct, which benefits everyone" (interviewee no. 1). Participants also noted that asking for feedback is very easy, because you can access your Dutch manager every day and almost immediately. "This is comfortable and saves me time. I don't have to send emails and wait for 2-3 working days anymore" (interviewee no. 5).

5.1.3 Hierarchy

The concept of hierarchy was a focal point in examining the leadership style within the company, and it emerged as a recurring theme among the interviewed individuals, particularly those working in larger organizations. During the interviews, four out of five participants expressed that hierarchy is not strongly prevalent in the Dutch companies where they are employed. They described the organizational structure as relatively flat, with minimal emphasis placed on hierarchical management layers. One interviewee remarked, "There are no clearly defined hierarchical levels within the company" (interviewee no. 2). On the other hand, the remaining participants acknowledged the existence of a clear hierarchy and a well-established chain of command but emphasized that individuals are encouraged to treat each other as equals.

5.1.4 Motivation

Dutch employees value a work environment that promotes autonomy, fosters innovation and creativity, and offers chances for lifelong learning. They are looking for a workplace that supports their values and enables them to make a positive difference in the success of the company. Russians frequently place a high value on consistency, professional advancement, and meeting social expectations related to their positions and job titles. Additionally significant motivators include a sense of loyalty to the organization and a sense of community. Additionally, Russians frequently value opportunities for professional growth and training as well as clear direction from their superiors. "In Russia I used to work only for my salary, that was my biggest motivation. I was not inspired by what I did or what my company did. However, here in the Netherlands your company invites you to join and make a difference in the world, leave a positive impact. I value that a lot right now" (interviewee no. 5).

5.2 Workplace Environment
This aggregated dimension describes the influence of punctuality and communication process which represent the two 2nd- order themes that are put together to make the 3rd-order theme.

5.2.1 Punctuality

In the Dutch workplace, punctuality is highly valued. One shows respect for others and their time by being on time. Interviewee no. 2 mentioned that: "it is normal and typical for Dutch managers and employees to show up on time for meetings and work assignments and to stick to deadlines. Being late is generally disliked and could be taken as a sign of indifference or lack of commitment. That has happened to me when I first started at my job". In the Netherlands for a smooth workflow and to prove one's dependability at work, punctuality is regarded as essential.

Compared to the Dutch, the Russian work culture has a different perspective on punctuality. "In Russia, there is a more relaxed attitude toward punctuality, even though being on time is generally appreciated. When I worked in

Russia our meetings and other work-related events frequently start a little later than expected, and there may be more tolerance for arriving a few minutes early", says interviewee no. 2. In Russia, it is also frequently valued to develop interpersonal relationships and engage in social interactions before getting down to business, which can occasionally result in a less rigid attitude toward punctuality.

5.2.2 Communication

Regarding communication, the majority of participants expressed satisfaction with their interactions with managers and colleagues, as English served as the common language in business settings. However, one participant raised a concern about certain Dutch employees who struggled with English proficiency and requested translations for their primary tasks and responsibilities. Another problem on the workplace was described by several participants was that fellow Dutch employees prefer to communicate with each other in Dutch and sometimes they do not switch back to English, which makes it difficult for Russians to socialize. "It is understandable for them to speak their mother tongue, but I do not speak Dutch and I feel excluded from the office communications" (interviewee no. 1).

5.3 Differences compared to work experience in Russia

The main findings that were identified after discussing the differences compared to work experience in Russia can be grouped into three 2nd-order themes: power distance, personal space, and privacy policy.

5.3.1 Power Distance

Regardless of hierarchical positions, open communication, direct interaction, and participatory decision-making are frequently expected in Dutch work environments. Employees are encouraged to challenge ideas, express their disagreements, and have productive conversations with their superiors. Dutch managers are frequently approachable and accessible, encouraging a sense of collaboration and reducing the perceived gap between various levels of authority.

When answering an interview question about the contact with his Dutch manager, interviewee no. 4 stated: "I can reach my manager every day, at any given moment. I see him at the lunch breaks, we drink coffee all the time. In the Netherlands the manager is very easy to find and to talk to, unlike my previous experience in Russia. There every manager has his own cabinet, sits there all day and you never see him".

5.3.2 Personal Space

In the Dutch workplace, personal space is generally respected and valued. Participants in the study reported that there is an understanding of the importance of personal space and privacy among colleagues. It was mentioned that physical boundaries are generally observed, and individuals are given their own personal space to work and carry out their tasks. This respect for personal space contributes to a comfortable and professional working environment. "I felt respected and comfortable at all times at my workplace in the Netherlands" (interviewee no. 3).

5.3.3 Privacy Policy

In Dutch workplaces, there is a strong emphasis on safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of employees through the implementation of robust privacy policies. "Dutch employers have the obligation to inform employees about the purpose behind collecting their personal data and seek their consent when required. I was very surprised, because in my previous company in Russia that was never done with such importance and urgency" (interviewee no. 1). When asked to assess whether you feel more secure working in the Netherlands or in Russia, four out of five participants stated that they do indeed feel that their private information is more secure working in a Dutch company.

5.4 Cultural norms

The last aggregated dimension refers to the work-life balance and concept of friendship experiences of participants.

5.4.1 Work-life balance

The Dutch prioritize the well-being and personal life, because they believe that it is key to higher job satisfaction and happiness of employees. Dutch workers usually follow regular working hours, emphasizing efficiency and productivity within the designated work time. Overtime work is less prevalent, and there is an expectation that employees should be able to detach from work and fully enjoy their personal time. "One time I stayed at work after 17.00 and my manager came to me and asked me to leave. He was very concerned about me staying longer at work and I thought he was being completely serious about it. In Russia our normal workday could go 2-3 hours overtime, easy" (interviewee no. 1).

5.4.2 Friendship

In the Dutch work environment, there is generally a professional approach to relationships, and it may take some time to develop close friendships with colleagues. "Dutch culture tends to prioritize a clear distinction between work and personal life, which was unusual to me, because in Russian companies you do make real friends at work" (interviewee no. 5). Another participant stated that as an international employee, it is important to be aware of cultural differences and respect boundaries. "While some Dutch colleagues may be open to forming close friendships at work, others may prefer to keep a more formal and professional relationship. In my experience all the Dutch employees do not like to be good friends with internationals, that is unfortunate" (interviewee no. 1).

6. DISCUSSION

This research aimed at exploring what is the perception of Russian professionals who work in the Netherlands on Dutch leadership and what is the difference between this style of leadership and Russian. To do so, this study has analyzed the experience of Russians working under Dutch managers and how some of the differences felt can be explained by cultural aspects. All the participants had a similar experience in some respects, but their perceptions varied based on their demographic's factors

such as age, gender, type of company for working experience in Russia and number of years spent working in the Netherlands.

6.1 Theoretical implications
Hofstede's study on cultural dimensions reveals distinctions between the Netherlands and Russia, and the findings from the semi-structured interviews show similar results. More specifically, the findings of this thesis underline that Russian employees overall feel more inclined working under the Dutch leadership styles rather than Russian. It was found to be a trend of participants mentioning how much more convenient it is to work in the Netherlands, which was an unexpected result for the researcher. To a certain extent, this corroborates Hofstede and colleagues' results (REF), in that they claim that when compared to the Netherlands, Russia performs better on masculinity and scores higher on power distance. Russian interviewees, described working in the Netherlands as less hierarchical than Russia, mentioned how easy it is to contact your manager and share your ideas.

Similarly, characteristics of Russian employees, according to Efendiev et al. (2014), seemed to be confirmed, as all five interviewees agreed that working in the Netherlands under the Dutch management is more motivating and they have a bigger say in decision-making. The results of this work were also aligned with Ardichvili's (2008c) insights, as most participants admitted that working in Russia was mostly based on the reward-penalty system and it was the main motivating factor.
To summarize, results of the semi-structured interviews with Russian expats living and working in the Netherlands provide some clarification on what the perceived differences are and is sufficient as a basis for future research.

6.2 Practical implications
The findings from this thesis can provide valuable insights for Dutch managers and Russian employees working in the Netherlands, enabling them to better understand the Dutch leadership style they are likely to encounter. By gaining an understanding of the Dutch leadership approach, individuals from Russia can be more prepared to navigate potential challenges and issues while working in the Netherlands. The research indicates that Russian individuals may face difficulties in adjusting to the significantly different hierarchical structure in the Netherlands. Additionally, it highlights challenges related to adapting to the work-life balance behavior and the difference in the power-distance. On the other hand, Dutch managers can learn more about the typical work environment in Russia and be prepared when dealing with Russian employees. Therefore, it is recommended that both Dutch managers and Russian employees who are planning to work in the Netherlands receive cultural differences training, language lessons, or participate in workshops that specifically address the topic of hierarchy. By doing so, they will become aware of how these factors can impact their performance and be better equipped to handle them.

7. LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

This research carries certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The primary limitation pertains to the sample size, as only five individuals were interviewed, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. It is important to note that a larger sample size might yield slightly different results, indicating the need for more extensive investigation in the future. Given the small sample size, the results cannot be considered representative and generalizable and should be interpreted consciously. However, even though this research only had five participants, the interviews were of high-quality and provided interesting insights. Every interview was individual and was conducted in an adequate time frame, which consequently resulted in the high quality of data. It is therefore advisable for future research to include a larger number of participants and consider a mixed-methods approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data.

Secondly, it is important to mention that there was a possibility of social desirability bias occurring during the interviews. This type of bias is explained by respondents answering questions in a manner that could be viewed as desirable by others (Chung, 2003). In the case of this research, it could be that Russian interviewees felt pressured to only share positive experiences they had in the Netherlands and more negative from their previous work experience in Russia. From the social desirability bias perspective, they could think that expressing admiration towards Dutch leadership could be viewed as desirable by others. However, the researcher repeatedly said during the interviews that there are no expected answers and respondents are free to share their thoughts and own opinions. This was done to try and avoid occurrence of the social desirability bias. To enhance future research, it is recommended to make sure that all the interview questions are neutral and unbiased, are framed appropriately and that respondents feel comfortable answering these questions.

Finally, it should be noted that participants in this study have varying durations of employment at their respective companies. Consequently, some individuals may be in the early stages of the acculturation process within the organization, while others may already be accustomed to the Dutch leadership style and work environment. Being aware of this limitation, the researcher tried to adjust some of the questions to account the difference in time spent in the Netherlands. For example, participants who spent more time working in the Netherlands were asked to compare their experience in the beginning to their current workplace. Consequently, interviewees with less time spent in the Netherlands were asked to compare their current work experience to working back in Russia. For future research, finding participants who possess similar years of work experience would be beneficial in providing more meaningful insights.

8. CONCLUSION

It is crucial to consider the cultural disparities between Dutch and Russian cultures, as various theories and literature highlight substantial differences in attitudes,

values, and behavior. Historical tensions and stereotypes further contribute to these cultural distinctions. Therefore, it is essential to approach the topic without preconceived judgments.

The divergent cultural dynamics between the Dutch and Russian working environments can present both challenges and opportunities. By promoting cultural awareness and establishing effective communication channels, individuals can effectively navigate these differences, fostering a harmonious and productive work environment. Furthermore, by capitalizing on the strengths of each culture and avoiding potential pitfalls, organizations can foster creativity, innovation, collaboration, and ultimately achieve their business objectives.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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11. APPENDIX A

11.1 Interview protocol

1. What is your full age? (Каков ваш полный возраст?)

2. What is your level of education? (Каков ваш уровень образования?)

3. Where do you currently work in the Netherlands? (Где вы сейчас работаете в Нидерландах?)

4. What does your company do exactly and what is your job position? (Чем именно занимается ваша компания и на какой должности вы работаете?)

5. How often do you have contact with your Dutch colleagues? What is the most common form of communication (e-mail, online calls, face-to-face)? Как часто вы общаетесь со своими голландскими коллегами? (Какая форма общения наиболее распространена (электронная почта, онлайн-звонки, личное общение))?

6. What do you discuss together? What is your position and what is the position of the Dutch person(s) (rank, distribution of tasks)? (Что вы обсуждаете вместе? Какова ваша должность и какова должность голландца (лиц) (ранг, распределение задач))?

7. What language do you speak with the Dutch? Is communication good? (На каком языке вы говорите с голландцами? Общение хорошее)?

8. What is it like to work in the Netherlands? How are your work meetings going? What do you do when you receive instructions from the Boss? (Каково это работать в Нидерландах? Как проходят ваши рабочие встречи? Что вы делаете, когда получаете инструкции от Босса)?

9. Describe leadership in your current company? What is the relationship between the Boss and employees? How are hierarchical relationships arranged? (Опишите лидерство в вашей нынешней компании? Каковы отношения между начальником и подчиненными? Как устроены иерархические связи)?

10. Have you had conflicts with your superiors? If so, which ones? (Были ли у вас конфликты с начальством? Если да, то какие)?

11. Have you had good Bosses in the Netherlands? Evaluate and compare with your superiors in Russia. (Были ли у вас хорошие боссы в Нидерландах? Оцените и сравните с вашим начальством в России).

12. What advice would you give to your friend who has just arrived here? What to expect in advance? (Какой совет вы бы дали своему другу, который только что приехал сюда? Чего ожидать заранее)?

13. I would like to talk to you about your experience with Dutch leaders (managers, higher up in the company). What is your experience with the Dutch managers in general? What do you think are the most striking differences between Russian leaders and Dutch leaders? (Я хотел бы поговорить с вами о вашем опыте работы с голландскими лидерами (менеджерами, занимающими более высокое положение в компании). Каков ваш опыт работы с голландскими менеджерами в целом? В чем, на ваш взгляд, самые разительные различия между лидерами России и Нидерландов)?

14. A good manager: how should he/she behave? Do the Dutch and Russians differ in this respect? (Хороший менеджер: как он должен себя вести? Отличаются ли в этом отношении голландцы и русские)?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the Dutch? Have we discussed everything? (Есть ли что-то еще, что вы хотели бы рассказать о своем опыте работы с голландцами? Мы все обсудили)?