

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG EMPLOYEES OF DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES

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ABSTRACT

The significance of this research paper entails examining the significance of cultural discrepancies and diversity within the working environment by considering the relationships that exist among employees of various cultures within the Greek working environment. Against the background of increased labour migration and global interactions due to globalization, cultural discrepancies within the working environment have become an integral component of modern organizational management. The research utilizes various theories including Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner. Modern theories within the subject of social psychology have also been incorporated into the research paper. The research paper utilizes a qualitative research approach that entails conducting interviews with employees from various cultures to analyse attitudes and integration strategies within the working environment. The research paper examines the advantages of cultural discrepancies within organizations as it relates to increased levels of creation and team work. The research paper also examines the challenges that emerge due to discrimination and increased levels of communication difficulties within organizations. The research paper also provides a comprehensive analysis by highlighting the significance of inter-cultural awareness and the implementation of inclusive working management within organizations. The research paper responds to the research gap within the Greek working environment by providing recommendations on efficient management of cultural discrepancies within organizations.

Keywords: Cultural differences, Cultural diversity, Workplace environment, Nationality, Intercultural communication, Stereotypes,

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity in the workplace has become an integral part of organizational life as a result of the socioeconomic shifts caused by factors such as globalization and migratory movement. The increasing mobility of the population and the global nature of companies have dramatically affected the makeup of the labour force such that cultural diversity has become an ordinary phenomenon in organizations in Greece (Banks & Banks, 2010).

Based on the latest statistics provided by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT, 2023), 12% of the labour force in Greece includes foreign nationals, and the total number of personnel employed by multinational companies has grown by 18% in the last five years. All these statistics not only reflect a certain trend but express a profound change in the character of Greek companies that now face the challenge of dealing with an uncharted complexity of values, attitudes, perceptions, and work practices.

Multiculturalism in the working environment goes beyond ethnic and national variations. In this respect, multiculturalism both within and outside the country includes factors such as gender, age, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation (Banks & Banks, 2010; Seguin et al., 2010). Dealing with these diversities in the working environment poses a challenge to the organization, as it needs to implement approaches that ensure inter-cultural communications and acceptance (Georgiannis, 2008).

Application of these phenomena can be better realized by considering the theoretical concept proposed by Hofstede (1984), which provides important cultural factors that determine societies and affect influencing factors at work. For example, the factor of Power Distance explains the level of acceptance of inequality and organizational hierarchy. In Greece, where power distance is high, there is acceptance of organizational decisions by subordinates without questioning, whereas in Sweden, with low power distance, decisions should be equally shared by everyone. The factor of Individualism–Collectivism determines the nature of group performances. In German organizations that value individualism at work, there should be emphasis on personal efforts and autonomy, as opposed to Greece, which values a collective approach. In addition, the factor of Uncertainty Avoidance determines the approach of employees towards organizational change. In Greece, where there is high uncertainty avoidance, there should be emphasis on rules and regulations at work. In Denmark, on the contrary, where uncertainty avoidance is low, there should be emphasis on experimentation and flexibility.

The Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) provides additional explanatory tools, elucidating how identification with specific social groups may lead to stereotypical perceptions and biases that often-become sources of conflict in multicultural workplaces. Effective management of these phenomena is a prerequisite for promoting equality, acceptance, and the constructive utilization of diversity, ultimately enhancing organizational performance and innovation (Groysberg et al., 2006; Mor Barak, 2011).

Although both the positive side and difficulties of cultural diversity have been emphasized by the international literature on the subject, it should be noted that comprehensive research on the specifics of the working environment of the Greek nation appears to be absent. The heightened migratory flows and integration of the Greek economy into global business

structures emphasize that research on cultural diversity not only has become topical at the moment but actually represents an imperative of effective human resource management. That is precisely what the present paper aims to achieve.

1.1 Attitudes, Stereotypes, and Cultural Differences in the Workplace

The management of cultural diversity in the workplace represents an important challenge for modern organizations since attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudices represent strong factors influencing the working climate and organizational effectiveness (Van Laar et al., 2019). Attitudes represent individual cognitive structures that reflect personal assessments and attitudes towards persons or groups of various cultural backgrounds. In contrast to attitudes, social representations represent collective constructs that emerge as a result of communication and interaction. They include shared perceptions and values within organizations (Moscovici, 2000).

Stereotypes were found to be closely related to prejudice and discrimination. Stereotypical cognition can result in unfounded beliefs about the capacity and/or activity of workers on the basis of their nationality or cultural origins. Such actions can create an inequality and a lack of inclusivity barrier for those employees who come from a diverse background (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Prejudices were seen to be negative feelings with a basis in stereotypes rather than an individual's personal experience. These feelings can create subtle or overt distaste toward those who belong to another culture. Discrimination was observed to be the expression of those feelings.

The awareness of the difference that exists between individual attitudes and collective social representations helps in understanding the dynamic of cultural diversity within an organizational setup. For an organization to create an innovative working environment, training that helps in dealing with unconsciousness and diversity in higher organizational positions makes a crucial contribution (Van Laar et al., 2019).

1.2 Theoretical Background

Multiculturalism at the workplace represents a complex phenomenon that considerably affects the activity of modern organizations. In the modern working environment, overcoming discrimination and prejudiced views on cultural disparities and ethnic diversity has become an important challenge. Workplace diversity covers a wide set of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation. The two primary principles of social psychology that considerably help in comprehending cultural disparities and interactions of people of various nationalities within the working framework are attitudes and social representations (Bidjari, 2011).

As per Banks & Banks (2010), the five primary components of multiculturalism include content integration, knowledge/construction, reduction of prejudice, equity pedagogy, and empowerment of organizational culture and structure. Similarly, another framework proposed by Seguin et al. in 2010 considers the various aspects of multiculturalism and diversity at work by examining it on three factors that include National, International, and Educational.

The management of cultural diversity needs approaches that promote intercultural communication and collaboration. According to Georgogiannis in 2008, interculturalism can be viewed as the management of diversity by those from various cultures in an effort to create a new cultural identity by accepting and appreciating the qualities that exist within cultures.

The cultural dimension theory put forth by Hofstede in 1984 offers a starting point in understanding cross-cultural variations and the influence of such variations on work-related behaviours. The framework of Individualism–Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance provide relevant understanding on the influence of cultural beliefs in management and employee interactions.

In addition, the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner from 1986 describes the process by which an individual can identify with particular groups that may create bias or clashes due to unmanaged cultural disparities.

Hence, an effective management of cultural diversity at work needs an understanding and implementation of such theories in order to finally achieve the goal of equal treatment and utilization of the positive attributes of cultural diversity.

1.3 Previous Research

Previous research has proved that cultural diversity can increase creativity and innovation by the varied views that it embraces (Groysberg et al. 2006). Proper management of diversity can cut employee conflicts at work and improve collaboration levels among work partners (Mor Barak 2011). Lack of knowledge on cultural disparities may result in poor work interactions, poor work production, and work-related stress at the organizational set-up (Banks & Banks 2010), thus highlighting the significance of addressing the three important aspects of multiculturalism: national, international, and educational aspects within an overall concept due to the complex nature of the modern-day working labour force based on varied cultural and ethnic factors.

Managing diversity is not only an important moral imperative but it also provides an advantage for an organization when it comes to sustainability. As Arar et al. (2019) have discovered, having staff of various nationalities may sometimes result in conflicts that result from a lack of respect for and acceptance of diversity and from inadequate training of managers on intercultural management.

These results illustrate the two-fold nature of cultural diversity: as an opportunity for innovation as well as an area that needs to be managed.

1.4 Research Questions

On the base of the foregoing theoretical background and previous studies, the following research questions are proposed:

In what ways do cultural differences and differing nationalities influence communication and collaboration among workers in the contemporary work environment?

Which approaches to dealing with cultural diversity work best in fostering intercultural understanding and effective multicultural team working?

In what ways can organisations create an environment that fosters the acceptance and use of cultural diversity within an organisational setting?

How exactly does intercultural education and training of employees as well as managerial personnel affect the management of cultural differences as well as the working of multicultural teams?

In what ways may cultural diversity affect innovation, creativity, and competitiveness within an organization on a global scale?

The answers to these questions can help gain an insight into the challenges and opportunities that emerge due to cultural diversity in the working environment. Additionally, it can also help in formulating strategies to deal with such diversity.

1.5 Research Purpose

The proposed research aims to explore the impacts of cultural differences on the world of communication and collaboration, the relationship between multicultural work teams and innovation, as well as the strategies that may be applied in order to manage such cultural diversity. In addition, it also tries to analyse the current situation of cultural diversity within organizations due to the absence of comprehensive data on the subject at hand and determine the important advantages and difficulties stemming from cultural diversity.

In addition, the proposed research aims to assess the management and reaction of both managers and employees towards cultural differences in work settings and investigate solutions that contribute to the effective management of cultural diversity with the objective of enhancing organizational effectiveness in Greek companies.

The research proposed within this paper has the objective of filling a gap that has been identified in the existing literature on cultural diversity at work in the Greek context, while at the same time being in keeping with international research trends. The research aims to offer important and specific findings relevant to the Greek context.

1.6 Research Significance

The relevance of the above research on cultural diversity and various nationalities at the workplace resides in the fact that, despite the subject being thoroughly investigated on an international level, a remarkable absence of comprehensive evidence on the subject has been observed within the Greek context. The important factors that define the significance of the research can be noted as follows:

Limited existing data: The area of cultural diversity in Greek workplaces lacks systematic research. The current research contributes to filling an important knowledge gap.

Rising globalisation levels: As companies' global orientation increases, awareness of cultural disparities grows in significance as a factor in management.

Economic implications: Cultural diversity has been found to contribute positively to profitability and innovation, and it thus has great significance for the economic development of Greece.

Workplace Dynamics: Awareness of cultural variations may increase communication effectiveness, decrease conflict, and increase work productivity in multicultural workplaces in Greece.

Finally, the above research may also be a contribution towards the design and development of more inclusive work practices within Greek organisations.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

In the current research, a qualitative research approach has been used. The main data-gathering technique employed in conducting the research is that of semi-structured interviews. The selection of the qualitative approach as the research technique used in the current research can be attributed to the need to delve deeper into the experience and attitudes of multinationals working in multicultural settings within Greece. In addition, it can be noted that complex events such as those that constitute intercultural interactions cannot always be captured properly using a qualitative approach (Cohen & Manion, 2008).

The semi-structured interviews will be designed around an interview schedule that includes the following topics: cultural and ethnic origins, collaboration experience with persons of various nationalities, language and communicative difficulties, views on organizational hierarchies and power relations, conflict resolution strategies, views on diversity in the workplace, organizational policies on managing diversity, and the influence of cultural diversity on organizational innovation and collaboration.

Data collection will continue until theoretical saturation (data saturation) is achieved—that is, until no new significant themes or patterns emerge from the interviews.

For data analysis, the technique of Thematic Analysis will be used as proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The primary advantage of using thematic analysis is that it helps in deducing patterns from the research data by associating them within the framework of the research. This analysis can be carried out by using qualitative analysis techniques such as NVivo.

2.2 Participants – Research Sample

The sample population for the research includes adult workers (18 years and above), both Greek and foreign nationals, working in multicultural settings in Greece with an objective of promoting equal gender representation.

The selection of research participants will be carried out through convenience sampling. Although convenience sampling may pose limitations on the overall generalisability of the findings, it appears to be very appropriate for the current research since it targets persons who have experienced firsthand the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013; Seguin et al., 2010; Banks & Banks, 2010).

The potential research subjects will be contacted through professional networking and social networking websites like LinkedIn with an objective of reaching at least five different nationalities. The sample will include individuals from the following groups:

- Employees of multinational companies operating in Greece;
- Migrant workers and employees of different nationalities in Greek enterprises;
- Human Resource managers and executives responsible for managing multicultural teams;
- Employees of international organisations based in Greece;
- Greek staff working closely with colleagues of different nationalities.

The expected sample size will range from 8 to 10 participants, with the final number depending on the achievement of data saturation—the point at which new data no longer contribute meaningful insights or new themes (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006).

For maximizing representativeness as well as to avoid biased findings, the following steps would be followed:

- Diversity of companies and sectors: Inclusion of employees from organizations of various sizes (multinationals, SMEs, companies from Greece and from international countries) and sectors such as technology, tourism, industry, services. This aims at getting a wider range of experiences (Arar et al., 2019).
- Range of nationalities and organisational levels: Including at least five types of nationalities and representatives from various levels of an organization such as employees, supervisors, and managers to represent varied opinions on the topic of cultural diversity (Groysberg et al., 2006).
- Multiple recruitment strategies: The research utilizes various recruitment strategies such as professional networks and referrals that help eliminate the chance of systematic bias occurring in the participant selection process (Mor Barak, 2011).
- Careful question design: The design of the interview schedule will ensure that it contains non-leading questions that will help the respondents reflect on and openly express their accounts and opinions (Bidjari, 2011).

Inclusion Criteria:

- Adult employees (aged 18 and above), Greek or foreign nationals.
- Employment in a multicultural work environment in Greece.
- Minimum of six months of experience in the current multicultural setting.
- Ability to communicate in Greek and/or English.
- Willingness to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Employees in culturally homogeneous workplaces.
- Individuals who do not speak Greek or English.
- Employees with less than six months of experience in their current workplace.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The research proposed here will strictly adhere to the principles of scientific ethics and deontology (Georgogiannis, 2008). The research proposed here would be carried out on a totally voluntary basis. All the participants in this research will be provided with full information on the nature of the research.

Informed consent forms will be sought from each of the study's participants. These forms define the aims of the research work as well as the processing of data.

All personal data collected will remain strictly anonymous. The data collected from interviews will be coded. All data collected from the research will be kept safely. Furthermore, data collected from the research will only be used for research purposes. The respondents' rights remain reserved to withdraw from the research at any time without consequences.

2.4 Research Material

The research data for the current research was planned to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected and analysed. The data instruments were designed based on the research framework and research question to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic of cultural diversity in the workplace from the perspective of the respondents. This fits within the work of Creswell (2013) and Braun and Clarke (2006).

2.4.1 Information and Consent Forms

All participants received full information on the objectives, procedures, rights, and duties concerning the research before participating in the research through designed information and consent forms. The forms were designed online using Google Forms to ensure easy accessibility of the forms and properly constituted informed consent from the research subjects in accordance with research ethics principles.

2.4.2 Demographic Questionnaire

To describe the sample and strengthen the external validity of the study, a brief demographic questionnaire (Google Form) was used. This questionnaire collected key information such as age, gender, nationality, occupation, hierarchical level, and years of work experience in a multicultural environment (Banks & Banks, 2010).

2.4.3 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The primary tool used for gathering qualitative data is the conducting of a semi-structured interview. The interview had been designed from the findings of the literature search and

research aims of the study (Mor Barak, 2011). The interview contained both open-ended answers to queries including:

- Experiences of collaboration with colleagues of different nationalities
- Linguistic and communicative difficulties
- The Concepts of Hierarchy, Authority, and Decision-Making
- Conflict management and integration strategies
- Organisational diversity management policies

The influence of cultural diversity on innovation and group outcomes

- Indicative questions include:
- Can you tell us about your experience working with colleagues from various nationalities?
- Have you faced difficulties or miscommunications arising from cultural disparities? How did you deal with them?
- Which organizational practices do you think work well in managing cultural diversity?

The interview guide was reviewed for clarity and relevance by the research supervisor and was refined following a pilot interview with one participant (Creswell, 2013).

2.4.4 Data Recording and Transcription

The interviews were either face-to-face or conducted online through such platforms as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The interviews were audio-recorded with the due consent of the respondents. Audio recordings were done by a cell phone or such equipment as may be appropriate. Also, transcription of the recordings may be done manually or assisted by such transcription services as may be appropriate. This helps ensure the data captured is accurate and complete (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2.4.5 Ensuring Validity and Reliability

Content validity was address by constructing the interview schedule using the findings of a comprehensive literature search and expert peer review. The use of the same interview schedule on all respondents and performing inter-coder checks on data analysis helped to address issues of reliability. The description of the research setting and the respondents helped to address the problem of external validity as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

2.4.6 Ethics and Data Protection

All data collected from respondents is safely stored in an anonymous form that complies with research ethics and data protection regulations (GDPR). After the research has been carried out, your personal data will be erased in accordance with the data management rules at the University.

2.5 Research Procedure

The data gathering process shall begin as soon as the research gets formal approval from the Ethics and Research Committee at the University (Creswell, 2013). The researcher will contact the proposed respondents through email and networking connections such as 'LinkedIn' based on professional networking.

The messages inviting participation in the research will include information on the nature of the research as well as the rights and duties of the research subjects. Interested respondents will then be given the information and consent form that needs to be read and electronically signed by them prior to conducting the interview.

The participation in the research is strictly on a voluntary basis, and the respondents remain free to withdraw at any point without consequences. The interviews may be carried out in face-to-face sessions or online options such as Zoom meetings and MS Teams. The duration of these interviews may take around 30 minutes. The consent of the respondents has been sought to tape these interviews. These recordings will be transcribed.

All the data collected will be strictly kept confidential and anonymous. The interview data will not include the personal details of the respondents. The data collected will be kept in a secure digital form accessible only to the researcher. All data collected will be deleted after the completion of the research work as per the University policy as well as the General Data Protection Regulations.

This helps to ensure that the research has moral and scientific integrity as well as respect for the rights and privacy of the research respondents (Creswell, 2013).

Having received approval from the Ethics Committee, the research process will now involve the following stages:

1. The researcher will develop the needed documents as well as data gathering tools such as questionnaires and interview guides.
2. A sampling strategy will be developed to identify and approach potential participants who meet the study's inclusion criteria.
3. The researcher will reach out to the prospective participants via email or various social networking platforms by sending them a brief description of the research being conducted.
4. Interested persons should approach the researcher for additional information on the research.
5. The researcher will mail information sheets to the potential subjects that outline the nature of the research as well as what it entails.
6. The research subjects who consent to participate in the research activity shall be asked to read the information sheet and electronically grant consent.
7. The researcher will arrange the data-gathering sessions (for example, interviews or filling out questionnaires) with each participant. These sessions should take around 30 minutes.
8. The research will ensure that data collected by the researcher is both anonymous and confidential.
9. The researcher will analyse the data collected using relevant qualitative analysis techniques. The data collected throughout the research process will remain anonymous.

10. Finally, the research findings will be compiled by the researcher without revealing anyone's personal information in the final report.

In summary, on obtaining ethics approval, the researcher will develop the various research materials used in collecting data (questionnaires and interview guides), design the sampling technique to identify potential respondents, and approach them via email or social networks. Interested persons will be given an information sheet that outlines the purpose of the research. The participant will then read the form and give consent by signing it. The researcher will then proceed with organizing and implementing the data gathering process. The duration of every data gathering process should be approximately 30 minutes. The secrecy of the respondents throughout the data gathering and analysis process will be upheld. In the final stage, the researcher will analyse and present the findings. The findings should ensure that there are no identifiable details contained in the final report of the dissertation or indeed in the publication.

2.6 Method of Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted using Thematic Analysis, a flexible and widely employed qualitative method for interpreting data obtained from semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding cultural diversity, as well as the challenges and management strategies within the workplace.

The process of analysis included the six phases proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with the data: The researcher carried out repeated readings of the interview transcripts in order to familiarize with the data. Initial observations were noted.
2. Coding: The coding process included systematic coding that helped pick crucial excerpts relevant to the research queries and framework on which the research stands.
3. Identifying Themes from Codes: The codes were organized into overall themes that captured salient aspects of the participants' experiences and attitudes.
4. Analysis of Themes: The themes were reviewed for coherence and clarity both within and across the themes to ensure that the analysis had validity.
5. Definition and naming of the themes: The themes were thoroughly defined with corresponding labels that aptly described the content of each theme.
6. Results synthesis and presentation: The final themes were presented and discussed within the context of research questions and the framework of the research.

The kind of analysis that made it possible to detect both similarities and dissimilarities at the same time allowed for a better understanding of the factors that define multicultural work settings. In order to increase the validity and reliability of the analysis, a number of techniques were used. These included data triangulations, consultation with the research supervisor, as well as keeping a coding record.

The suitability of the technique of Thematic Analysis to the research study appeared particularly relevant in that it offers a practical framework for exploring complex events in the world around us and understanding the underlying interpretations that workers attach to cultural diversity as well as its management within organizations.

3.0 RESULTS

Table 1: Themes Identified through Thematic Analysis

No.	Theme	Description
1	Cultural Differences in Communication and Collaboration	Differences in communication styles, approaches to hierarchy, and teamwork dynamics.
2	Stereotypes and Prejudices	Presence of stereotypes and biases that affect collaboration and inclusion among employees.
3	Challenges and Integration Factors	Language barriers, peer support, and participation in shared social or professional activities.
4	Diversity Management Strategies and Benefits	Training, inclusion practices, and the benefits of diversity for creativity and team performance.

Table 2: Frequency of Theme Occurrence in the Interviews

Theme	Number of Interviews Mentioned	Percentage (%)
Cultural Differences in Communication and Collaboration	8	100%
Stereotypes and Prejudices	7	87.5%
Challenges and Integration Factors	6	75%
Diversity Management Strategies and Benefits	7	87.5%

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews using thematic analysis revealed four main themes that reflect the participants' experiences and perceptions regarding cultural diversity in the workplace. These themes are:

1. cultural differences in communication and collaboration,
2. stereotypes and prejudices,
3. challenges and integration factors, and
4. diversity management strategies and benefits.

1) Cultural Differences in Communication and Collaboration

The respondents shared various experiences in terms of cultural differences that affect communication and collaboration in the working environment. The respondents noted that there exist various discrepancies in both verbal and nonverbal communication. These include discrepancies in understanding politeness and dealing with hierarchies. Many respondents observed that employees from cultures that respect power distance, such as Greece or Eastern Europe, usually take orders from those above them without question. In contrast, employees from other cultures appreciate an equal and communicative approach. Such discrepancies may result in difficulties in collaboration or misunderstanding. All these may manifest during the initial collaboration process.

"Working in my last company, I realized that the Greek personnel were always expecting guidance from the manager, but the Italian ones used to discuss and offer solutions. At the initial stage, there were some misunderstandings. However, eventually, we were able to work with them better."

(Participant 4)

2) Stereotypes and Prejudices

The influence of stereotypes and prejudices among the staff of various nationalities turned out to be an important factor that impacts the workplace environment. The employees claimed that they either experienced or observed instances of discrimination against certain nationalities.

"There were instances when I had the feeling that I wasn't trusted as much as my Greek colleagues. I had to prove myself more."

(Participant 7)

3) Challenges and Integration Factors

The respondents were asked to identify the challenges they experienced when adapting to working within a multicultural setting. The difficulties encountered were primarily due to linguistic difficulties, cultural attitudes toward work, and the persistence of stereotypes. Communication difficulties arose as a prominent challenge.

"I felt that initially I could not convey what I had to express. The language and fear of being misunderstood made me more reserved."

(Participant 5)

In addition, the working environment and the views of workmates and management were also identified as an important consideration in facilitating integration. Encouragement of participation and provision of opportunities for interactions were found important for smooth integration of foreign staff.

"What really worked well for me was that my fellow students invited me to participate in group activities from the start. I felt like I was part of the group very quickly."

(Participant 9)

4) Diversity Management Strategies and Benefits

The organizations that realize the significance of cultural diversity implement particular management practices like holding intercultural training sessions, having a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, and working on improved team communications.

"Our company regularly organizes seminars on cultural diversity. This helps us to better understand each other and avoid misunderstandings."

(Participant 2)

The advantages of diversity that were observed from the interview findings include increased levels of creativity and innovation. In addition to that, the co-existence of various cultural viewpoints helps in improved problem-solving and better services to clients who belong from diverse cultures.

"When you work with people from various countries, you realize that everything is viewed from another perspective. In addition, you learn to generate solutions that you wouldn't have come up with by yourself."

(Participant 8)

"In my last position, the Greek staff were always ready to accept directions from the manager, while the Italian ones liked to talk and propose solutions. At first, it created confusion, but gradually we managed to work better as a team."

(Participant 4)

Table 3: Indicative Interview Excerpts by Theme

Theme	Indicative Interview Excerpt
Cultural Differences in Communication and Collaboration	"Working in my last company, I realized that the Greek personnel were always expecting guidance from the manager, but the Italian ones used to discuss and offer solutions. At the initial stage, there were some misunderstandings. However, eventually, we were able to work with them better." (Participant 4)
Stereotypes and Prejudices	"There were instances when I had the feeling that I wasn't trusted as much as my Greek colleagues. I had to prove myself more." (Participant 7)
Challenges and Integration Factors	"I felt that initially I could not convey what I had to express. The language and fear of being misunderstood made me more reserved." (Participant 5)
Diversity Management Strategies and Benefits	"Our company regularly organizes seminars on cultural diversity. This helps us to better understand each other and avoid misunderstandings." (Participant 2) "When you work with people from various countries, you realize that everything is viewed from another perspective. In addition, you learn to generate solutions that you wouldn't have come up with by yourself." (Participant 8)

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

The evidence emerging from the current research confirms that cultural differences represent an important determinant of interpersonal relationships and collaboration at work. The analysis of the findings of the semi-structured interview analysis has disclosed that the factors of power distance, individualism/collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance proposed by Geert Hofstede

affect work-related attitudes and behaviors. In particular, it should be noted that the Greek workplaces tend to favor hierarchical forms of organization and hierarchical decisions, reflecting a high-power distance value that is typical of Greek society (Hofstede, 1984). At the same time, it has been found that the value of collectivism and cohesion at work represents an important aspect of the working environment.

The work of Tajfel and Turner (1986) on Social Identity Theory can be used to explain the process of stereotypes and prejudices that develop within an organization among employees of various nationalities. The notion of social categorization and the process of finding a division between "us" and "them" commonly result in social exclusion and affect the smooth integration of foreign staff within an organization. The findings above show that linguistic insecurity, cultural misunderstandings, and the absence of intercultural training are some of the factors that increase the possibility of integration problems and conflicts at the workplace.

However, it should also be noted that the above research emphasizes the dynamic and positive aspect of cultural diversity. In workplaces where inclusive management practices are implemented, it has been found that there is an increase in the levels of creativity, innovations, and team performances as a result of increased awareness of intercultural perspectives. Having various cultural viewpoints together acts as a catalyst to improve problem-solving capabilities in an ever-evolving work environment.

Hence, it can be ascertained that the empirical evidence brought forth by the above study supports the theoretical assumption that cultural diversity may both pose challenges and offer opportunities. In addition, it emphasizes the significance of flexibility and training within an organization.

4.2 Comparison with Previous Research

The findings that emerge from the above research correspond with findings from global sources that highlight that a culturally diverse working environment may result in either an increase in innovation and creativity within the workspace or may result in conflict and exclusions based on the management of such diversity by the organization's framework (Groysberg et al. 2006; Mor Barak 2011). Findings from research carried out by Van Laar et al. (2019), Banks & Banks (2010) show that a lack of relevant inclusivity strategies and inter-cultural training exacerbates stereotypes and prejudices that consequently affect work group performances and work-related dissatisfaction.

In the Greek context, findings from the current research verify the evidence presented by Georgogiannis in 2008 that Greek organisations encounter challenges in the management of ethnic diversity. The main challenge being experienced in Greek organisations relates to low exposure and adverse influence of stereotypes. Despite certain advances made by Greek organisations over the years, certain challenges persist. These include inadequate support services for foreign staff and poor adaptation to new working conditions.

In addition, it is worth noting that the current research confirms the findings of both Seguin et al. (2010) and Banks & Banks (2010) on the significance of intercultural awareness and improved communication in ensuring the successful integration and use of diversity. The

effective management of cultural diversity needs the creation of inclusive organizational policies and improved communication among team members.

In conclusion, it can be confirmed that the research has established that cultural diversity indeed forms a complex phenomenon that can only be turned into an advantage by management that relies on evidence and humanity. The adoption of the possibilities of diversity entails overcoming stereotypes, fostering intercultural sensitivity, and including inclusiveness as an organisational value.

4.3 Limitations of the Study

Although the above research yields important information on cultural diversity within the Greek working environment, it also has certain limitations.

Firstly, the size of the sample may be considered relatively small and accordingly limited to certain sectors. The third factor that may influence the findings of the research could be that it used a qualitative approach that enabled it to delve deeper into the subject. The research utilized a qualitative approach that may involve subjectivity.

In addition, the primary emphasis of the research on national and cultural differences prevented it from delving into the same depth of detail on other aspects of diversity that may also affect dynamic workplace interactions. These may include gender or age considerations.

4.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The future research may include a wider and more comprehensive sample of employees from diverse sectors and regions. This may help improve the overall validity of findings. The research should incorporate qualitative as well as quantitative research methods. The research may take advantage of the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research should provide an overall understanding besides being based on statistics.

Of particular interest here is the role of intercultural training and awareness initiatives as intervention methods, as well as the influence of other factors of diversity such as gender, age, and religion on team processes and organisational outcomes.

Finally, it would be important to research the long-term impacts of cultural differences on employee career development and integration within multicultural work settings.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In the above dissertation, emphasis has been placed on the significance of cultural diversity within the workplace. Attention has been directed towards the interactions that occur amongst persons of various cultures within the working context of Greece. Through research, it has been ascertained that cultural diversity poses a challenge as well as an opportunity within the modern-day organizational setting.

The evidence supports that cultural variations have an immediate influence on communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and team integration. The presence of stereotypes and

prejudices in the form of statements made by the respondents may act as an impediment to fostering an inclusive working environment. The creation of an inclusive working environment by organizations through intercultural training can ensure that cultural variations within organizations act as an opportunity for innovation and improved team performance.

In addition, it emphasized the role of "bridge-building" persons and support systems in ensuring the smooth integration of workers from various national backgrounds. Improved intercultural communication and working on stereotypes represent crucial preconditions for maximizing human resources as well as enhancing cohesion within business organizations.

Although it should be noted that the research has limitations in terms of sample size and representativeness, it still helps to shed more light on the complex dynamics of cultural diversity within the Greek workplace. The needs of developing an overall organizational policy that supports the principles of equality, acceptance, and inclusion vis-à-vis the challenges of the modern organizational world have been identified as imperative.

In closing, cultural diversity is not only a phenomenon of the modern-day corporation but also a factor that organizations can capitalize on in order to create sustainable growth and generate innovations. The successful management of cultural diversity needs constant educational efforts on the part of the organization's stakeholders.

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