

**ADAPTABILITY OF EXPATRIATES' LEADERSHIP STYLE TO
SUBSIDIARY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE_A
COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN SELF-INITIATED AND
ASSIGNED EXPATRIATES**

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract <p>Researchers have agreed that organizational culture and leadership are very complex phenomena. Several studies have been conducted on the influence of leadership on organizational culture. However, the influence that organizational culture has on leadership has remained under-researched. Additionally, various studies have been conducted on assigned expatriates ability to adapt their leadership style to a subsidiary organizational culture. However, numerous international experience studies indicate the gap of knowledge regarding other types of expatriates including self-initiated expatriates. This study aims to fill these two gaps by exploring factors influencing the (non-) adaptability of expatriates' leadership styles to subsidiary organizational culture.</p> <p>By virtue of a qualitative analysis, the data collected from four different case groups of IKEA leaders was compared: Assigned expatriates, self-initiated expatriates, self-initiated transfers and natives. Here I report on nine factors (headquarters organizational culture, subsidiary organizational culture, people being led, motivation, personality traits, role and responsibilities concerning subsidiary, training and coaching leadership style, experience and situational challenges) that are interrelated as well as elaborate on their impact. My findings indicate that self-initiated expatriates and natives exhibit similar experience while self-initiated transfers and assigned expatriates also present similar experience. However, contrary to prior theorems that indicate that assigned expatriates would not adapt their leadership style to the subsidiary organizational culture, my findings indicate that IKEA assigned expatriates experience a fusion, meaning a mixture of both adaptation and non-adaptation. This finding advances the leadership literature by providing a different angle for further research and the international experience studies by furthering the studies on the unresearched group of expatriates</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Many authors have argued for the need for more studies that delve deeper in the relationship between leadership and organizational culture (Ashkanasy et al., 2011; Kargas & Varoutas, 2015). Although there are many factors that influence leadership style, this thesis focuses on the factors that are influenced due to subsidiary organizational culture aspect. Most studies on this relation have focused on the influence that leadership has on organizational culture (Schein, 1985; Schein & Schein, 2017), however, here the focus is vice-versa. The aim of this study is to uncover and understand the vigor to which a change in organizational culture predisposes on leadership style.

This thesis focuses on blending organization study literature and leadership literature while touching on the international experiences. Leadership and organizational culture authors have indicated that there is a gap in studies related to how organizational culture conditions and influences leadership (Alvesson et al., 2017; Schein & Schein, 2017). In addition, authors of international experiences express their concern for research to be directed towards self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) - people who initiate their own international experience. This is because the rate at which young people are mobile is a case that would affect the acquisition of talent and increase competition in the global economy (Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Szkudlarek et al., 2019). Furthermore, few studies have focused on self-initiated expatriates' acclimatization to organizational culture (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). This indicates there is a gap in the studies since many similar studies are conducted on assigned expatriates (AEs). Assigned expatriates are people sent from a headquarter or a home company to another nation for an assignment in a subsidiary. The need to explore these topics in search of studies that had addressed this gap led to the defined topic of this study (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012).

This topic is important due to the increase in globalization and internationalization of companies. Multinational companies have a difficult time managing and controlling subsidiaries especially subsidiaries in other countries other than the headquarters. This due to the difference in culture and difference in the best perceived leadership style. To bridge the cultural gap multinational organizations have been using assigned expatriates. Although the use of assigned expatriates by organizations has seen a decline due to alternative forms of international experience (Kerr Inkson et al., 1997), analysis show that it still is perhaps a preferred option having increased by 4 % from 2013- 2017 (Finaccord, n.d.). Assigned expatriate's role has been reported as the responsibility to socialize the headquarters culture into the subsidiary to enable better control and enable leadership style assimilation (Harzing, 2001). With this role in mind, the assigned expatriates might find it difficult to assimilate and integrate to a point of understanding the culture and the needs presented by a subsidiary in a different country. Harzing's study indicates that an assigned expatriate role supersedes thus limiting the versatility to the subsidiary organization. Research shows that assigned expatriates are less likely to be affected by the culture surrounding the

subsidiary organization (Peltokorpi & Zhang, 2020). However, Ashkanasy et al. (2011) argue that any culture surrounding an organization predisposes on leadership style indicating that previous research on blending organizational culture and international experience is encountering a tension that needs to be navigated.

This thesis has three objectives. The first is to identify the variables that cause the tension and test Harzing's theory. The second is to formulate propositions from the theoretical framework in an effort to explain the outcome. The third is to conduct a qualitative comparative study between AEs and SIEs to assess their adaptability to subsidiary organizational culture and their leadership styles. To see this mission through, 11 interviews were conducted on IKEA leaders which included different expatriates and native leaders in leadership positions all over Europe and Asia. These were analyzed, and enabled the answering of the research question, what drives the (non-) adaptability of leadership styles of SIE or AEs to subsidiary organizational culture.

The research done during this study could serve as an increment and advancement in the relationship between organizational studies and leadership style. This study is distinctive as it acknowledges that a culture that has been predominantly disposed in an organization will have influence on new leadership style while on the other hand proposing that the influence will be perceived differently by a self-initiated expatriate as opposed to the assigned expatriate. This study aims to advance the leadership literature by, providing research data from the opposite aspect in relation to organizational culture which has relatively few studies, making it possible to examine their relation as well as to enrich the expatriate's studies by narrowing down on the leadership style employed by different types of expatriates.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study is centered around three different studies. The primary focus is on organizational studies with a deeper emphasis on the organizational culture. The second focus is on leadership since this thesis aims to link and delve deeper into and relationship between organizational culture and leadership study their influences. Due to the comparative nature of this study, the thesis blends in the international experience studies with an emphasis on the role and motivation of two types of expatriates. These are the assigned expatriates and the self-initiated expatriates. To enable a thorough dissection of the nature of this study, literature on the influence that organizational culture has on leadership style will be reviewed and the adaptive capability of different expatriates to organizational culture.

2.1 Organizational culture and Leadership style

2.1.1 Organizational Culture

Numerous aspects of organizational culture study focus on the role of the leaders in creating and maintaining particular types of culture. Leadership literature suggests that the ability to understand and work within a culture is a prerequisite to leadership effectiveness (Ashkanasy et al., 2011). Although there is not one clear definition of organizational culture due to the ununiformed studies. Some authors view organizational culture as ambiguous (Kargas & Varoutas, 2015; Martin et al., 2006) while others viewing it as in a single perspective unique and unitary, in that it is a matter of shared practices, behaviors, way of thinking, language etc. And still others viewing it as a mixture of different cultures (subcultures, occupational culture and national cultures etc (Schein & Schein, 2017). Due to this, organizational culture has been defined differently in many different studies. Martin (2002) challenges the idea of a single perspective and defines organizational culture as “patterns of meaning that link these manifestations together, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in bitter conflicts between groups and sometimes in webs of ambiguity, paradox and contradiction”. Some studies refer to these patterns as “collective programming of the mind”(Geert et al., 2010) or “basic shared assumptions, beliefs and values”(Schein & Schein, 2017). These patterns also distinguish the way that members of one organization perceive situations (internal and external) and publicly express them from other organizations. This division demonstrates the complexity of the concept of organizational culture. From the definitions, it is possible to confer that every organization carries its own ways of distinguishing itself from other companies in the way it is managed.

Organizational culture has been studied from different angles with some authors focusing on the homogeneous aspect of the culture and some focusing

on the heterogenous aspect (Martin et al., 2006). Heterogenous aspect means that an organization can have subcultures inside it. These cultures can be due to the nature of the industry, or differences in the groupings in the organization. In addition, the culture comprises the surface level elements e.g., the way the offices are arranged, dress code and the deeper level elements e.g., rituals and values (Schein, 2004). The knowledge of the deep level elements usually requires being a member of the organization for a longer period since these require interactions and learning behaviors accepted in the organization. Ashkanasy et al. (2011) have argued that organizational culture is a word that is used in studies to explain the complexity of the way organizations' thinking and behavior differs. An organizational culture can be identified as strong or weak. Strong organizational cultures are cultures that have been integrated into the organization and have been accepted by most of the members and have become the norm. Strong cultures are credited with organizational growth and innovation whereas weak cultures are described as ones that are not accepted by members of the organization and are not innovative (Schein, 1985). This infers that the strength of a culture is important and should be managed carefully. The understanding of the deeper level elements of the culture by a leader dictates the effectiveness of the organization. These deeper level elements are only learned and realized after lengthy interaction with the local people and are hard to learn during short training (Van et al., 2004).

Furthermore, since organizations are based in different nations, researchers have also argued that organizational culture is influenced by the national culture (Geert et al., 2010; Martin, 2002; Scandura & Dorfman, 2004). This can be in the type of food, spoken language, preferred humor etc that a general/majority of the population of a country identifies with. Geert et al. (2010) explain that the national culture is an embeddedness that begins from birth continuing in the home life and throughout our school years while organizational culture is acquired when we work in an organization. Thus, it is possible to deduce that some of the elements of the national cultures will be observable in the organizational culture. Although, Geert et al. (2010) continue to state that some organizations do manage to overcome and bypass the national culture.

2.1.2 Cross- cultural leadership /Leadership styles

Leadership style studies emphasize a relationship between the leader and the follower e.g. (Antonakis, 2002; Bass, 1999; Bass & Riggio, 2006). In addition, the style is expected to differ depending on the situation, the organization and mostly the country. However, researchers are aiming to discover whether there is one universal leadership style that is effective and accepted (Scandura & Dorfman, 2004). The quest to find the most effective leadership has led most researchers as of now to narrow down on transformational leadership style. According to Dionne and colleague's analysis of 25 years' worth of leadership work on leadership quarterly journal, the line of study that has drawn most attention to researchers until now is the transformational leadership style (Dionne et al.,

2014). Transformational leadership is a leadership style that aims at motivating and inspiring followers so that followers go above and beyond their assignment. It is associated with life coaching of followers and improving people's lives (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2016 pg.161-167). Although this leadership style is popular, it has been criticized as lacking sufficient evidence on people's lives that have changed as a result of transformational leadership (Antonakis, 2002). In addition, Yukl (1999) criticizes it as portraying a heroic leadership bias, where followers are dormant in motivating the leader.

Globe studies as well found that although a universal leadership style does not exist, elements of the charismatic and transformational leadership are prevalent in most cultures (House et al., 2004). In addition, Elenkov and Manev (2009) agree with the outcome of the Globe study finding that in expatriate managers, visionary-transformational leadership styles were positively related to strong cultures and innovation. Although Globe study was well received, it has also faced criticisms. Northouse (2016. pg 449-450) states that the use of broad sets of elements in their study would have enabled their findings thus a narrow scope would provide a more reliable finding. Scandura and Dorfman (2004) also noted that the deduction might have been prevalent because MBA studies have become popular globally. It is clear that there is an unintended push for a particular type of leadership style thus indicating the existence of a universal leadership style.

2.1.3 Relationship between organizational culture and leadership style

Studies on the correlation between organizational culture and leadership agree that these two are intertwined (Ashkanasy et al., 2011; Kargas & Varoutas, 2015; Schein, 1985). Though as mentioned, most studies have neglected the influence that an organizational culture can have on leadership styles. Leaders formulate a culture of an organization, reinforce it using rituals, stories and informal interactions and when the culture is integrated into the members making it strong then, the formed culture dictates and guides the kind of leadership that will be prevalent within the organization (Ashkanasy et al., 2011; Schein, 2010). This is observable in the selection process of leaders and in the integration processes (Martin et al., 2006). O'Reilly et al. (1991) noted that newly appointed leaders experience a dilemma after being introduced into a new culture that has already been accepted and is supported by current leaders. Due to this, the new leaders that accepted the current culture found it easier to integrate and job satisfaction was higher. While those who found it difficult to accept the culture found it difficult to perform their job thus leaving the job position. The assimilation and understanding of the deeper level differences such as norms and values as etc. of another culture as opposed to the surface level differences (food, dressing etc.) is correlated with how an expatriate will adjust both in the work and general adjustment.

In addition, organizations view leadership differently, some positively and are driven by it while others are dispassionate and care less about it. It can

be perceived as unprofessionalism or worse as dictatorship (Ashkanasy et al., 2011). It is important to understand how the members of the organization perceive leadership, how different it is from own understanding and adjust the leadership behavior to fit the members of the organization in order to be effective (Geert et al., 2010; Gerstner & Day, 1994; Scandura & Dorfman, 2004). This is because the success of a leader depends on the correlation of cultural values to leadership behaviors (Scandura & Dorfman, 2004) and provides channels to build social networks (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). For example, a leader in a Finnish organization is expected to be inspiring, participative and gives autonomy to subordinates. While a Kenyan leader is expected to be humane oriented, concerned with status and inspiring (House et al., 2004).

2.2 Adaptability of expatriates' leadership style

There are many different types of expatriates. In this study we compare assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates' adaptability to organizational culture in relation to leadership style. Assigned expatriates (AE)- these are people sent from a headquarter or home company to another nation for an assignment (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012) and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) who are also referred to as overseas experience (Kerr Inkson et al., 1997) have been defined as people who initiate their own international experience and are not funded by a home organization. This means that they find a job opportunity outside of their own country on their own doing (Suutari & Brewster, 2000).

In the empirical study conducted by Harzing (2001) on assigned expatriates, she introduces an analogy of 3 types of roles: bears, bumble bee and spider. The bear has control over the subsidiary in relation to cultural operations directly and indirectly and is also bureaucratic. The bumblebee blends the multinational corporation and the host company through socializing local employees to the culture of headquarters while the spider weaves a casual/informal communication links. The study suggests that AEs almost always act in the bear role irrespective of situations however, the spider and bumble bee roles are dependent on the situation at hand. Although this study confirms and is in agreement with the previous studies about the roles being related to knowledge transfer and enabling better communication, it elaborates deeper the correlation between transfer managers and control over host company in the pursuit of a similar organizational culture to the headquarters. In a systematic review Kraimer et al. (2016) confirm that the relationship between the expatriates and their role is to socialize the organizational culture along with creating networks that enable the existence of informal communication. This then enables strategic control and functioning between the headquarter and the local company. Furthermore, transfer of skills and knowledge of cases where a suitable person for the position could not be found in the host country appeared to be other reasons for the transfer of expatriates (Boyacigiller, 1990; Kerr Inkson et al., 1997).

In addition, the findings in Peltokorpi and his colleague study, after interviewing expatriate managers and top managers sent by mother companies from Nordic countries to China and Japan on a periodic assignment, indicated that the assigned expatriates are less likely to be affected by the host country and organizational culture since one of the reasons for the assignment is often to align the host organization culture to the headquarters culture (Peltokorpi & Zhang, 2020). This is in agreement with the study conducted by Selmer (1996) that found that assigned expatriates tend to apply the same leadership styles as they used in their home country. However, one study by Suutari and Riusala (2001) found that the Finnish managers (assigned expatriates) needed to adjust their own leadership style to integrate and adapt to the local culture in order to be effective. This can be explained by the difference in the host countries' culture as one was based in Europe where hierarchical levels are similar, while the others were based in Asia. In relation to the expatriate's country of origin, locals tend to be biased when the expatriate is viewed to have power, thus gaining respect and thus their leadership style is somewhat accepted (Gerstner & Day, 1994). The reluctant nature of assigned expatriates to adapt to the organizational culture can be explained by the nature of the role imparted to them by the headquarters.

The motivation of an expatriate is viewed as another important aspect of an international assignment. This is because it greatly influences the outcome and the effectiveness of the assignment (Chen et al., 2010). It has also been associated with the degree to which cross-cultural adjustment and repatriation occurs (Kraimer et al., 2016). According to Inkson et al. (1997), AEs motivation for international assignment does not initially start with the person but the organization. The organization initiates/suggests and transfers the expatriate. The motivation for an AE is then fueled by the perceived organizational support (monetary, rewards, a raise in the job position, building up global career skills,) (Konopaske & Werner, 2005; Shaffer et al., 2012). In addition, headquarters motivate the assigned expatriates by also providing support before and during the assignment. Organizational support can involve training (cultural and language), monetary (better pay, involvement in high-end clubs, benefits,) support for family members (education fees for kids and spousal support), host support (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Black et al., 1991).

The desire to acquire and achieve a career when one has been provided with an opportunity then fuels the person with motivation and confidence to accept the international assignment (Inkson & Arthur, 2001). In addition, AEs are driven by the job position and the perceived skills and career growth that they will gain in the international assignment in the long run (Doherty et al., 2011).

In comparison to assigned expatriates, there is a scarce resource catered to the self-initiated expatriates. Most of the research on SIEs aim to understand their motivation to move from one country to another (Kerr Inkson et al., 1997; Suutari & Brewster, 2000) and the cross-cultural adjustment (Kraimer et al., 2016). Therefore, there is much ambiguity in this group of expatriates. However, they are considered as a scarce talent with no additional or prior attachment to other organizations (Vaiman et al., 2015). Concerning motivations, some authors have stated SIEs motivation is self-driven with a desire to improve and develop their

career skills and prospects, experience the world and to be adventurous (Inkson et al., 1997; Konopaske & Werner, 2005). Indicating that they have a personality that embraces change and are ambitious. Inkson et al. (1997) study has been criticized as being too narrow because it is conducted only on Australian and New Zealanders people and thus downplays the reality (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Suutari and Brewster (2000) state that, the motivations are not limited only to the ones mentioned above but include other elements such as unemployment and following a spouse to the host country. In addition, Doherty et al. (2011) found that job location and the reputation of an organization as well as the country were great motivators for SIEs. Overall SIEs motivation to relocate is affected by many different factors and it is positively related to the adaptability of the organizational culture and leadership styles.

The figure 1 below shows how these two types of expatriates' identity in relation to the organizational culture affects their adaptability of leadership style. It also summarizes the analysis conducted on prior research, two different factors surrounding assigned expatriates influence their ability to adapt and assimilate into a subsidiary organizational culture: their role and their motivation. While motivation and personality traits are key factors that influence self-initiated expatriates.

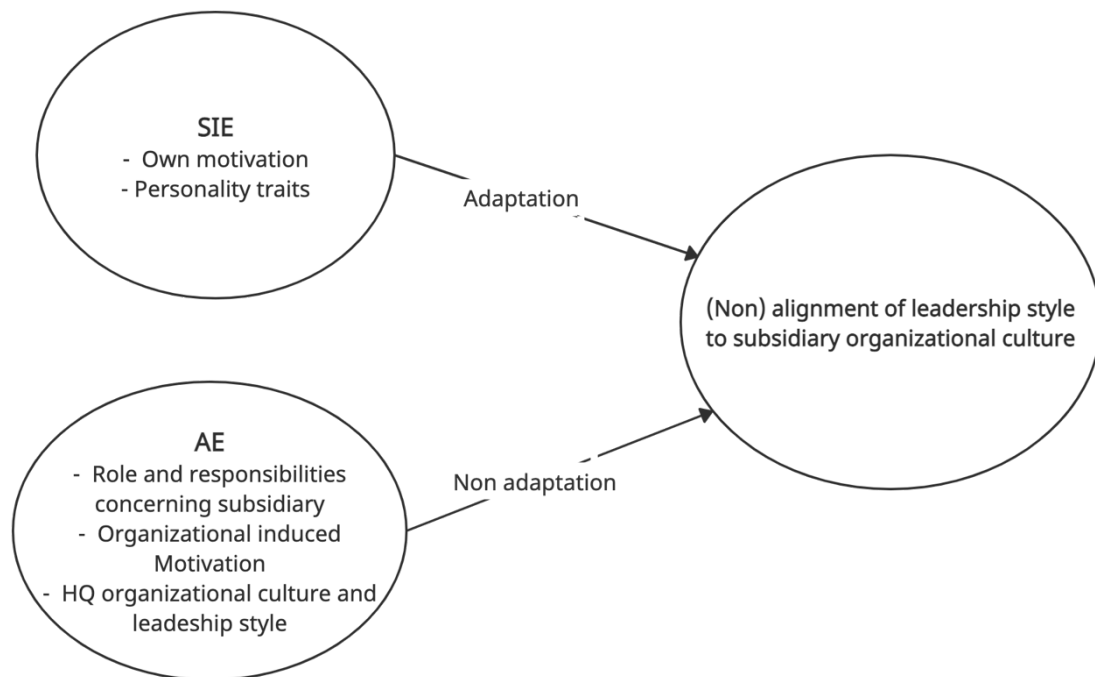


Figure 1. Differences in drivers for SIE and AE to (non) alignment of individual leadership style to subsidiary organizational culture.

In summary, researchers have agreed that organizational culture is a complex concept that is still to be researched and understood. It consists of aspects of the national culture, subcultures and occupational cultures. Although the culture of an organization is created by a leader, the organizational culture dictates the type of leadership that will continue to manage the organization. Even though studies point out the importance of an expatriate to adjust and accept a new organizational culture in order for their leadership to be effective, it is clear that the role of assigned expatriates influences their perception of a subsidiaries culture as weak. Earlier research has agreed that assigned expatriates differ from self-initiated expatriates in their role as they are embedded into the headquarters culture, motivation and the kind of organizational support received. Assigned expatriates role is to enable control over subsidiaries and maintain an organizational culture that is similar to the headquarters. AEs push factors are channeled mostly by the organization and while SIEs push factors come from themselves.

Based on the discussion above about roles and motivation, I expect that the assigned expatriates will find it difficult to adapt their leadership style to the subsidiaries organizational culture leading to proposition 1.

*Proposition 1. Assigned expatriates will probably **not adapt** their leadership style to the subsidiary's organizational culture*

On the basis of the self-initiated expatriates, I would expect that they will tend to integrate and adapt their leadership style to the subsidiaries organizational culture leading to proposition 2.

*Proposition 2. Self-initiated expatriates will probably **adapt** their leadership style to the subsidiary's organizational culture.*

To my surprise while conducting this review, to the best of my knowledge, there is no research conducted on SIEs in relation to how they perceive organizational culture affecting their leadership behavior.

3 METHODS

3.1 Research Strategy

According to Johannesson and Perjons (2014) research methodology is a scientific technique used in pursuit of knowledge. This technique is applied in an effort to synthesis things with an aim to produce knowledge and advance knowledge by contributing to an already existing knowledge. Research involves a strategy outlined purposefully with a phased method involving collection of data, analysis and interpretive meaning (Igwenagu, 2016). Igwenagu (2016) continues to explain that the nature of the study, the focus and the intended objectives direct the appropriate approach and method applied.

In order to capture the extent of the relationship between organizational culture and leadership style, I examine the propositions presented above by analyzing the retrospective perceptions that self- initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates have on the effects of organizational culture on their leadership behavior. This will then enable the answering of the research question; what factors drive the (non-) adaptability of leadership styles of SIE or AEs to subsidiary organizational culture? The main aim is not only to identify the factors but also analyze how the factors influence the expatriate leadership style.

In order to build and elaborate further on the theories discussed within the theoretical framework, this study applies aims to search for cross case comparison strategy (Eisenhardt, 1989). This is because though this study focuses on IKEA as a case company, it focuses on comparing different case studies and purposes to represent the participants experiences. (Gehman et al., 2018). To execute this method effectively, this study focuses on a single case study multinational company and utilizes a qualitative research approach that focuses on the words and observations. This enables and purposefully provides a rich detailed data to explain and highlight the profoundness of a byzantine notion. (Johannesson & Perjons, 2014) This also supplies a comprehensive exploration that enables the study of the relationship of the probable factors (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014). The primary tool for data collection was semi structured interviews and written short notes. Thereafter, a thorough and compound data analysis to uncover the meaning, the significance and its relatability in the hopes of understanding and advancing the knowledge field was conducted. This study takes into account that exegesis of data using a qualitative analysis is subjective.

3.2 Research setting

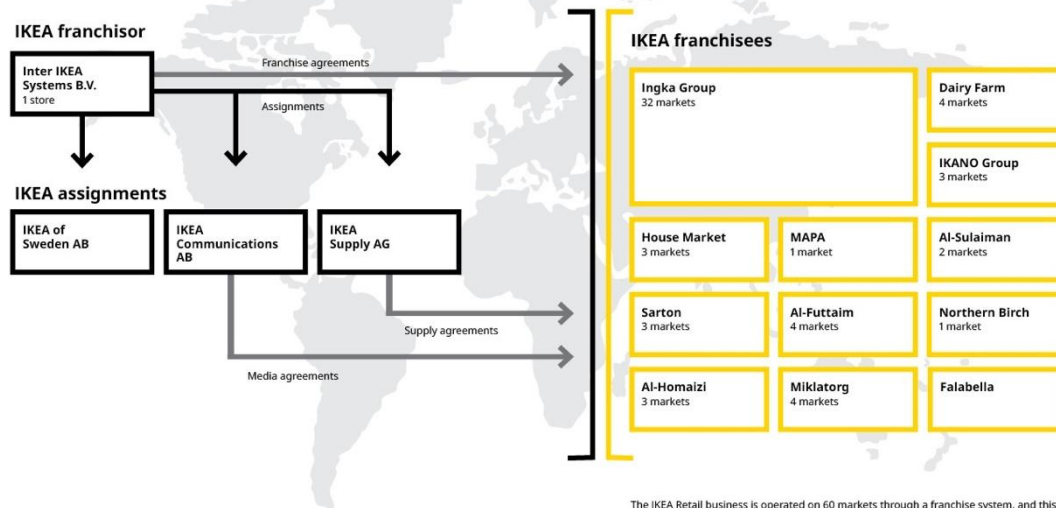
Seawnght and Gerring (2008) state that the approach used to select a case study should fulfil two requirements: the case should have a sample that is illustrative and meet the requirements that would enable it to analyze the theoretical framework. With this in mind, it is useful to mention that an alto university research on foreign owned companies in Finland results found that there are 2486 such companies (Aalto University, 2020). However, in order to narrow down the scope, to embody the needs of this study and to provide a richness of data. I required a multinational company with a local subsidiary in Finland and a company that has a multicultural diverse group of leaders and a mixture of different types of expatriates as a case study. Studying one multinational company would provide an approach to control the headquarters organizational culture. This was not a difficult decision considering I had been presented with an IKEA case study during my study time at the university that showcased the market entry to Japan and their failure in their first entry round and their success in their second try. I had a priori thought on the company, however since I could not be sure that the company would accept my request. I sent emails to 3 multinational companies with a short description of the study and the research question. Amazingly IKEA Finland agreed to be the research context for this study.

IKEA in Short

IKEA is one of the world's largest multinational furniture retail companies with a reputation of excelling in market entry strategies. It has 445 stores in 6 continents. IKEA was founded by the late Ingvar Kamprad in 1943 while he was 17 years of age in a small Swedish village in Almhult and named it after himself and the village where he originated from. Ingvar's vision was to *"create a better everyday life for the many people"* (IKEA, 2021). In the 1960s Ingvar Kamprad documented the concepts of the company in the *"The Testament of a Furniture dealer"* which would guide the company's values for many decades to come. IKEA's core business is retail, this means providing an extensive selection of brilliantly thought out, exceptional quality and easy to use furniture that meets the needs of the many at an affordable price (IKEA, 2021). The core values that guide IKEA are represented as togetherness, led by example, simplicity, caring for people and the planet, renew and improve, different with a meaning, give and take responsibility, cost consciousness and are shaping the path and experiences of every IKEA location.

IKEA started to expand into new markets in 1980 and has since expanded into 60 markets with 10 more planned within the next 5 years. Studies show that this success has been attributed to IKEAs focus on maintaining their culture as a one of their strategies for success through IKEA knowledge sharing and storytelling about Ingvar's passion and values to new employees in the onboarding process as well as through training (*"Ikea Assembles IT Training for Employees,"* 2002). This has proven essential when entering new markets, IKEA uses flexible

replication with a desire that when customers visit an IKEA in Finland, they could have a similar customer experience to visiting an IKEA elsewhere in the world. To accomplish these goals, IKEA utilizes expatriates who are more knowledgeable about IKEA culture to socialize its culture throughout the new markets (Jonsson & Foss, 2011). The figure 2 below provides an overview of the complexity of the IKEA organizational structure and number of markets entered.



The IKEA Retail business is operated on 60 markets through a franchise system, and this infographic shows a simplified overview thereof. Market information accurate as per 31 August 2020. For detailed information please visit inter.ikea.com or about.ikea.com

Figure 2. The organizational structure of IKEA. Source (IKEA, 2021)

IKEA Finland is part of the Ingka group which is a franchisee from the Inter IKEA Systems B.V. Therefore, the principles and values that govern the organizational stakeholder relations are reflected in the franchisee as well.

Although IKEA greatly credits its success and growth to the personality of its founder and to their culture which has been cultivated and remained grounded during these many years. It also credits its success to the tenacity to innovate and recognize opportunities in the midst of vicissitude in the market (IKEA's *Success Can't Be Attributed to One Charismatic Leader*, 2018). Ikea believes in training people that have similar values as IKEA and developing them to become leaders. It also has a culture of circulating the talent that is within the company. This enables the multinational company to maintain the culture and values within their many different locations (Jakobsen et al., 2017).

3.3 Data collection

Since the study focuses on analyzing organizational culture and leadership style. Since IKEA is not a Finnish company, there was a need to understand how locals in Finland perceive the applicability of the organizational culture and the effect it had on their leadership style and why. For this query, the specification for the leaders was that the leaders had to be native Finns with a management position before joining IKEA and haven't been on an expatriate assignment yet. The second requirement was to understand how expatriates differ in their perception of local organizational culture and adaptability. After a careful analysis of the types of expatriates present in Ikea, it was clear that there was a need to analyze not only self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates but also self-initiated transferees. Self-initiated transferees are expatriates that choose to move from one country to another on their own initiative but within the domains of the company. For example, leaders can choose to move from Ikea Finland and apply for a position in Ikea Slovakia. The requirement for the expatriates was as follows.

1. Self-initiated expatriates –These group of participants should have moved to Finland without any prior work experience in IKEA and should have held a leadership position for over 6 months in IKEA Finland and were in a leadership position in their previous job.
2. Assigned expatriates- These group of participants should have been assigned their expatriate position by the service unit to Finland and are currently in a leadership position and have been in IKEA Finland for more than 6 months.
3. Returnees/Transferees' expatriates- These group of participants have initiated their own transfer from different IKEA subsidiaries to the Finnish subsidiary or vice versa and have been in a leadership position for over 6 months.

The six months' time frame was decided upon studies that indicate that experience below six months in a new country or organization would be considered the onboarding period/honeymoon which implies that the participant has not been well acquainted with the role. Over nine 9 months period would be ideal since it suggests that enough time has passed to start integrating and learning to understand the local way of doing things and starting to apply leadership style on grounds (*New Leaders Need More Than Onboarding*, n.d.).

The data was collected by the use of a semi structured interview that lasted a minimum of 25 min to a maximum of one hour. Semi structured interviews provide an opportunity for the participant to express themselves freely. This type of interview enables the interviewer to place more emphasis on the questions that prove relevant to the study due to the freedom to follow up on the questions

(Knapik, 2006). Interviews were conducted on 11 leaders; this group of participants were a diverse group of leaders with different experiences in leadership positions.

The questions mainly focused on the previous leadership experience the leaders had before joining IKEA and their experience within IKEA. The questions also focused on the change of leadership style, if any, that had occurred as a product of working under Ikea. Depending on the position of the participant, the questions roamed from previous organizational culture experiences, differences in the cultures of the countries of the countries they had had their expatriate experiences, how they related to the organizational culture, challenges in expatriation and how the participants handled the challenges. All interview questions had a similar focus on understanding what factors dictate adaptation of leadership style. (See Appendix 1) In addition, video interviews were recorded via Zoom software and stored for analysis. Short notes were also written during the interview as an additional source due to difficulty with the network and for security. A summary of the participants who took part on this study are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Participants interviewed

Participant	Gen-der	Current lo-cation	Nationality	Expatriate experiences with IKEA	Duration of Inter-view	Position Held
Native leader 1	Female	Finland	Finland	None	25min	HR Director
Native leader 2	Female	Switzer-land	Finland	Germany, Switzerland-but not in a leadership position	33 min	Logistics Manager
Native leader 3	Female	Finland	Finland	None	51 min	Leadership and competence leader
SIE	Male	Finland	New Zea-land	Experience before join-ing IKEA	30 min	Talent development Manager
SIT 1	Female	Austria	Finland	Austria	43 min	Market Manager
SIT 2	Male	Finland	Finland	UK, Italy	45 min	IKEA backpacker project manager
SIT 3	Female	Finland	Finland	UK, Netherlands, China	43 min	Country commercial activity leader
SIT 4	Male	Finland	Netherlands	Australia, UK, China	55 min	Regional change and com-munication manager Asia Pa-cific
AE 1	Female	Switzer-land	Finland	Switzerland	30 min	Market Sales Manager
AE 2	Male	Finland	UK	Russia, Taiwan, Lithu-ania, Finland	55 min	Market Manager
AE 3	Male	Finland	Japan	Sweden, Finland	56 min	Market Manager

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of comprehensively searching and exploring collected data by a researcher and interpreting it with a purpose to increase and advance knowledge (Nassaji, 2015). This process of data analysis is important since it provides a channel to breakdown unknown issues to known concepts, abstract to concrete by sensemaking of large amounts of data (Maher et al., 2018).

The data collected was analyzed to provide analytical meaning behind the IKEAn expatriate experiences and perceptions of how the organizational culture influences their leadership style adaptability. This process was conducted using the Temi software to transcribe data and Atlas.ti software to enable easy amalgamation and conceptualization of data.

The data analysis process was aligned to the formalized way of coding that provides a systematic technique in the way of approaching data. The analysis began by transcribing the video interviews using the Temi software. This was then followed by reading and listening to the interviews once more before beginning the thematic analysis processes. According to Gehman et al. (2018) the analysis follows a three-stage step. First step involves reading the data and recording narratives that are related to the study that provide a base for the analysis. These narratives are recorded to provide a close to what was said by the participants and are then noted as the "first order". The second step involves reading the interviews again and adding an interpretation to the meanings of the "first order" narratives. This step also involves grouping the first orders according to common themes noted as "second order themes". Thirdly, the grouping of the themes into larger categories that enable the examination of the relationship between themes in relation to their similarities, differences and how they relate to one another. Henceforth, the data analysis methodology was then utilized with a minor difference where a priori codes (role, motivation, HQ organizational culture and leadership style and personality trait) were already defined from the theoretical framework. This provided a ground for the study, but the analysis wasn't limited only to the a priori codes

Validity and Reliability

While conducting a research study, it is vital to address the trustworthiness of the whole process. Reliability of data has been described as the quality of data collection and result analysis to provide consistency, neutrality, dependency (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and trustworthiness (Seale, 1999). To collect data for a qualitative research, validity can be increased by the use of open-ended interviews and recording the interviews (Golafshani, 2015).

With the intention to increase the reliability of this study, the data adhered to the above suggested measures by prior studies and cross checked the notes taken during the interview, used the video recorded and the transcribed data together for the purpose of data analysis

4 RESULTS

This section of the study depicts the findings related to the data analysis. This section is divided into two parts. The first part shows results related to the factors related to (non-) adaptability of leadership style to local organizational culture. The second part focuses on understanding the courses that each group of participants experience in relation to the factors and alignment to the local organizational culture. One of the main findings of this study was to realize that there are two more groups associated to a multinational company. These groups include the self-initiated transfers and local natives and were also included in this result sections to enrich the study.

4.1 Factors related to (non-)adaptability of leadership style to local organizational culture.

The results from the analysis of the participants responses yielded a list of 9 themes / factors. Namely experience, HQ organization culture and leadership style, subsidiary organizational culture, motivation, role and responsibilities concerning subsidiary, training and coaching leadership, people being led, personality trait and situational challenges. These factors were noted to appear commonly in most participants. These themes were grouped into overarching group category which include factors related to the headquarters, factors related to the subsidiary and factors related to the individual.

The figure 3 below shows the thematic analysis process of this analysis and the resulting categories/ themes related to adaptation and non adaptation. In the first order codes adaptation, codes that indicated adaptation are placed in white boxes while codes that indicated non adaptation are placed in green boxes.

Figure 3. Data Structure on factors influencing adaptation and non adaptation

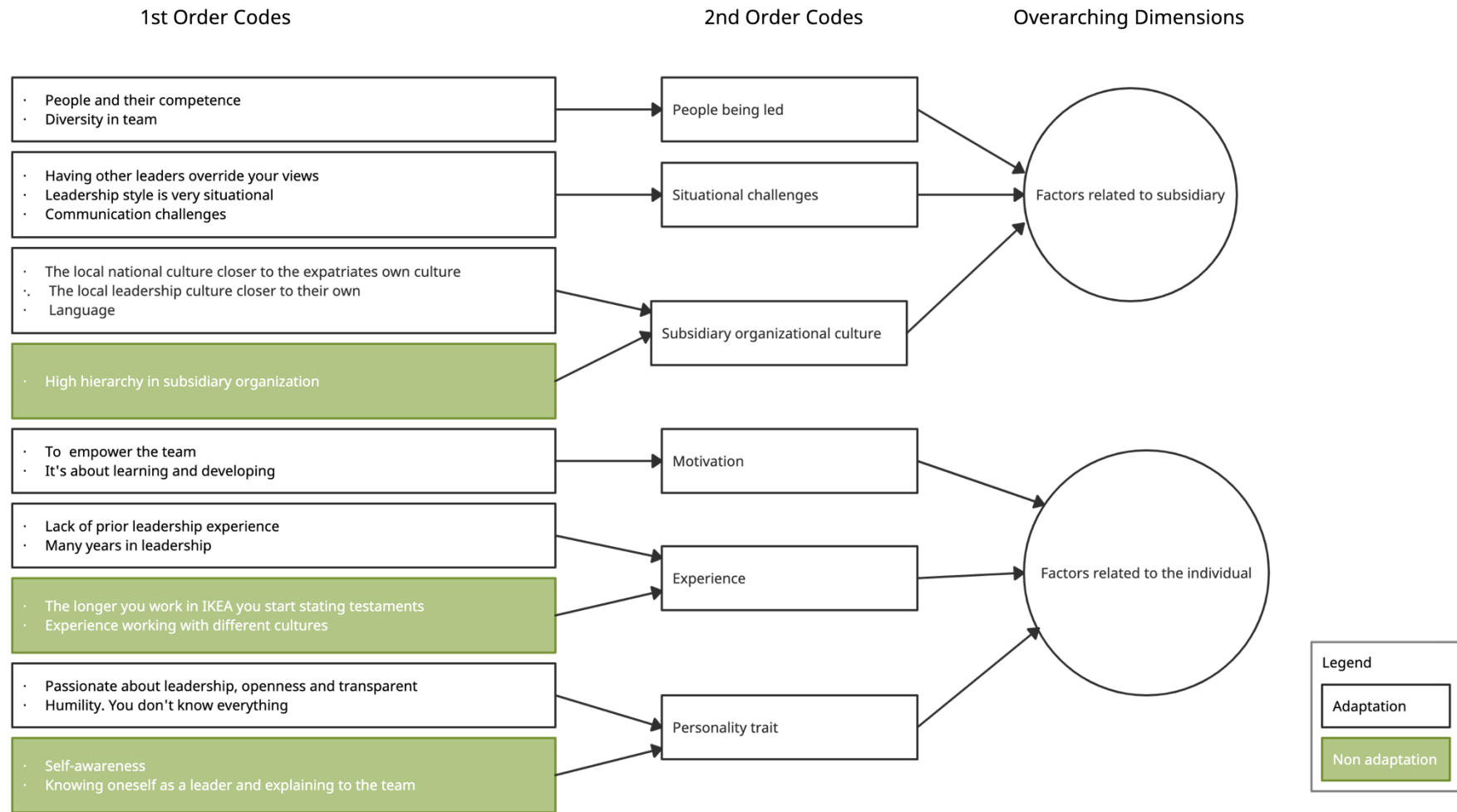
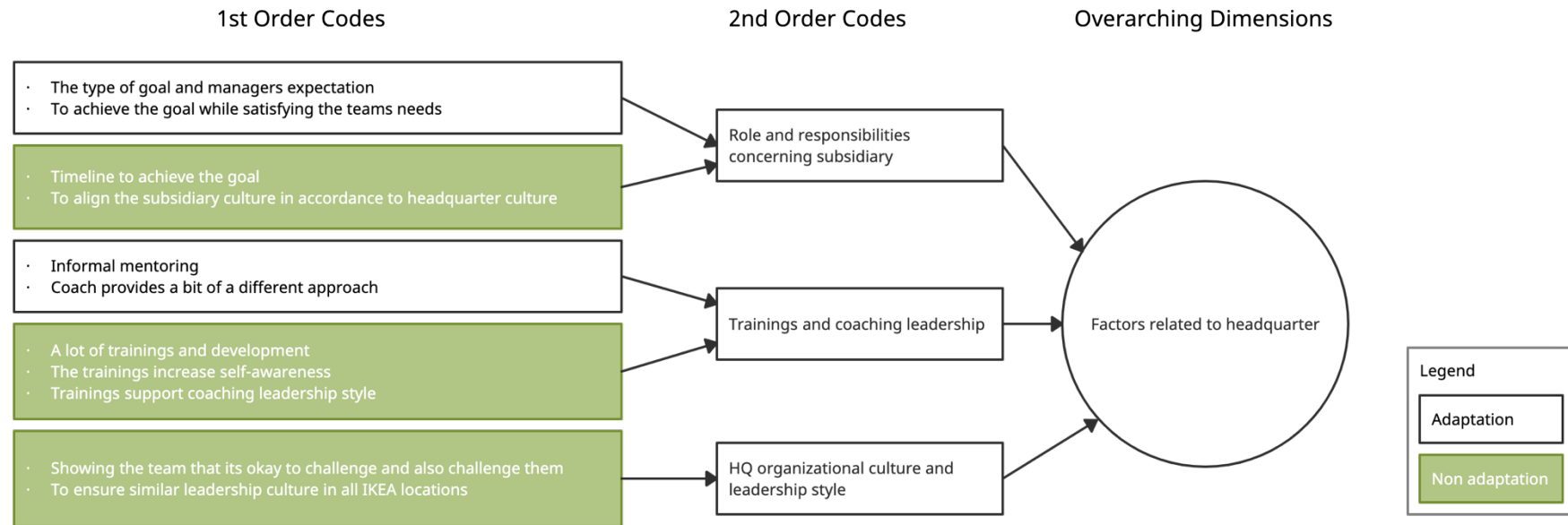


Figure 3 (Continued)



4.1.1 Factors related to subsidiary

People being led

According to the findings of this study, IKEA places a great emphasis on its people's development. Since leadership is about leading people it's not such a surprise that one of the major factors influencing adaptation would be the nature and culture of the people being led. The results indicate that aspects related to the people being led proved essential in selecting the leadership style. For example, how the people think, their preferred communication style, their individual unique traits and the aspects of the national culture that they relate with. Table 2 shows some responses related to some of these aspects. These aspects were not only noted on an individual level but wholistically as a team. In addition, aspects related to the diversity and characteristics of the team, how multicultural is the team, the competence in the team, their understanding of leadership and their expectations etc. One participant phrased it in the following manner.

"Basically, it's people who I am leading, how much competence, how much, who I have in my team and, uh, building on different Strength." (AE 3)

One interesting result was the involvement of people in the team in decision making. Majority of the AEs and SITs stated that the national culture mainly hierarchy had a great influence on how people responded to the expatriate's leadership style as well as how they expected to be led. This was clearly demonstrated as a factor that dictated how the expatriate leaders would relate their leadership style to the people. The results also state that most of the leaders tried to remain true to their personality and leadership style while altering some aspects to cater to the people culture. One respondent state that

"... this is a weak person, and this is not the strong enough, because culture here is completely different. You need to be much stronger, a stronger, uh, in demanding than for example, in Finland." (AE 1)

Yet another stated concerning communicating with the people.

"I learned too that even if it's kind of a high heat, like in communication, it's very high context culture. Um, I can still achieve quite a lot if I just communicate too much and if I am straightforward and if I ask like, okay" (SIT 3)

Table 2: Factors related to the subsidiary: People being lead

People being led

Code: People and their competence

- “They want to feel like their opinion matters or they are being seen, and their efforts are being recognized.” (SIT 3)
- “Basically, it's people who I am leading, how much competence, how much, who I have in my team and, uh, building on different strength.” (AE 3)

Code: Diversity in team

- “But here, my team is not even French. I have people from Italy or Portugal, Spain, Romania. So it's really international team. And it's so different to lead. So international team where half of the team is Italian versus Finnish. You can imagine it's, uh, emotions, feelings, uh, everything, communication, everything.” (AE 1)
 - “I would say that most chances are usually with communication, uh, so that people, um, uh, are understanding the message differently. And, uh, sometimes you need to be careful how you say, uh, say the things, and especially when there is a bigger group” (Native 2)
-

Situational challenge

The results indicate that the challenges experienced in a local organization influenced the leadership style utilized. The results also indicated that the challenges were situational, some were due to the local national culture, function assigned and difference in the leaders-managers opinions, challenges relating to people, lack of experience and multicultural environments. The results indicate that situational challenges were associated with adaptation as a means to overcome and achieve goals set forth. Table 3 shows some responses from participants related to some challenges.

Some of the participants experienced challenges relating to the present global pandemic. For example, the SIE respondent noted that Covid 19 had been a challenge due to his personality trait. He has needed to lead mostly through Team's software though his strength is in knowing the people and working face to face. The results also indicate that the challenges faced dictated how the participants reacted and how they led. Another aspect of challenges that was discovered in the study was overcoming own expectations. The results indicated that the difference in cultures experienced by some participants was quite unexpected. One noted that

"... what was my level of expectation and what was reality and the gap between my expectation and reality was quite large." (SIT 4)

Interestingly, responses related to discussions and communication challenges in the expatriate period since most participants experienced difference in cultures leaned mainly towards adaptation. Below are some of these responses with one response in particular (AE 1) stating the importance of being able to adapt while in a expatriate assignment.

"For example, if you, in a meeting asked for other people's opinions, especially if you're their superior, you just don't do that because it makes you look like that, you don't know what you're doing, or that you have to ask someone because you're stupid or slow or unprepared" (SIT 3)

"And this is, I think it's, you need to adapt you can't, uh, you can't, uh, it's the only way for success. I feel if I'm only doing stubbornly, like I always did in Finland, then maybe I need to go to Finland because you know, cultures are different." (AE 1)

Table 3: Factors related to subsidiary: Situational challenges

Situational challenges

Code: Having other leaders override your views

- “I always had one or two bosses that would overrule it with the snap of the fin-gers.” (SIT 4)

Code: Leadership style is very situational

- “If I moved to a different unit, I will probably need to be in a different grades. It's very situational leadership is always situational and then when I say situational,” (AE 3)
- “I think the leadership style is dictated a lot by what's in that plan because there isn't a one size fits all.” (AE 2)
- “I think my leadership styles being quite adaptive, um, uh, over the period, and it does change depending on the situation that I'm in” (SIE 1)

Code: Communication challenges

- “And after two weeks I realized that it was not clear to anybody of them, but they didn't say it. Okay. So, I've learned to be a bit more controllable to ask more powerful questions,” (AE 1)
-

Subsidiary organizational culture

The results from the participants responses substantiate the influence of aspects of the local national culture such as language, communication, office politics related to the culture and level of hierarchy as shown in Table 4. The green color in the tables represents non-adaptation. Although the IKEA culture is expected to be similar, interestingly the results indicate differences in leadership styles in different IKEA locations, leadership styles that worked in Finland did not work in other different IKEA locations. The majority of self-initiated transfers noted that different IKEA locations have different level of hierarchy influenced by the national culture, although they also noted, that in comparison to other companies in the nations IKEA was seen to have a low hierarchy due to its values. The hierarchy level influenced the relationship between the expatriate and their managers while at the same time influencing how the people being led behaved in the presence of the expatriated and how they expected to be led. One participant SIT 4, noted that while in one expatriate assignment, his managers overruled his ideas without giving it a second thought while his team believed in listening more to the leaders that hired them. This proved challenging and affected his motivation. Similarly other participants had comparable experiences. One respondent stated in response to the hierarchy aspect

“Then of course, the culture can in that specific country need a little bit of a different approach” (Native 1)

and another stated

“Sometimes it's the coaching leadership style in Taiwan, for example, is very different to Russia because in Russia that you're the boss. So even if you said, even if you said something that the person knew was wrong, they would still do it because you're the boss and it's not right. It's not, it's certainly not Ikea, but culturally that's what happens. So, you've got to create an environment where it's okay for these people to push back and say, Martin, that won't work” (AE 2)

The results also indicated that the office politics and social standings which originate from the local culture had an impact on the relationships between leaders and co-workers and the people's behavior towards expatriates. The participants explain that they needed to learn the office politics in order to lead effectively and attain the goals set before them.

Although challenges in communication style and language were briefly mentioned in the situational challenge the results show that it is greatly influenced by the local national culture. In addition, Though English is considered an international language, the result from the study shows that the understanding of the English words is different in different countries. One participant noted that when both the leader and the co-worker's native language is something language other than English the misunderstandings arise. The results show that language

was a small portion of the communication paradigm. The majority of the SIT participants stated that in some cultures giving feedback was considered offensive to the leader and also the people would act like they understood what was communicated while in reality they did not understand. The results indicated that influencing and inspiring people was a leader's role, and that leaders needed to learn how to understand, relate and communicate with the locals in order that goal timeframes would be met. One respondent stated her challenging situation with a new co-worker joining her team saying

"I can imagine that it will be even more challenging after we open the store. And I have, uh, many co-workers that cannot speak to me" (SIT 1)

While other respondents explained that they needed to adapt their communication and leadership style in order to try to curb the challenge as noted below.

".... so, I create kind of communication rules between me and the receiver, because I don't want them to receive it in the wrong way, but I also don't want to start guessing around trying to adjust my style until I hit the mark because they like a behavior that I act out of myself, but it's not close to that." (SIT 4)

"You've got to play it back. You've got to tell it maybe two or three different ways and then listen for somebody to play it back to you. So let me just check, what did we agree?" (AE 2)

"I just need to give them the time and explain them again and again and again, what are the benefits or what are the reasons or whatever to go for this new direction" (Native 2)

Table 4: Factors related to subsidiary: Subsidiary organizational culture

Subsidiary organizational culture

Code: The local national culture closer to the expatriates own culture

- “I feel that lots of similarities between Japan and Finland, we are both shy. People humble down to earth, not maybe sort of talk, we don't value talking something beautiful is the most important we value doing things or important” (AE 3)

Code: The local leadership culture closer to their own

- “... so their leadership style is not different to what I've been working with previously.” (SIE 1)

Code: Language

- “ Then also, maybe it mattered that it was their first language and it wasn't mine that I also felt like I don't always know how to speak to people and these kinds of things”.(SIT 3)

Code: High hierarchy in subsidiary organization

- “I have to say that the, hierarchy thinking is here much more clear than in Finland in Finland, in Ikea, here hierarchy is quite flat. But here it is, it is bit, um, if you are the boss, you are the boss and I, I kind of, uh, obey you and respect you in a different way ” (AE 1)
-

4.1.2 Factors related to the individual

Motivation

All participants mentioned the influence that aspects of motivation had on their leadership career. Interestingly, the results indicate that the motivating aspects revolve around the people being led and the individual leader as shown on Table 5. In relation to people being led, the motivation entails the need to understand and respect people and other cultures, empower people and also provide an opportunity for others to see the best of themselves. To encourage the people the leaders, provide opportunities that people can see their own potential. One respondent stated

“I really need to get this decision through, and I needed to have it fast. What, what would you do? And then they would be kind of proud that they know these connections and telling me like, yeah, okay.” (SIT 3)

Elements related to the individual motivation (the desire for growth, success, feel good, following personal values) were evident, elements related to organizational induced motivation for example monetary support was not heavily present in assigned expatriates however, the ease of moving abroad within IKEA was a motivating factor for expatriation for both self-initiated transfers and assigned expatriates, but did not appear to influence their adaptation and non adaptation experience. One respondent noted

“it was clear for me that if I take the path of a store manager, it really leads me also abroad within Ikea because I, I believe highly that, uh, Ikea needs that we we've really moved from a country to another.” (SIT 1)

While others also noted that their passion towards their role and admiration to the IKEA values, were a driving factor on how they relate with others and how they lead. One respondent noted that

“it's part of what I dream to work with. Um, you know, there, the, the values-based leadership that they apply here, um, is something that's very strongly aligned to, to what I look to be” (SIE 1)

The aspects mentioned above were strongly related to adaptation as the desire to succeed and empower people dependent on understanding the people and the subsidiary organizational culture.

Table 5: Factors related to individual: Motivation

Motivation

Code: To empower the team

- “I look to be able to empower people, uh, where I look to be able to say, I be-lieve in you, um, do what you all way, if you need it, you can lead it.” (SIE 1)
- “... something that worked for me in my roles or is trying to connect people across different functions” (SIT 4)

Code: It's about learning and developing

- “It's been always my motivation that I want to grow more and to be able to grow.” (AE 3)
 - “if you're really motivated and you don't give up, you can succeed” (SIT 2)
-

Experience

In regard to experience the results indicate a paradox of aspects related to experience and adaptation experience. This was evident since the lack of prior leadership experience during an expatriation period led to adaptation mainly because of coaches that are present to guide the participants, while also many years of experience also provided a platform for adaptation for many participants.

"I lived, um, or work there 20 years for Nokia and 10 years of that I lived, uh, uh, in, uh, in China, in Beijing" (Native 2)

The results also indicate that a majority of the SIT and AE participants had experiences in leadership positions before expatriating and the same results apply for local natives and SIE before joining IKEA. However, the results differ in relation to prior experience in multicultural environment and the length of the experiences. The results indicate that participants that had many years of experience in leadership were more confident and self-aware in their leadership style. One respondent stated

"..... nowadays I, I don't feel like that. I mean, I can be my own person and I like that my people are their own persons" (SIT 3)

In addition, the results also indicate that the participants who had prior cultural experience did not place great expectations on the subsidiary IKEA location culture being similar or different. The results indicate that the participants who had been part of the IKEAn family for long, were more aware of the values and statement and managed to caution people who did not follow the values. Table 6 shows these aspects and some of the participants responses related to the aspects.

Table 6: Factors related to individual: Experience

Experience
<p>Code: Lack of prior leadership experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I maybe I didn't have the toolbox of tools to succeed to the level that I expect myself to perform" (SIT 2)
<p>Code: Many years in leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I've had to adapt my leadership style because my leadership style used to be very solution-based because I've got a lot of experience. I've done this for a lot of years" (AE 2)
<p>Code: The longer you work in IKEA you start stating testaments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "... and to, and I think it's, it's also the, um, the longer years you are within Ikea, the easier you it is, it starts to be, to actually start to state those statements as well that, Hey, people, please remember in our culture, it is said that we need to blah, blah, blah." (SIT 1)
<p>Code: Experience working with different cultures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "The shock was lighter. Uh, however that doesn't make, uh, make it all of a sudden easier, but at least the acceptance level for yourself, that's the first stage of denial-acceptance. And that's easier to do. It's, it's rough, it's tough. And you get it in every time you move to a different country or at least I do. And then, um, but, but because you, I expect now a difference. So I didn't expect that the first time I move abroad and now it's like my standard" (SIT 4)

|

Personality trait

Although the results indicate in the subsidiary organizational culture present a struggle for the expatriate leaders, the results also indicate that the personality trait of the leader is related to navigating these factors. The results indicate that most of the IKEA leaders share similar personality traits. Majority of the participants expressed responses that depicted their personality traits to involve respect for people and different cultures, goal oriented, openness, humility, ambitious, holding firm to their own values as individuals, confidence in who they are as leaders and self-awareness. Table 7 shows some of these aspects and the responses to analyzed from some participants.

Personality traits related to respect for other people, wanting to understand people, openness, passionate about leadership, humility, and transparency are strongly associated with adaptation. The results indicate that characteristics related to self-awareness and confidence in oneself as leader, are strongly associated non adaptation. One respondent stated that that calming themselves to remind them who they are is what keeps them from changing who they are as a person in relation to different circumstances and different cultures. Others stated

".. my personal values help me to, to put the, my heart in the right place." (AE 3)

"..... so, it, it takes, it takes a certain level of confidence in your own leadership style. Yeah. When the organization are expecting you to say, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this. Then you say, how should we do this?" (AE 2)

".... so, it's better to stay true to myself and to explain my thoughts and then I cannot, I can control what I communicate to other people control how they receive things. (SIT 4)

At the same time personality traits related to goal oriented and ambitiousness were associated with both adaptation and non-adaptation of leadership style to subsidiary organizational culture.

Table 7: Factors related to the individual. Personality trait

Personality trait

Code: Passionate about leadership, openness and transparent

- "... the quality of your leadership style, its personality, your personal, uh, personal style or behaviour, you know, it's, it's personal, it's not, uh, about, uh, I'm a Japanese or I'm American. It's not about that. Leadership is always, uh, who we are." (AE 3)

Code: Humility. You don't know everything

- "you need to understand that you don't understand everything that they do, but you need to have a passion for the leadership and creating the possibilities for them to do their job" (Native 3)

Code: Self-awareness

- "what was important to me was that I'm honest and I don't pretend I'm someone that I'm not. So I don't want to lead through authority, just, I would like to have the buy-in from a team. And that means we have to create consensus." (SIT 4)

Code: Knowing oneself as a leader and explaining to the team

- "I used to have these ideas that maybe I need to behave in a certain way or maybe I need to, or do I have something to prove? And nowadays I, I don't feel like that. I mean, I can be my own person and I like that my people are their own persons." (SIT 3)
-

4.1.3 Factors related to headquarters

Role and responsibilities concerning subsidiary

The results observed that the majority of the AE and SIT participants were influenced by different aspects of their function in the job position. Firstly, the type of position, the type of goal to be achieved, expectation from managers, the timeframe and deadline to accomplish the goal and socializing the IKEA values as shown in Table 8.

The goal for the expatriate assignment defined the leadership style. It was interesting that one AE participant respondent stated that he needs to allow the people in the team to spend more time in the discussions though that wasn't so much his style in order to meet the people cultural needs so that he would eventually accomplish the goal (AE 3). Another finding was the relationship between the role and the team, the results show that the functions of the participants were to empower the people in the team. These aspects influenced adaptation of leadership style to the subsidiary.

The results show that related to the timeframe to achieve a goal and the situation related to the timeline influence the leadership style. Another paradox is reported where a short timeline leads to non-adaptation while long timeline can provide opportunities for adaptation. One assigned expatriate response noted *"a timeline, a timeline, how much time do I have to deliver the goal"* (AE 3)

The responsibility of an IKEA leader is also related to the strengthening the understanding of the IKEA values. The assigned expatriates and the self-initiated transfers participants mentioned that socializing the IKEA culture and knowledge within IKEA locations is considered one of their main roles. Explaining that IKEA uses expatriates from within the organization to circulate and strengthen the culture and values. This aspect of the function was strongly related to non-adaptation to subsidiary organization culture where differences in organizational culture were experienced. Respondents stated,

"I think it's so important for Ikea that, that we, there is expats that, uh, that we, we really moved from a country to another, so that we can, uh, remind, uh, strengthen this culture and values that we have in this company so that they are not forgotten," (SIT 1)

"... but basically, there's the Ikea leadership fundamentals is one of the fundamentals in, in, in our leadership approach in the company. And that's like my responsibility to deliver." (Native 3)

Table 8: Factors related to the headquarter: Role and responsibilities concerning subsidiary

Role and responsibilities concerning subsidiary

Code: The type of goal and managers expectation

- “.... focus on the, uh, pointing out, uh, clearly the intention and the direction that we see outcome or goal” (SIT 1)

Code: To achieve the goal while satisfying the teams needs

- “I understood their needs, and if I don't satisfy their needs, I cannot satisfy what I want to achieve. So that was one way, try to understand what needs they have. They have a need of this discussion.” (AE 3)

Code: Timeline to achieve the goal

- “I have three months, three months to do that....To change this. It was incred-ibly directive. I knew what I was doing. I'm a concept assessor. So I know what I'm doing in terms of what good looks like. And I just had to tell people what to do. And it was a really horrible three months and a really difficult three months for me because I wasn't convincing people. I wasn't coaching people.” (AE 2)

Code: To align the subsidiary culture in accordance to headquarter culture

- “I think it's also, that's why I think it's so important for Ikea that, that we, there is expats that, uh, that we, we really moved from a country to another, so that we can, uh, remind, uh, strengthen this culture and values that we have in this company so that they are not forgotten,”(SIT 1)
 - “So if you get people that really started to resonate with these values, you can, you can, you can work miracles.” (AE 2)
-

Table 9: Factor related to headquarter: Trainings and coaching leadership

Trainings and coaching Leadership

Code: Informal mentoring

“And especially coming from another company to work with the Ikea, I didn't have the background. I didn't have the knowledge. It's more to poach the oth-ers to find out the right answers to it”(Native 1)

Code: Coach provides a bit of a different approach

“I think I had the first mentor or coach was it, um, three years ago was some-thing so actually not. Um, but I'm a kind of a person who I love, uh, interact-ing with people and I love watching them. How do they do things and, uh, and asking why, why, why, why, and, and really to learn, and then make my own opinion as well about things.”(SIT 1)

Code: A lot of trainings and development

“a lot of trainings and you can also make your own path. So, we have a devel-opment discussion process and it's, uh, what I'm really proud of, proud about that is that it's, uh, it's, uh, my tool for my development.” (SIT 2)

Code: The trainings increase self-awareness

“...with IKEAs leadership, um, uh, trainings, I have, uh, broadened my awareness, uh, about that. Uh, what is actually, uh, my job.”(SIT 1)

Code: Trainings support coaching leadership style

“But coaching leadership is the number one and empowering our co-workers to do decisions. And this is, uh, a very strong man-tra within the whole IKEA. So, so we have the same approach. We have the same leadership approach where we talk about un-leashing intrapreneurs” (Native 1)

Training and coaching leadership

The findings showed the presence of types of training, mentoring and coaching of participants as shown in Table 9. The majority of the respondents have received or are still in receipt of training within IKEA. The results indicate that IKEA empowers and develops its leaders through lots of internal developmental plans and trainings that are available before expatriation while in an expatriate assignment and also when the expatriate assignment is over. Different respondents noted as follows.

"I'm extremely thankful, uh, for Ikea, uh, about all the great trainings that, um, we have a lot of great, uh, uh, internal trainings that, uh, I have had the opportunity to be part of" (SIT 1)

"Generally, we have a lot of training program for leaders, and they were, uh, quite strong". (Native 1)

These training can be in the form of one-on-one coaching or mentoring. One respondent noted that in his first expatriate assignment he had received a coach all through the assignment and had access to the same coach six months after the expatriate assignment (SIT 2). It was also noted that one of the aims of the coaches was to assist in navigating different cultural situations. The results also suggest consulting and discussing with other leaders (informal mentoring) was influential in peregrinating through challenging situations.

The results indicate that the trainings increase awareness of different approaches of leadership mainly the coaching, adaptive and situational leadership style. This result was evident when some of the respondents stated that before joining the IKEA family they hadn't known or used coaching leadership style but through the trainings offered in the company, they were able to learn and operate using the new acquired skill.

Another analysis shows that majority of the IKEA participants believes in coaching leadership and aim to encourage co-workers. This aspect can lead to non-adaptation to subsidiary organizational cultures that do not place the same value on coaching approach. In addition, A majority of the respondents have stated the benefits of the training in their leadership paths within Finland and more importantly in relation to people of different nations and their identity as a leader. This aspect in related to self-awareness which is related to non-adaptation. One respondent stated

".... trainings, have, uh, broadened my awareness, uh, about that. Uh, what is actually, uh, my job, uh, to hear, um, um, I'm not the one who's supposed to be the smartest person in the meeting or, or something that, uh, and this is, uh, really to give space for others and learn to focus". (SIT 1)

HQ organizational culture and leadership style

All participants mentioned the significance of values and the culture of the organization. The results indicate that although IKEA has same values, they manifest differently in different locations. The concepts that arose strongly were related to the oneness of IKEAs culture and the leadership fundamentals that lead IKEA. The results show that the participants that experienced similarities in the subsidiary organizational cultures and the IKEA culture found it easy to adapt their leadership styles. Though most of participants were faced with similar working cultures in the subsidiary location to what they understand as what IKEA stands for, some leaders noted that the actuality and realism of the culture was missing in some IKEA locations. This was evident in the involvement of people, freedom to voice opinions and feedbacks, togetherness. One SIT respondent noted that people were not expected to speak up even though some things were conducted against the IKEA values saying,

“And that is not the way I I've used to work and not, not the way that I think our competence profile even is”. (SIT 1).

However, all in all the findings show that the IKEA values which are recorded in the fundamentals define greatly the leadership style. Since the participants that experienced differences in values, sought consolation from the IKEA manuals and acted from that perspective. Statements similar to the following response

“I seek a lot of, uh, strength also back from our manuals. So that is something in Ikea. We have, um, luckily created manuals about leadership, about our values and culture. Uh, we have the Testament of the furniture dealer” (SIT 1)

“.... but basically, there's the Ikea leadership fundamentals is one of the fundamentals in, in, in our leadership approach in the company. And that's like my responsibility to deliver” (Native 2)

“Sometimes it's the coaching leadership style in Taiwan, for example, is very different to Russia because in Russia that you're the boss. So even if you said, even if you said something that the person knew was wrong, they would still do it because you're the boss and it's not right. It's not, it's certainly not Ikea, but culturally that's what happens. So, you've got to create an environment where it's okay for these people to push back and say, Martin, that won't work” (AE 2)

appeared more frequently. These results indicate the influence towards non-adaptation of leadership style to subsidiary organizational culture as shown on Table 10.

Table 10: Factor related to headquarters: HQ organizational culture and leadership style

HQ organizational culture and leadership style

Code: Showing the team that its okay to challenge and also challenge them

- " I've been asking, uh, from, from the team members that do you dare to challenge me, do you dare to say to me that you disagree? Um, because it's not so, uh, normal here in Austria, that, that people there's to disagree their managers or, or someone in the organizationlevel higher than them. But for me, coming from Scandinavia, coming from Ikea, uh, culture, it's, uh, it's the opposite. Um,Ingvar loved, uh, people who, who dares to say to him that, that Ingvar now we're going in the wrong direction because of this." (SIT 1)

Code: To ensure similar leadership culture in all IKEA locations

- "And, um, and we have a, we have a leadership culture within IKEA globally, and the same culture lives throughout, in all countries, more or less, uh, being leaders." (Native 1)
-

4.2 (Non-)alignment of individual leadership style to subsidiary organizational culture

Using a group participant/theme frequency graph it was possible to identify the factors that influenced each group of participants strongly and which factors were prevalent in all participants. According to figure 4, it was established that the majority of participants' responses indicated that greater influence on adaptation and non adaptation originated from their personal traits- who they are and what they value, the people being led, and the HQ organizational culture and leadership styles. Furthermore, the graph also shows the factors that greatly influence each group of participants assigned expatriates, self-initiated expatriates, self-initiated transfers and natives' different factors were predominantly influencers. For assigned expatriates the leaders personality traits and the people being led, while for self-initiated expatriates the organizational values and experience. Looking at self-initiated transfers the personality trait of the leader and the local national culture while the natives the organizational value and the personality trait. It is also worth noting that factors like role and responsibilities concerning the subsidiary, situational challenges, training and mentoring surprisingly did not score highly.

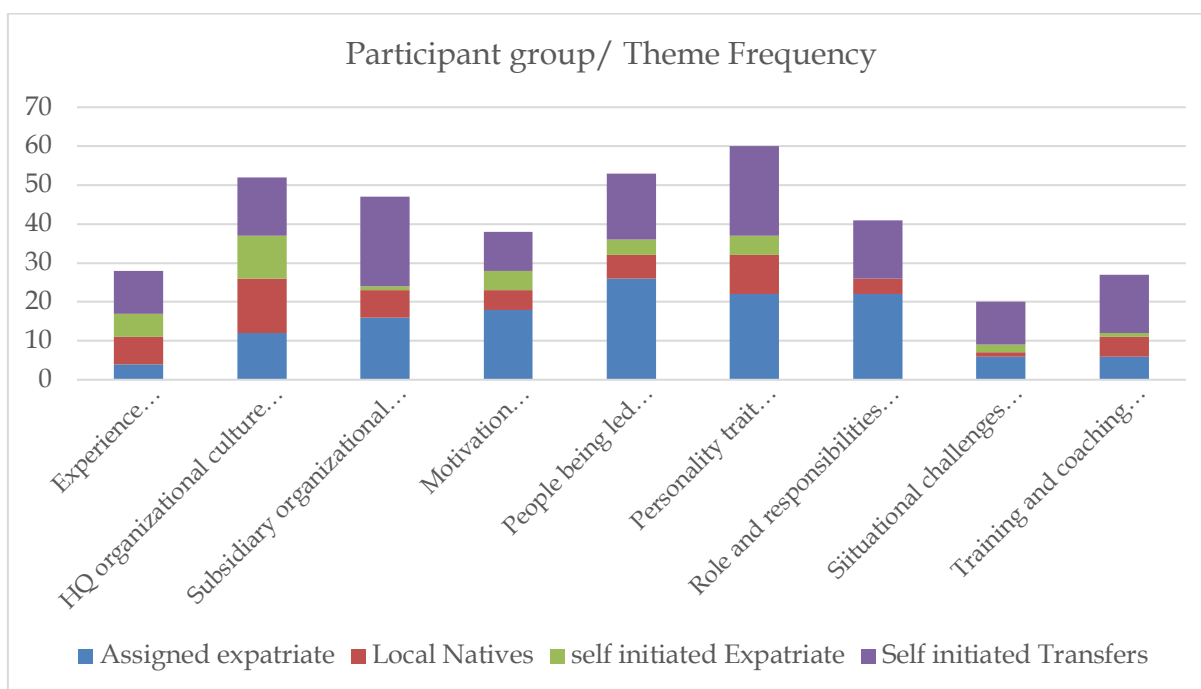


Figure 4. Graph indicating the frequency of the themes for different participant groups

From the graph, it is possible to deduce that factors related to headquarter and factors related to subsidiary and factors related to the individual are all prevalent to all participants. To determine the participants attitude towards that aligning their leadership style to subsidiary organizational culture, statements that displayed actions/ attitudes related to non adaptation or adaptation were analyzed. Adaptation which I defined as statements that displayed actions related to accepting the factors related to the local culture and non-adaptation process as statements that displayed actions/attitudes related to remaining with the previous culture or the headquarter culture as opposed to changing completely to fit the local organizational culture. A new type of alignment was factored in namely fusion. Fusion is the use of a mixture of adaptation and non-adaptation. The result of the analysis shows that natives and self-initiated expatriates tend to adapt their individual leadership style to the subsidiary organizational culture. Another deduction is that most self-initiated transferees and assigned expatriates tend to have a mixture of the two processes which is noted as the fusion process. However, although most SIT participants experienced fusion, the analysis showed that SIT 2 experienced only adaptation during his expatriation period. The figure 5 below, shows the summation of this analysis in order to provide a comparison to the propositions offered in the theoretical framework.

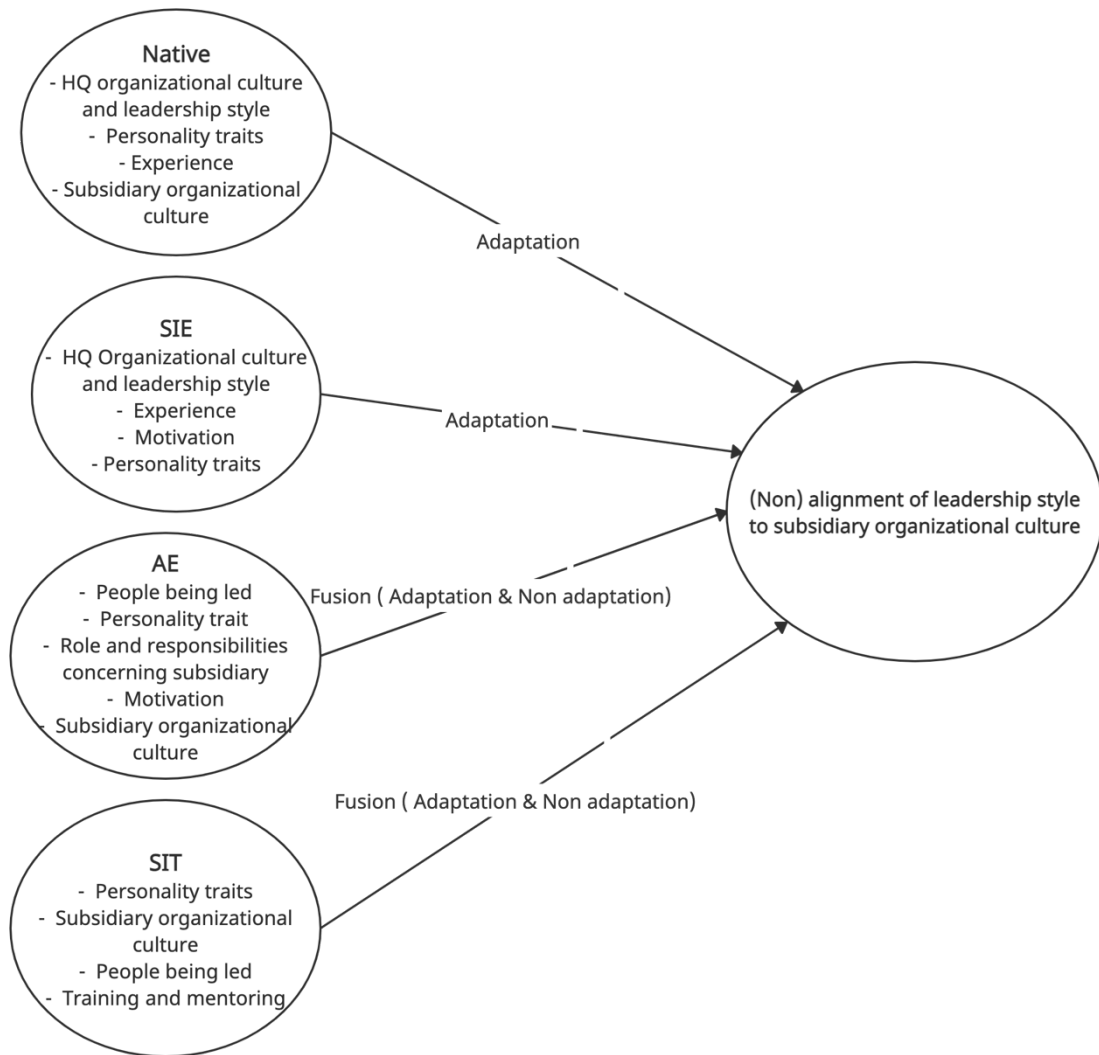


Figure 5. (Non) alignment of individual leadership style to subsidiary organizational culture

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical implications

This discussion section is poised around better understanding the potency that organizational culture carries on leadership style while focusing on the international experiences. Throughout the study the aim has been to figure out the factors affecting (non-) adaptability to local organizational culture and how different expatriates experience the process. Conducting this study required to a significant extent a rigorous analysis of the data to avoid misrepresenting the case study company IKEA.

The results indicate that factors that influence the adaptability of leadership style to host organizational culture can be divided into three categories. Factors originating from the headquarters which involved training and mentoring, HQ organizational culture and leadership styles and role and responsibilities concerning the subsidiary. Factors related to the subsidiary include subsidiary organizational culture, people being led, situational challenges, and factors related to the individual include personality traits, experience and motivation.

These results also indicated that in regard to assigned expatriates these three factors were strongly important. This result attempts to provide a relaxant to the tension between Harzing (2001), Peltokorpi & Zhang (2020) study which state that the role of the AE to socialize the culture supersedes leading to lack of adaptation and Ashkanasy et al. (2011) who argue that the culture embedded in an organization, in this case subsidiary organizational culture predisposes on leadership style leading to adaptation. The results also provide a clearer understanding of how these two theories are related indicating surprisingly that the AEs experience both adaptation and non-adaptation. The non-adaptation due to the influence of the headquarters culture, role, and training while adaptation due to the influence of the national culture and the people being led. These results are probably due to the need to understand the people and their culture in order to attain the goals and empower the people for the future. These results contradict proposition 1 which stated that assigned expatriates would probably not adapt their leadership style to the subsidiary's organizational culture.

In regard to self-initiated expatriates the results indicate that the factors related to the headquarters culture are more important. The results also indicate the SIEs are more likely to adapt their leadership style to the local organizational culture since they consider identifying themselves with the values of an organization as a motivating factor when selecting an organization and country to move to. This is also dependent on their experience and their personality trait. This result supports the theory that SIE are guided by their motivation and personality trait (Konopaske & Werner, 2005) and is in line with the proposition 2 propounded in this study that stated that Self-initiated expatriates will probably adapt their leadership style to the subsidiary's organizational culture.

Although this study focused on two groups of expatriates, the nature of IKEA as a multinational company provided an inclusion of two new groups. These two groups represented the local natives and the self-initiated transfers. The results indicated that local natives reacted similarly to self-initiated expatriates with factors related to the headquarters proving to be the most important influencer and they are likely to same degree to adapt while self-initiated transfers results suggested that they are more similarly to the assigned expatriates. This might be firstly due to the fact that both AEs and SITs are familiar with the IKEAN culture. Secondly SIEs and local natives had no prior experience with the IKEA organizational culture for the period this study is concerned with. This because, though the local natives have an advantage as they are familiar with the local national culture, they are still experiencing a difference because of the foreign multinational company IKEA. Thirdly, the training and mentoring provided for IKEA leaders provides them with the useful tools to be able to adapt to the local culture while still remaining in line with the role and IKEA culture. However, the results also indicated that one self-initiated transfer did not relate to non-adaptation. This is probably due to the fact that the SIT 2 experience was limited during the leadership assignment in the foreign country since it was the first leadership position held. Also, most of the SIT had been leaders for a longer period and had had multiple experiences in different cultural aspects. These results provide new insight, indicating that local natives' leadership style also succumbs to the influence of foreign multinational organization culture.

Furthermore, the results provide another new insight suggesting the existence of a fusion process between adaptation and non-adaptation of leadership styles to local organization. This can be associated highly to experience, the number of years a leader has been in leadership positions and also the cultural experience. The larger the experience the greater the vigor towards fusion while the shorter the experience the higher probability of adaptation. This was clear for the SIT participants that only experienced adaptation. A more plausible explanation for this result would be the SIT lack of prior leadership experience before expatriating and the expatriation period. These results build on the existing discussion on the effects of organizational culture and leadership style while suggesting that the tension between Harzing (2001), Peltokorpi and Zhang (2020) and Ashkanasy et al. (2011) studies could be navigated by embarrassing the fusion concept. Fusion has been associated with intercultural communication studies (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). The results challenge the organizational culture and leadership researchers to investigate the concept of fusion further in relation to international experiences.

Though the main aim of this study was not to find out whether a universal leadership style exists, a finding that was less related to this study but beneficial to the leadership studies was that most of the expatriate leaders stated that the use of the adaptive and situational leadership style in addition to coaching have been essential in their expatriate career. Since coaching followers is an aspect of transformational leadership, it provides evidence to the acceptance of transformational leadership in the ongoing debate. Moreover, in relation to expatriatism

it sheds light on the importance of adaptive and situational leadership approaches.

5.2 Managerial implications

Most value driven multinational companies work to maintain the values and the culture of the organization. The results of this study show that though IKEA aims to nurture the values and culture represented in the testament, it is clear that some properties of some national culture that are not in accordance with the values of the company have managed to slip in and are threatening to corrupt the standings of the IKEA culture. For example, hierarchy. This is one of the major findings in the study. It is important to note that IKEA in a nation that is high in hierarchy might not be perceived as hierarchical in comparison to other similar companies in the same country. Nevertheless, within the IKEA spectrum, the leaders experienced hierarchy as a strong factor that influenced their leadership style. IKEA's advantage comes in play due to the value and emphasis placed on its people. The push to empower, develop its people and the respect for different cultures has proved to be one of their main strategies for a successful expatriating experience.

The results from this study show that multinational companies should take into consideration factors related to adaptation and non-adaptation and to consider the significance of incorporating fusion in order to achieve set goals and experience a successful expatriation. In addition, providing continuous training for managers in subsidiary in order to gauge their conformity with the headquarters organizational culture and values albeit the difference to the local national culture is present.

5.3 Future Research

The idea that Finnish people are law abiding might influence the idea that they should come back to the IKEA leadership manuals. However further research is recommended to be conducted on the same study but from different perspectives. For example, a non-Scandinavian with expatriates moving to Scandinavia or different cultures. The same study could be conducted in a different multinational company for comparison and to give meat to the results.

Further research could take it upon understanding the fusion process and how it influences assigned expatriates and self-initiated transfers from one expatriate assignment to another to find out whether there is an ultimate ideal state of an expatriate leadership style. Though, it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse, it would be interesting to analyze how many expatriate leaders in IKEA repatriate before the assignment end time due to non-adaptation process and

would this provide more knowledge about the (non-) adaptability process and the success of the fusion process.

5.4 Limitations

The reliability of the data was impacted by firstly the number of self-initiated expatriates' participants. Due to the limited data on SIE, the results cannot greatly confirm the theories. This limitation was due to IKEA recruitment strategy which emphasizes growing and developing internal talent before venturing out. Another limitation in relation to some of the participants was the presence of Covid 19 pandemic in their expatriation period. This has reduced face to face experiences with people and has limited the exposure to different factors. Due to this, the results might accentuate different factors while at the same time understating some. Another limitation concerns the depiction of the frequency graph, this is because the frequency would be affected by the number of participants in a group since some groups had fewer participants. Additionally, emphasis on factor during an interview might increase the frequency of a code in the analysis process.

The generalizability of the results presented in this study is limited by the fact that the majority of intertwined participants are of Finnish descent, all leaders held different positions and that most of the expatriates have been groomed by IKEA from entry level to leadership positions. The years in the company might also influence the result.

6. CONCLUSION

As many of us continuously aim to unweave the complexity of the term leadership, the influence of organizational culture is conspicuous. It is important to comprehend how this, and other factors influence differently leader's behavior. The research conducted during this study serves as an increment and advancement in the relationship between organizational studies and leadership style. By analyzing the experiences of some of IKEA expatriate leaders and native subsidiary leaders, this study reported that 10 different factors influence differently on the adaptability of leadership style in regard to subsidiary organizational culture. This was evident since assigned expatriates and self-initiated transfer leaders exhibited a fusion experience which means that they projected both adaptation and non-adaptation experiences. While native and self-initiated expatriates' leaders both exhibited adaptation experiences towards the subsidiary organizational culture they were working with.

Although the findings in this study on assigned expatriates were different from prior studies, this study advances the leadership literature by providing an angle for further research that might enable the simplification of the complexness of leadership while at the same time enriching the international experience studies by studying different types of expatriates.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Interview questions

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Interview sample questions

1. Tell me about yourself (who are you? Where are you from? Educational background, Career trajectory)

Before IKEA

2. What drove you to leadership?
3. What are your successes/ failures?
4. What were the challenges you experienced while leading in your previous job and how did you overcome them?
5. In your previous job what was the role of the organizational culture in leadership?

In IKEA

1. Why did you choose IKEA Finland?
2. How was the integration process both socially and in work life?
3. What have been the challenges you have faced in Finland when leading? Have you felt a need to adapt your leadership style to your current job position?
4. In a few words how would you describe IKEA?
5. What role has the organizational culture played in leadership