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PERCEPTION OF WORKPLACE LEADERSHIP BY FOREIGN EMPLOYEES IN AN AUTOMOTIVE COMPANY

An exploration of leadership styles and workplace leadership differences between Sweden and other countries

Master of Science Thesis in Strategic Human Resource Management & Labour Relations

VIOLA NAGUJJA

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Supervisor:	Thomas Jordan
Examiner:	Karin Allard

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Department of Sociology and Work Science

Department of Business Administration

Abstract

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership styles used by managers in a Swedish automotive company, how employees with foreign backgrounds perceive the leadership styles of their respective managers and if there are perceived differences between Sweden and the countries of origin of employees with foreign background. To that end the study aims to understand leadership styles in an automotive company and workplace leadership differences between Sweden and foreign employee's countries of origin.

Theory: The theoretical framework is based on three understandings. First Alvesson & Spicer's (2011) metaphors for leadership together with the leadership triangle (leaders, followers and context). Secondly, the two leadership styles transformational and transactional leadership, which are used to interpret how the respective managers lead their teams. Thirdly, in relation to the leadership differences that could exist between Sweden and countries of origin for foreign employees, some of Hofstede's cultural dimensions are used to review how culture contributes to the identified differences.

Method: A qualitative study based on in-depth open-ended interviews that took a narrative and interpretative approach was conducted. The study involved 15 interviews in total at an automotive company. 13 with foreign employees who are engineers and 2 interviews were conducted with 2 HR informants to understand the leadership strategy and support available for managers to fulfil their leadership duties. The sample included interview participants with 3-15 years of automotive experience who have worked and lived in Sweden for at least 3 years. In addition the participants had worked in automotive industries in their home countries.

Results: In meeting the purpose, this study revealed that transformational leadership is more used in the automotive company than transactional leadership. Respondents' descriptions of their respective managers fit with three metaphors according to Alvesson & Spicer's typology (the Saint, the Buddy and the Gardener). The study further revealed the existence of leadership differences between respondents' countries of origin and Sweden in aspects like hierarchy, female managers, knowledgeable managers and distributed leadership being used.

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Leadership is performed in every organisation but only effective leadership leads to successful organisations and with non-effective leadership organisations tend to perform less well and are even exposed to the risk of losing their way (Garg & Jain, 2013). Effective leadership calls for leaders who are more transformational than transactional which supports employee motivation and fosters positive attitudes at a workplace, among others things (Benjamin et al, 2001), but also creates room for sufficient communication in the organisation through openness where each person clearly knows what the vision is and how to reach the vision.

Skill-full leadership is one of the primary factors that is responsible for the physical and psychological well-being of employees and once the well-being is good then the organisation is impacted positively in a way that employees perform better thus enabling the organisation to attain sustainable competitive advantage (Crede et al, 2019). Leadership can be experienced in different sectors like political, religious and social (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011), but here the focus will be on leadership in an automotive company based in Sweden which will be kept anonymous.

The world at large is experiencing increased migration (Bradley & Healy, 2008), thus it is highly relevant to explore how the leadership style prevalent in a country like Sweden is actually experienced by employees with a background from other countries, where leadership styles might be different. This will be the core of this thesis since less attention has been given to the fact that people who migrate to Sweden from societies might perceive the Swedish leadership styles differently compared to the leadership styles used in their home countries.

Almarie (2011) explains the relationship between cultural differences and leadership styles where cultural attitudes, belief, norms and values define the behaviours of the leader and

follower. This implies that particular traits a leader exhibits depend on his/her society settings which means that when people migrate to a country they have a particular picture of leadership in mind which might differ with the one that exists in the country they have migrated to.

It is important to understand that leadership draws a line which determines the difference between successful and struggling organisations. This can be explained more by looking at the fact that no matter how good the strategies used by a firm are, it is mostly through skillful leadership such drafted strategies can be implemented. However, the leadership aspect is unclear since we can see a shift from how it was perceived in the traditional days where one was considered a good leader with a military character by taking command and acting courageous (Garg & Jain, 2013), but today a good leader is seen as one who is engaging and involving his/ her employees in the organisational processes rather than using a military style. This brings us to Alvesson and Spicer's (2011) leadership triangle which involves three major elements namely leaders, followers and context (see chapter 3 below). This can help understand the complexity associated with the leadership aspect since the triangle relates links and connects with each other.

According to Jeffrey Pfeffer (2013) there are some processes that will always still be relevant and can't be affected by modern trends and leadership is among those processes since it's found in any biological and social organisation. Pfeffer (2013) further explains how the young generation doesn't believe in the existence of hierarchy at a workplace but still explains that hierarchy will always exist, it may just be invisible or indirect.

The shift in how a leader was viewed in the past to now is very evident thus categorising who a leader is depending on a particular situation (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011): either people-oriented, task-oriented and the idea of situational leadership, i.e. that it is a good thing to adapt the leadership style depending on a particular situation, using different styles for different conditions. According to Fernando (et al 2007), task-oriented leaders plan in detail how to accomplish specific tasks or projects in a way that each employee is given clear responsibilities in regard to the project and is expected to follow the guidelines to avoid delays and wasting resources, which means that the leader is fully in charge of identifying what resources will be used by whom, when, where and why. Here leaders tend to use the transactional leadership style. One the other, hand people-oriented leaders focus more on the relationship with the employees in a way that leaders encourage and support the employees

even when they experience work-related stress. The leader ensures that before any decision is taken the employees are consulted to offer their suggestions which creates a sense of belonging and involvement for the employees, thus creating openness at the workplace and this connects clearly to the transformational leadership style (Fernando et al, 2007). However, there are leaders who stick to one single style even when operating in a different context, which in the end opens room for destructive leadership.

Leadership is an important aspect as people work in groups/teams in a way that the leader ensures that all team members work towards the same goals. Working in teams is of great importance since each person has unique capabilities and with proper leadership the team can maintain its goal direction and thus achieve effectiveness and efficiency (Stogdill, 1974). A dedicated effort was made to find related studies about how foreign employees perceive leadership style(s) in Sweden, but there seemed to be not much amidst increased levels of globalisation which in the end sees foreign employees being hired in different industries, so in the section of previous studies the focus will be on how leadership is understood, perceived by employees and also what leadership styles are common in certain countries.

1.2   Problematisation

Today the world at large is experiencing trends like high levels of migration, increasing diversity and globalisation (Bradley & Healy, 2008). Due to different perspectives to problem solving organisations experience several changes like new technology, flexibility, and feminisation (Bradley &Healy, 2008), but it is only through the practice of effective leadership the above trends and changes can be dealt with, since they are associated with challenges like providing a common mission, setting clear objectives and providing a strategic direction. This has led to a shift from leadership by top management to leadership by line managers (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Thus it is the responsibility of line managers to transform employees' potential and their rich diverse perspectives into reality. This means that today's organisations consider having competent line managers as a strategic action since the line managers supervise employees on a daily basis. Furthermore line managers play a big role together with the Human Resource department to ensure that the organisation not only hires the best talent but also retains its talents.

The aspect of migration involves movement of people from one place (country) to another due to several reasons like political instability, financial/economic crisis, family reunion, work opportunities, further education, among others. According to Bradley and Healy (2008),

migration has five trends, namely;- globalisation of migration, acceleration of migration, differentiation of migration, politicisation of migration and lastly feminisation of migration. This has seen people move from different countries to Sweden in search for better job opportunities. As stated by the Swedish Migration Board there has been an increase of foreign employees being hired in the automotive industry from the 1960s, however this increase even accelerated highly from 2015 up to this date (Migrationsverket, Work permit statistics, 2020). In fact, to facilitate the increase of foreign worker migration in key sectors like the automotive industry the Migrationsverket introduced fast track work permits that are issued within 20 days for certified companies (Migrationsverket certified employer, 2020). This makes it relevant to consider that Sweden's work place leadership particularly in the automotive industry might differ from that of other countries, thus the need to understand leadership styles used in automotive industry and workplace leadership differences between Sweden and other countries. This is particularly very important to understanding and unleashing foreign employee's potential and their rich diverse perspectives into reality to accelerate continued growth in the Swedish automotive industry.

1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership styles used by managers in an automotive company, how employees with foreign backgrounds perceive the leadership styles of their respective managers and if there are differences in leadership styles between Sweden and the respondents' countries of origin. To that end the study aims to understand leadership styles in a Swedish automotive company and workplace leadership differences between Sweden and other countries. To reach this aim the following research questions will be explored:-

RQ1: How do employees with a foreign background experience the leadership styles of their managers in the automotive company?

RQ2: What differences, if any, in leadership styles exist between Sweden and their countries of origin, as perceived by the respondents?

2
Earlier Studies

This section explores earlier studies on how leadership is understood, perceived by employees and some of the leadership styles different countries use as explained below :-

Leadership can generally be defined as a process that involves leading people, teams, community and organisation. Leadership can be experienced in different sectors like political, religious and social (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011), but here the focus is on leadership at workplaces. Today globalisation is increasing thus creating a competitive business environment calling for effective leadership for companies to sustain their competitive position (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014).

Leadership involves a leader who is in charge and followers (employees) who are being lead. According to Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2014) an effective leader is one who can influence his/her followers and drive them towards a desired direction which might sometimes call for a leader to use different leadership styles. Leadership style refers to understanding the patterns of behaviour associated with the leader. Bass (1985) categorised leadership styles in two distinct styles; transactional and transformational leadership. Furthermore Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2014) explains that different leadership styles have different impacts on employees and organisations, impacts include job satisfaction, high performance, emotional intelligence, builds bond between leaders and employees thus open and clear communication and proper utilisation of resources.

Several researches like Crede et al. (2019), view leadership as a primary factor to employee well-being, which means that poor leadership has negative effects like work stress, poor employee retention and less productivity, while good leadership has positive effects like increased emotional intelligence, improved ability to succeed under pressure and growth of confidence in teams. This means that a leader has a big role to play throughout this leadership process and thus must exhibit different practices which led to him/her being categorised either a people-oriented or a task-oriented leader.

Another important aspect in leadership research is the level of participation offered by the leader. Participation refers to the ability a leader or manager has in involving his/her

followers in decision-making since it is the followers that ensure that decisions are implemented (Yukl, 1998). When there is less participation it reflects to autocratic leadership in a way that the leader makes all the decisions and followers don't question them but rather instead just do as they are told. On the other hand more participation is understood as democratic leadership since here both leaders and followers discuss what strategies are best, which creates room for responsibility and empowerment of followers. (Yukl, 1998).

Blickle (2003) explains that most organisations are shifting from a commanding leadership approach to a persuading approach in a way that a leader has more responsibility to drive and influence employee skills towards reaching organisational and individual goals than having the authority to command employees to perform specific tasks. This improves the levels of employee commitment (Stum, 1999), since the leader is supporting, influencing, motivating and assisting employees as they work daily.

Swanepoel et al, (2000) highlight the importance of organisations to use leadership styles that establish employee engagement and involvement to ensure that employee loyalty is attained which will help the organisation to retain its employees hence a strategic action to outcompete rivals. This means that it is the responsibility of managers to create a safe workplace where trust and communication are values that managers use to supervise team members. Effective leadership plays a big part as teams accomplish tasks since even at times of conflicts the manager or leader ensures that the misunderstanding is solved immediately to avoid conflict escalation which might have negative impacts for the team.

Different countries across the world use diverse leadership styles since leadership is influenced by culture (Gholamreza et al, 2010). In different regions, including China, Japan, U.S.A, Europe, and Arab countries leaders inspire followers to recognize desirable ways in which leaders tend to manage successful teams (Zahedi, 1999), meaning that in all cultures, two kinds of leaders (task or people oriented) exist so people of different cultures have different expectations from their managers. For example in the Swedish context, a manager is not expected to know everything about a project, but in a country like Japan it's a necessity for a manager to know, this applies also in the French context where a manager should offer accurate and clear answers to his/her followers as a way of preserving credit among them (Mandanghal, 1995).

Autocratic leadership is more acceptable and effective in large power distance countries like Malaysia, Mexico, France, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates among others. This

leadership gives leaders at a workplace more power and authority over their followers in a way that decision-making is from top to bottom (Gholamreza et al, 2010). On the other hand democratic leadership is suitable for small power distance countries like Sweden, Denmark and Norway among others, where managers are friendly, give followers a chance to exercise their own judgement in how to do things and openly let their followers know what they think of them and whether the followers have met their needs and expectations.

In Asian countries like Japan and China due to hierarchical relationship, managers tend to control affairs and don't allow their followers to participate (Sun, 1980). Here superiors don't believe that there is something their inferiors can bring on the table in matters of decision-making. The followers perceive their leaders as people, who are always serious even when Japan seems to be shifting from the traditional leadership, some standards still remain constant (Gholamreza et al, 2010). In brief leadership at a workplace differs depending on the context because it's like the guideline of how a leader ought to act and how followers expect to be lead.

3
Theoretical Framework

This section discusses the theory used for analysis. Alvesson & Spicer's (2011) Metaphors for leadership together with the leadership triangle (leaders, followers and context) are discussed, then followed by the two leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and lastly two of Hofstede's et al., (2010) cultural dimensions including some critical perspectives on Hofstede's framework.

3.1 Motivation for selecting the particular frameworks

Based on the purpose of this study, to try understanding what leadership styles are used in the automotive company, both transformational and transactional leadership styles will be explored in depth but also in order to understand why they are used.

Secondly, Alvesson & Spicer's (2011) Metaphors for leadership will be used as tools to identify and interpret how employees describe their leaders. The metaphors will be used as analytical tools of what's happening in the automotive company since they can be realistic/critical in a way that leadership approaches can be approached by applying the metaphor filter. The leadership triangle will be used to understand the relationship between leaders, followers and context.

Thirdly to explore differences in leadership that exist between Sweden and other countries of origin for the foreign employees, two of Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be considered because according to Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2014) leadership is largely cultural orientated, through traditional beliefs, norms and values and leadership style is influenced by the leader's close and extended family, clan and tribe depending on a particular context.

3.2 The leadership triangle
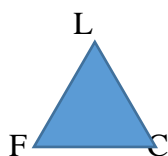
Figure 1: The leadership triangle.

This leadership triangle is about three components (L for leaders, F for followers and C for context) that are relevant for one to understand the leadership complexity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). All the three components are important and link to each other for example leaders are influenced on how to manage their followers depending on what a particular context demands. But also followers determine the behaviour or attitudes of their leader.

Leaders (L). At times we ask ourselves when the word leadership is mentioned, are leaders born or made? According to Alvesson & Spicer (2011:23), "leaders can be transformational, or transactional, people-oriented or task-oriented". It's difficult to categorise the leader since often times a leader can be people-oriented or task-oriented depending on what a particular situation requires the leader to be. However, some leaders get too attached to one leadership style even when there is need for a different style which makes work difficult for them. Leaders must be flexible to use different styles to ensure that their followers are directed well and deal with the inevitable changing work environment (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Below is a brief summary that can differentiate task-oriented leaders and people-oriented leaders

Traits of Task-oriented leaders

- Inform employees (followers) of the plans and tasks.
- Offer directions and instructions to the followers on how to accomplish the tasks.
- Determine accurate and clear timeline for accomplishing the tasks.
- Always aware of necessary work equipment required to get the task done.
- Expect the followers to report their work progress.
- Lead the followers to work in specified time frame.
- Don't tolerate time wastage since it might result into unsuitable planning.
- Lead the followers to work in their maximum capacity and ability

Traits of People-oriented leaders

- Improve working facilities of the followers.
- Focus on understanding attitudes of the followers.
- Aim at knowing the beliefs of followers.
- Behave justly and fairly towards the followers which is imitated in the followers' behaviours towards each other which makes communication open and easy.

- Deal with personal problems that followers experience like for example a follower who needs to work from home due to some reasons can easily discuss it with the leader.
- Trust the followers since there is a continuous relationship/bond built.
- Support the future work of followers like through approving trainings.
- Recognize the good performance of followers.

Followers. To fully understand the ambiguity of leadership it is essential to consider the followers. Today it is visible that followers are engaged in the actions that leaders provide, rather than just following or implementing what the leaders decide like how it was in the past (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Therefore it is vital to have an existing working interaction/relationship between the leaders and followers. (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

Context, which looks at societal conditions, at the way individuals are raised and at how culture affects the leadership, technological changes and how the organisation reacts. In some countries like Denmark, Sweden the context of leadership calls for leaders to be engaging with followers thus a self-management approach. But in other countries, for example African societies, the leader decide what his/her followers have to do (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). This component is of great importance since the researcher is trying to explore leadership styles used in the Swedish context and how foreign employees perceive the leadership considering the fact that they come from different countries (context).

3.3 Leadership styles

The concepts transactional and transformational leadership is a well-known and much used distinction in leadership studies according to Bass (1985).

Transformational leadership involves leaders who concentrate more on the development of employees as well as their needs in a way that the leader upholds the employees' interest through taking employee voice into consideration which creates a sense of involvement and belonging, thus individual motivation and actively influencing both individual and organisational outcomes like high performance and employee satisfaction (Andresson & Sun, 2017). This leadership style is mostly used in high performing organisations and government organisations, but also it is evident that women show higher levels of transformational leadership as compared to men (Andresson & Sun, 2017). According to Bass (1985) transformational leadership is developed on a model of four dimensions namely:-

Inspirational motivation.- Here the leader articulates a vision which inspires and motivates his/her employees to work beyond expectations by providing support, encourages employees to look at challenges with a new perspective, which prompts employees to invest more effort and time in their tasks. Through this, team spirit is enhanced since employees have the ability to meet their duties.

Intellectual stimulation.- This involves leaders challenging assumptions that are already existing and stimulate employees to create and innovate new ideas and approaches that will help develop the organisation.

Individualized consideration.- This focuses on the extent to which leaders attend to the needs of the employees since the followers look at the leader as a mentor or coach, so the leader must listen attentively to each follower's situation, needs and background.

Idealized influence.- This looks at the ability for leaders to display high standards of both ethical and moral conduct which is admired by the followers. Here leaders are seen as role models, respected and trusted by the employees.

Transactional leadership focuses more on the leader promoting compliance by followers through both rewards and punishments in a way that the leader validates the relationship between performance and reward, then exchanges it for appropriate response which encourages employees to improve performance. Task completion is the leader's big target and followers are compensated for meeting specific goals through use of rewards, corrective action and rule enforcement which keeps followers motivated only for a short period of time (Arnold, 1998).

According to Bass (1985) transactional leadership has three concepts all looking at the social transactions between the leader and follower. The leaders have an influential relation with the followers and tend to manage them formally through rewards and sanctions. The three concepts include;

Contingent reward.- Here the leader clearly communicates what each employee's duties are to be performed and what the followers will receive once the expectations are met. So the leader keeps an eye on the performance of each employee based on specific tasks and targets set.

Active management-by-exceptions.- Here the leader focuses on monitoring task execution for any problems that might arise for example ensuring that resources for required tasks are available.

Passive management-by-exceptions.- This involves the leader maintaining the status quo through attending to only those problems that are serious and a big threat to task completion.

3.4   Metaphors of Leadership

The Leadership styles can be approached and described through applying a metaphor filter. Metaphors are tools used to seize the ambiguity of leadership and make it apprehensible in our communication and sharing of ideas, thoughts about leaders, but also to seize the real 'doings' of leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Thus, the interesting part is to apply metaphors with the aim of understanding how people frame and describe leadership, how they understand it, and then how it connects to the socially desirable attributions based on how leaders are viewed which could be good and bad for different actors in different contexts. Alvesson & Spicer (2011) describe different metaphors, namely good (saint, buddy, gardener) and bad (commander, bully, cyborg), but each metaphor is divided into sub-metaphors which enable scholars to clearly categorise the leadership style.

The Saint metaphor is a leader who is always there for his/her followers with morality and empowerment aspects (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011) in a way that even in stressful moments at work the leader has the inner strength to control the environment. Here the leader is even willing to involve him/herself in risky behaviours and decisions to ensure that the followers reach the organisation's goals. The leader also exhibits respect, engages in the lives of followers, thus creating openness between them both, and treats followers equally among others. This metaphor is divided into sub-metaphors namely "the Inner moral super Wo/Man, the Martyr, the Champions of the great cause, the Good guy (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011:62-65).

The Buddy metaphor involves a leader doing their best to befriend his/ her followers aiming at making them feel good considering how stressful a workplace can be. Through caring the leader can increase the performance of followers thus reaching organisational goals. This metaphor is associated with aspects like cheering, including, safeguarding and being there for people with the purpose of making subordinates feel good (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). In

addition this metaphor is divided into sub-metaphors namely "the Party host, the Equal, the Ombudsman (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011:106-110).

The Gardener metaphor views a leader as one responsible for establishing a workplace that results into growth and coaches his/her followers. It's more like a gardener who doesn't stop at planting fruits but ensures that the fruits are planted on the soil that is weeded and watered to ensure that the fruits harvested are the best (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). It is the duty of a leader to not only hire the best talents but also ensure that the talents are retained through motivation aspects like fair working conditions, better salaries and providing continuous training programmes. The metaphor is seen as a leader being the power behind the growth of followers (Alvesson &Spicer, 2011).

The Commander metaphor describes a leader who takes unpopular decisions that are not welcomed and liked by the followers but are good for the organisation. Here the leader uses the tough-love style to the extent of being bold enough to inform his/her followers about what tasks to perform and how they have to perform them. Followers have one particular direction to take which is uncomfortable often times and the leader has the responsibility of engaging into what followers might look at as evils yet it is necessary for the good of the organisation. However, it doesn't mean that things work out always like how the leader wants them to be but instead the leader must insist and be stubborn (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). This metaphor is divided into sub-metaphors namely "the Leader of the charge, the Ass-kicker, the Antagonizer, the Ruler-breaker" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011: 124-128).

The Bully metaphor views the leader as one who uses his powers to undermine, coerce, exclude, silence, humiliate, malice and intimidate his/her followers at a workplace (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). The leader might use this power for several reasons like in situations when followers act immature. Bullying might be used as a strategic tool for the leader to be able to accomplish positive outcomes. Sometimes this metaphor is applied when followers reject an ideology that leader believes is best. For the leader to gain control of such unstable situations he/she behaves in a bully-like conduct to stabilise his/her team or group. The metaphor is divided into sub-metaphors like "Malice and Intimidation" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011:171-173).

The Cyborg metaphor advocates for a leader to be flawless, rational and focused, thus appearing like a machine. Here the followers see the leader as a superior with the best skills

that stands out and sets new norms which inspires and demands his/her subordinates to copy and follow his/her successful behaviour (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Followers under this kind of leadership are exposed to working under pressure by the superior leader who wants them to be perfect and how the leader achieves this might vary (appearing superior and flawless). Here the leader never tolerates ordinary performance and is not buddy with the followers to an extent of leading his/hers by intimidation. The metaphor is divided into sub-metaphors namely "Leading through great expectations and Leading by intimidation" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011:142-145).

3.5 Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede et al, (2010) describe six dimensions of cultural differences. The dimensions are: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation vs. short time orientation and lastly indulgence vs. restraint. However, only three of these will be selected for this particular study.

Power Distance: Here less powerful people with-in a country accept and expect a degree of inequality in power distribution. To understand the degree of power distribution, there is a visible gap and imbalance in behaviour of more powerful members of society compared to less powerful members. This affects leadership, which differs depending on each country. People are often categorised into classes namely; upper, middle and lower depending on one's education, social welfare and occupation which all relate to each other. This could be either large power distance (e.g. Uganda, Arab countries, France) or small power distance (e.g. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands). Countries associated with small power distance have characteristics like employees not being supervised continuously by managers but instead managers choose a self-management approach towards the employees (Hofstede et al 2010).

Masculinity vs. Femininity: A culture is considered to be masculine when emotions differ due to gender in a way that men are expected to be assertive, tough and focused on material success while women expected to be are concerned with the quality of life. Some masculine countries are USA and Germany where men have the highest positions at work. A culture is considered to be feminine when emotions of gender are similar for both men and women; they are supposed to be modest, tender and equal on the quality of life. Some strong femininity countries are Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands (Hofstede et al,

2010). This means that in strong feminine countries women are empowered and even take high managerial positions at workplace unlike in masculine countries.

Individualism vs. Collectivism: Individualism refers to societies where individual ties are loose in a way that an individual is expected to take care of him/her self and what he/she considers to be his/her immediate family. It is most common in developed countries like Sweden, Germany with good governments that can provide all the basic social services to its citizens while on the other hand collectivism refers to societies where individuals right from birth on wards are part of strong in-groups which they belong to for a life time like the tribes, clans. In such societies, individuals can't exist on their own due to weak governments that can't provide all the social services to the citizens which forces people to depend on each other in order to survive (Hofstede et al, 2010). This means that people from individualistic societies can expect work-place leadership to have aspects like that managers always asking and valuing employees' opinion, mutual respect from both managers and followers. This would make followers feel like they belong to the organisation. Unlike people from collective societies who might experience unhappiness and stress due to excessive work load but can't express it to their mangers since they might be fired yet many of their family members are dependent on them.

3.6   Critique of Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

The Hofstede's framework has been subjected to various types of criticism as explained below.

Out-dated. Some researchers like Jones (2007) argue that Hofstede's study is too old to be used in the modern times considering the trends like rapid change in global environments, internationalisation and convergence. Hofstede (1998) explains that culture will not change overnight, but this can't be relied upon considering that increased diversity, migration since a person can be born in a country where there is large power distance but he/she travels to a country with small power distance for reasons like work, study then this changes his/her mind having experienced the benefits associated with working or studying in a small power distance country. Then on return to his/her country of origin they change and influence others.

Too few dimensions. Nathan (2015) points out how in the start Hofstede used four dimensions and then later on added two more. The critique here is how many dimensions are

sufficient to explain cultural differences since Hofstede thought the four were valid enough, later on added the two and believes additional dimensions should continue to be added to his original work (Hofstede, 1998).

National divisions. Hofstede points out that cultural difference can only be measured and identified by national identities however researchers like McSweeney (2000) argue that nations are not proper units of analysis of culture. According to DiMaggio (1997) culture is disintegrated across group and national boundaries.

3.7   Relevance of Hofstede's framework for this study

Since the study aims at exploring how foreign employees' perceive the leadership styles in a Swedish context, Hofstede's dimensions are still relevant since they provide a conceptual framework that might facilitate understanding of the cultural aspects and tendencies of a nation, thus creating room for comparing and contrasting the differences in leadership styles between Sweden and foreign employees' countries of origin.

4

Methodology

This section explains the research design, case selection, the two interview guides used as a tool to collect data, data analysis, ethical considerations, validity and reliability and limitations of the methodology.

4.1 Research design

This study is qualitative in nature, since the researcher aims at exploring experiences so a qualitative study will be the best to get data from foreign employees at the automotive company as the unit of analysis, (Yin 2009). In this case semi-structured interviews were used with open-ended questions considering the nature of the research questions. Interview guides were drafted to be used as a tool of data collection (See appendix 1). Semi-structured interviews are good for the study because the respondents will have liberty to express themselves and hence giving the interviewer a chance to ask follow-up questions on specific areas of interest (Tracy, 2013). Further, semi-structured interviews enable getting deep and broad information from the interviewees (Hesse et al, 2011). The interviewer can use indirect questions to make the respondent open up more comfortably and give the necessary feedback, rather than direct questions that point at them.

4.2 Case

For this study, a single-case design was selected because the researcher has one source which is an automotive company in Sweden. The single- case design will enable to explore the case and analyse the data thus giving the researcher a look at the smaller units existing in the longer case (Yin, 2013). A single case study will help in describing and understanding the context of research question and this will enable the reader to understand the research findings. Single case design would be the best since it was cost-effective and time-saving (Yin, 2013)

4.3 Study Sample

Considering that it was impossible, to contact several companies due to time constraints. The researcher opted for an automotive company in Sweden as the study sample since the

company seemed interested in the topic. The researcher thus used convenience sampling for the study.

4.4   Data type

The researcher collected primary data from the in-depth interviews and kept in mind that the respondents might not spontaneously be open enough during the interview, so it was important to use probing questions to collect enough detailed data (Yin, 2013). The researcher checked the automotive company's website, saw different contact details for the HR department and chose to contact them that via email to see if they found the topic of this study useful. After several weeks of no reply from the automotive company, one HR staff contacted the researcher to find out more details and then an agreement to conduct the study was reached upon.

The researcher with the help of one HR staff was able to select and identify respondents of great relevance to for this study. The researcher was not involved in selecting the interview participants in order to reduce bias. The interview respondents were qualitatively selected by the help of one HR staff based on insider knowledge about experience, employee background, skills and organizational distribution (Creswell, 2009). Then the researcher reached out to the selected respondents to set   time for the interviews.

4.5   Ethical and Safety Considerations

The researcher started by seeking for permission from the automotive company and explained what the purpose/topic of the study was. Through writing several emails an agreement was reached upon then the researcher mentioned the number of interviews that had to be conducted. Participants were asked for permission to record the interview, which was granted (Bryman, 2015). However, it was clearly mentioned from the top management of the company that they preferred to be anonymous. All the respondents were given a nick name (code) that will be used on the interview scripts for the purposes of privacy. The information collected from the respondents has been treated with confidentiality where the interview scripts were locked in a drawer, and after analysing the data the scripts were burnt. The respondents were clearly oriented about the benefits and procedures of the study. During the interview, respondents were given an opportunity to ask questions and were free not to answer any question that felt too sensitive to respond to (Yin, 2013).

4.6   Data Analysis

A thematic data analysis approach in 6 phases was used to analyse the data collected in order to draw conclusions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This ensured more understanding and insights about the obtained data (Boyatzis, 1998). A data driven approach was used which employed open coding style on all interview data so as to minimise threats to internal validity since data was analysed by one researcher (Runeson and Höst, 2008).

The 6 -phases of thematic analysis that were applied to the interview data to derive results are explained as follows;

Phase 1- Familiarizing yourself with your data

So as to get to know the data and note down initial ideas, the researcher listened to the audio recordings while transcribing word by word (verbatim) of all interview recordings (Runeson and Höst, 2008). Verbatim transcription was particularly employed since the study was exploratory in nature and the researcher did not know in advance what the results would be except strongly relying on interview data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Phase 2- Generating initial codes

Phase 2 involved organizing initial ideas and verbatim transcription into meaningful groups thus generating codes strictly following open coding guidelines (Runeson and Höst, 2008). To avoid leaving out important information the entire dataset was mapped and collated to a given code or a number of codes in accordance to (Robson, 2002) guidelines. The main output from Phase 2 was a sum of codes that where later analysed in step 3 to generate candidate themes

Phase 3- Searching for themes

The codes (with their corresponding extracts) got from phase 2 were iteratively sorted and grouped into interesting broader themes in accordance to (Braun and Clarke, 2006) guidelines of thematic analysis. To allow flexibility and ability to move around codes short memos and sticky notes were used during this exercise. The output of this phase was candidate themes that were further reviewed in Phase 4.

Phase 4- Reviewing themes

The candidate themes from phase 3 where iteratively reviewed and refined for coherence, accuracy and distinctiveness in accordance to level 1 and level 2 reviewing guidelines for

reviewing themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Distinctiveness and Coherence of patterns within candidate themes and codes was reviewed leading to regrouping and further refining themes where necessary (Level 1). The refined themes where further reviewed against the entire dataset to further check for accuracy, coherence and distinctiveness (Level 2).

Phase 5- Defining and naming themes

The refined themes from phase 4 were named and described using descriptive names clearly stating what and why the theme was interesting as well capturing essence of each theme in accordance (Braun and Clarke 2006) guidelines of thematic analysis.

The themes found for RQ1 were transformational leadership, furthermore still for RQ1 themes such as the Saint metaphor, the Buddy metaphor and the Gardener metaphor were found. The themes found for RQ2 were hierarchy, female managers, knowledgeable managers and distributed leadership.

Phase 6- Producing the report

Here a report was written and when writing this report, compelling data extracts were quoted for each theme to provide evidence of the themes within the data. The themes and supporting quotations were used in the next section (empirical findings) of this study.

4.7 Validity and Reliability

Reliability establishes the consistency in the findings, this looks at the fact whether information gathered is true, valid or invalid (Bryman, 2008). Particularly for this study, reliability was based on interviews thus the interviewer and respondents, how questions were asked to get the relevant answers for the research questions, were the recordings clear enough for the researcher to transcribe them with less struggle and finally were the transcripts helpfully for the researcher to categorise the data. To ensure reliability, there was no change in questions for all respondents and all interviews were exploratory to the extent that respondents were given opportunity to add/discuss anything that might not have been included in the interview guide but also to contact the researcher after the interviews in case they remembered something important for the topic. Therefore reliability for this report is consistent since all respondents were asked similar questions.

Validity focuses on the accuracy of the study doing what it says it does. The effectiveness of the study helps to have well thought conclusions (Bryman, 2008). To confirm or deny how valid the study is, it requires one to look throughout the original text e.g. do the categories

connect to the theory (Lincoln, 1995). The researcher therefore provided a detailed theoretical framework which was used to analyse the empirical findings. The researcher conducted two test interviews at the start and these helped in improving the interview guide having seen what lacked in line with the purpose of the study thus offering validity of how foreign employees perceive the leadership styles used by their respective managers. Furthermore, most respondents had previous experience in the automotive industry from their countries of origin so they were familiar with how different leadership is in their home countries and Sweden. Therefore, the study provides and analyses experiences of respondents making the findings valid and reliable.

4.8 Interviews

In total 15 interviews were conducted, each interview was between 40-60 minutes approximately. The 13 respondents, who were all engineers, and the 2 HR informants were contacted and confirmed the suitable time to have the interview. The two HR staff were included as informants because the researcher needed to find out if foreign employees perceived the leadership styles used by their respective managers was in correspondence with the company's' leadership strategy. No respondent was given the interview guide in advance. The interview guides were formulated in line with the purpose of study, the research questions and the theoretical frame-work (see appendix 1 and 2). Furthermore, the respondents (engineers) all had different managers since they were from different departments. Two interview guides were used, one for the engineers to explore how they perceived leadership styles used by their respective managers. A different interview guide was used for the HR informants to understand what the company's leadership strategy is. This would help the researcher to draw accurate conclusions at the end of this study. The interview guides (see appendix 1 and 2) had background questions, nature of leadership question, impact questions (personal and organisational impact), development and change questions (opinion and challenges), lastly followed by concluding questions.

Before qualifying to be among those interviewed (for engineers only), some requirements were put in place like having at least 3 years of work experience in the automotive industry, having stayed in Sweden for at least 3 years and lastly having a foreign background. These requirements were important and chosen since such people would have rich experiences suitable for the study. Below is a table containing characteristics of the respondents.

Respondents' nick names(codes)	Role/ profession	Country of origin	Number of years working in the automotive Industry	Number of years lived in Sweden
RE1	Software Developer	Kenya	6years	8years
RE2	Mechanical Design Engineer	Germany	9years	6years
RE3	Engineering Task Leader	Iran	11years	9years
RE4	Senior Software Engineer	India	10years	4years
RE5	Software Verification Engineer	Cameroon	4years	14years
RE6	Senior Software Engineer	India	14years	4 years
RE7	Senior Software Developer	Italy	9years	4years
RE8	Function Tester	Spain	5years	7years
RE9	Senior Software Architect	France	7years	4years
RE10	Software Architect	Uganda	5years	10years
RE11	Function Tester	Italy	5years	4years
RE12	Software Developer	South Africa	4years	3years
RE13	Software Design Engineer	India	12yeras	8years
RA14	HR staff	Sweden	7years	All lifetime
RA15	Senior HR staff	Sweden	9years	All lifetime

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents and informants

Blue interviews were from HR informants and they are both native Swedes.

R= Respondent, E= Engineers and A= HR informants.

All interviews were agreed upon and the respondents decided when and where they wanted to carry out the interview. All interviews were in English. The respondents were asked to describe how they perceive leadership styles used by their respective managers. The interviews were open-ended enabling the researcher to identify the common themes to help the researcher draw accurate conclusions and make proper recommendations (Charmaz, 2006 and Hakim, 2000).

In order to establish a common understanding during the interview, key terms and concepts about leadership were briefly explained at beginning of each the interview. The keys terms included; transformational leadership, situational leadership, transactional leadership and servant leadership.

4.9   Case Description

The Swedish automotive company operates on the global market with a mission of producing safe, quality and environment friendly vehicles with approximately 2,300 local dealers from around 130 national sales companies worldwide. The company has large markets in Sweden,

China, United States, Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Belgium among other countries.

4.10 Limitations

The researcher was given access two days after the course started and was expected to immediately start the interviews. This was a limitation since the researcher needed to be sure of the interview guide, then by the time the researcher was set to start the interviews all the respondents were busy and couldn't tell when they will be free to have the interviews.

Second was the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, since respondents who had already confirmed to have the interviews all over suddenly notified the researcher that they needed to post-pone the interviews with no clear reason, until the researcher started to suggest phone or Skype interviews. When the number of people with the coronavirus increased the respondents started fearing for their lives but were not open enough to the researcher to find a solution of avoiding face-face interviews, rather just kept post-poning, however eventually the researcher and respondents reached a conclusion.

5

Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings, which are based on experiences and narratives from the respondents. The structure used will correspond to the research questions and the theoretical framework. Direct quotations were used to support themes from the data collected. Due to anonymity and confidentiality purposes, all respondents' codes used in table 1 in the methodology section (interviews 4.8) were still maintained when quoting the respondents. All interview respondents' quotations will be presented in a different font (Times New Roman, font 11 and indented 1cm right and left) for easier identification from the rest of the text.

The structure is divided based on the results that provide the answers for the two research questions stated earlier in Section-1.3. The answers to the research questions of this study are presented in the following order; RQ1- How do employees with a foreign background experience the leadership styles of their managers in the automotive company? which are presented in Section 5.1 and 5.2, followed by RQ2 - What differences, if any, in leadership styles exist between Sweden and their countries of origin, as perceived by the respondents? which are presented Section 5.3.

Furthermore, in this chapter the researcher explains only the three leadership metaphors (the Buddy, The Saint and The Gardener) that had a link with the narrations of the respondents. The other three metaphors (see 3.4) did not fit in any the respondents' narrations.

5.1   RQ1 - How do employees with a foreign background experience the leadership styles of their managers in the automotive company?

This sub-section presents an overview of how employees with a foreign background experience the leadership styles of their managers in the automotive company from the perspective of the interview participants. The specific description by particular scripts is presented in Sections 5.1.1-5.2.2

When the researcher asked employees about the leadership style that their respective managers use in the automotive company, it was very evident that many of the narrations and explanations from the respondents pointed towards the transformational leadership style (see chapter 3). The narrations revolved around concepts like trust, safety, openness, shared goals

/ vision, room to solve problems, creativity thus individual growth, which has positive effects for organisational growth.

5.1.1 Transformational leadership style

Many of the respondents acknowledged that a transformational leadership style was the central function in their teams since their respective managers focused on the development of their needs, considering facts that were mentioned during the interviews about their managers being optimistic, involved and engaged in the processes as respondents accomplished their duties. Each respondent perceived leadership styles in their own way and also have different reasons why they thought their managers used this style. Furthermore, the respondents expressed how they liked the transformational leadership style due to its benefits like transparency, which bridges the gap between employees and managers, employee engagement in decision-making which creates a sense of belonging, room for team work since there is open communication between the employees and manager which motivates the team to know that their manager has got their back.

> I think with our scrum master, I would say she's more vigilant with the transformational style because she puts into a lot of effort. She invests a lot of time just not only with work, but in knowing the team, to find out if there are issues on the team. And my guess as to why she uses this style would be that this style in the long run puts high results on the table. When a leader invests time for his/her team then, it's easier like my scrum master is more approachable. It's very important, I think she listens to the team, and I think it is very important because it is the only solution to having a successful team. She is willing to act on it… [RE2].

Transformational leadership has, according to theory, an active influence on individual and organisational outcomes like employee satisfaction and performance which helps the company to outcompete its rivals. It is important to understand that here the leader balances the needs of the organisation and that of his/ her team members which increases personal involvement in the day-to-day aspects of the business, ability to be pragmatic, communicate expectations, establish criteria for success, delegate responsibility, and monitor performance of the entire team.

> My manager is more of a transformational leader. He is not really strict in terms of delivery tools. And he tries to understand the problems thus providing support. My team is not frustrated and it's mainly because of this approach. Everyone has the self-responsibility to focus on completing his/her duties with no pressure. So, our

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manager creating a bond with his team makes the work environment comfortable for the team and thus increased efficiency. [RE5].

Work and social life can only be balanced when one has a transformational leader since everyone on the team is a human being and personal life can affect the professional life. My manager provides support, encouragement and welcomes open communication like a few questions how my personal life and trusts me, through such talks I most times end up including the professional challenges that I experience. [RE11].

In addition to the above, respondents narrated that transformational leadership takes into consideration the employees' voice which increases employee motivation since the leader in most cases asks and listens to what the employees think is best for the organisation which creates a sense of belonging for employees and increases their commitment levels.

Her approach is more of self-management like all team members know the task and she expects you to manage it but then she keeps her door open and if you find any challenges go to her and talk. [RE13].

The researcher asked respondents if they liked the transformational leadership style, if they would have preferred a different style to some extent and if there was something they felt critical about regarding transformational leadership. Representative views from respondents RE1, RE5 and RE13 are below. Actually even with few respondents who were comfortable with transactional leadership, they still expressed that it is always good to balance both styles but the biggest percentage should lean towards transformational leadership.

Because I have experienced the transactional leadership where the manager sees you as a robot yet employees are people sometimes it's not about reward, I mean the transactional looks at employees as a machine who must accomplish tasks and they are re-fueled. This forces employees to switch from one company to another like I did. Employees need a relationship with their manager instead of money. Once there is a bond between employee and manager then growth is visible. [RE1].

It is best to balance different leadership styles. But honestly the biggest direction should move and lean towards transformational because if employees are happy and have a bond with the manager, they feel less pressure then there are high chances of getting delivery on the planned time. Maintaining people culture calls for long term benefits. [RE5].

Most of the managers here use transformation because they would like to see employees grow. [RE13].

5.1.2 Transactional leadership style

Here the central theme of the relationship between the leader and follower relies on an exchange. Here leaders expect certain work from the followers and in the end there is compensation which could either be reward or punishment. This means that the exchange is the only bond bringing together the leader and the followers to satisfy their needs which implies that leader's priority is task completion instead of employee wellbeing.

Few of the respondents mentioned concepts like task completion and employee compliance relying on rewards and punishments that relate to transactional leadership. When asked why they think it is used and whether they would like the respective managers to use different leadership, one respondent said:

> My manager is a result oriented person may-be because I am a team lead [Engineering Task Leader] and he is responsible for several projects with deadline that all must be respected and his focus is always on the progress. I mean if we delay the project like two weeks because one person doesn't feel well then that delay is equal to a certain amount of money and also it is affecting other bigger projects since the small project that delayed was a contribution to the big project. [RE9].

> Honestly I am okay with the task oriented approach. Yes, because of having deadlines which must be respected and with the result oriented approach it's easy to achieve the time frame issues. May-be I find it okay because since I was born it's the type used in my community. [RE9].

When the researcher asked if the respondent [RE9] would like the respective manager to change from a transactional style to another leadership style, it was clear that the respondent was comfortable with transactional leadership considering the fact that the respondent was born in a background setting where the work-place culture differs depending on the different regions in the country. This means that also how managers lead the teams is different like with the seniors, there is less familiarity and socialising at a workplace.

5.1.3 Respondents' perceptions about the Swedish leadership style

It was very clear that all respondents were satisfied with the leadership styles of their managers. Respondents mentioned benefits like less work stress, which they believe was because of less pressure their respective managers imposed on them while at the work-place.

Furthermore, respondents were satisfied with the growth and empowerment associated the Swedish leadership which was mostly used in the automotive company.

> I don't have to report to my manager on a daily basis. There is a one on one meeting which happens bi-weekly where I update my manager about my progress for feedback but it is upon me to decide what I should do as long as it aligns with the department's goals/priorities. [RE7].

Even when some respondents mentioned that the Swedish leadership style can be criticised in matters of decision-making since it is in most cases slow, the respondents in conclusion mentioned that the decisions might take long to be agreed upon since several people must be involved but once the decisions are made they are always the best and they can easily and quickly be adapted.

> When we have an issue in my team, we have to take several meetings before we decide on how to solve it. Actually at times we can reach a conclusion but then one of the team members could say perhaps we need to double check how this decision affects another team before we proceed and then this could result into several more meetings but in the end we are well aligned and we progress quickly. [RE4].

5.2 RQ1 – How employees with a foreign background described their respective managers using the metaphor filter?

After going through all transcriptions which were based on respondents' interpretation and descriptions of how they experience leadership styles of their respective managers, the researcher thematically organised the respondents' description to fit with the various metaphors according to Alvesson & Spicer's (2011) typology. Then three metaphors of leadership were identified from the data collected from the interviews. The three metaphors are presented and explained below but will be discussed further in the analysis chapter.

5.2.1 The Saint metaphor

Saint Metaphor involves themes like sacredness, worship and miracles and one would wonder how worship and miracle connect to leadership since the word Saint is commonly used in religion and politics. However here we are talking about Saint in line with leadership at a workplace which highlights moral peak performance where the followers look at the leader with the image of purity, miracles and sacredness. In this metaphor a leader exhibits respect, engages in the lives of followers thus creating openness between them both, treats followers equally among others (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

There was a connection with how the respondents perceive their managers as if the Saint metaphor through the morality and empowerment expressed in several ways by the managers towards the employees like managers willing to subordinate personal goals for the good of the team. Representative views from respondents RE2 and RE6 are listed below.

> I think my manager is someone who leads the team by giving some kind of direction and who motivates the people in the team to do work by themselves not to rely on the leader for everything. Someone who motivates the team so that we can come up with our own solutions. He is independent and also takes time to listen to the people in the team basically considers our inputs in decision making. [RE2].

> My manager is a combination of things like engaging in the lives his/ her team members which creates openness, treat the team members equally. Always stands firm in challenging times and make decisions that benefit the team at the same time involves the team in decision making. In my team, I think the scrum master (manager) facilitates the team activities, he empowers the entire team and I think that is why the team is happy. [RE6].

5.2.2 The Buddy metaphor

This involves a leader doing their best to befriend their followers aiming at making them feel good considering how stressful a workplace can be, for example by making the workplace environment a comfortable place which motivates their employees in such a way that they voluntarily do their best to accomplish organizational goals. Some respondents' descriptions of their respective managers had traits that relate to the sub-metaphors like the Equal, the Pseudo-shrink of the Buddy metaphor. Representative views from respondents RE1 and RE10 as listed below.

> My manager is a person who balances the growth of the organization at the same time growth of us his employees. Actually not discriminating the employees whether immigrants or native Swedes, I mean we are all treated equally, like we all attend trainings that he feels are important for the positions we are in. He know the abilities of each of the employees and avoids comparing the employees, each person is unique and my manager identifies who is good at what and combine that potential, competence together to have a strong team. My manager is friendly to us all, like he makes our team a comfortable place and I think he has enough knowledge of people management. [RE1].

In terms of approaches and the way he mingles with us is really awesome, there are two things he does, he takes decisions and also his statements are not diplomatic, he talks straight to the point. [RE10].

The buddy metaphor calls for active employee participation where the leader believes in cheering, including, safeguarding and being there for employees with the purpose of making subordinates feel good. We can say this is a strategic plan for an organisation since with this strategy there can be proper utilisation of expertise that employees have and in the long run this helps the organisation to attain competitive sustainable advantage.

When it comes to people management, he talks with everyone, greets everyone, smiles, understands and generally he is of soft nature. [RE10].

When it comes to competency, any problem or any issue that is relating to charging, he can really understand the technical know-how and he also appreciates to find a solution, he gives time for that, so, I see a person of really different character. [RE10].

5.2.3   The Gardener metaphor

The leader strives towards helping the employees grow and reach their full potential as they work to accomplish organisational goals. Here employees are empowered and facilitated to grow better which build their commitment as they work for the organisation and since they waste no time in looking for opportunities in other organisations but rather utilise all their time towards accomplishing their tasks.

The HR informant and some respondents' narrations matched well with empowerment which is the central theme with the Gardener metaphor. Representative views from respondents RA14 and RE4 are as follows.

We encourage managers to use their leadership positions to develop and guide their subordinates to become better. Actually we tell managers that it is normal for team members to make mistakes as they accomplish tasks but we advocate for managers to guide the employees after the same mistakes happening again. This is actually why managers have a one on one meeting with each employee as a way of getting and giving important feedback. [RE14].

My manager follows up how we do things which enables her to facilitate the team like providing all necessary information required by the team to progress in a clear direction, this ensures that everyone on the team fulfils his/her task. Most important,

she listens carefully to each individual on the team to ensure that the team is supported equally in brief, she is the backbone of the team. [RE4].

5.3   RQ2 - What differences, if any, in leadership styles exist between Sweden and their countries of origin, as perceived by the respondents.

The employees were asked to narrate if they see any differences between work-place leadership in Sweden and in their countries of origin, since they all worked in the automotive industry back home. In their narratives, they all in a way expressed how different it was with issues like-, knowledgeable managers, hierarchy, female managers and distributed management.

5.3.1   Knowledgeable managers

In most cases followers tend to identify their managers as individuals with technical skills, knowledge and capabilities to perform and accomplish specific tasks. The skills help the manager to coordinate the team through solving problems, communicating effectively and efficiently. However, on the other hand followers also view their managers as individuals with people management skills with responsibilities like training, motivating, delegating, and communicating like offering and receiving feedback. Managers with technical expert knowledge have advantages like driving the teams to a clear direction, quick problem solving but it is also important to note that managers with people management knowledge promote unity in the team since they ensure each team member is listened to and good at avoiding conflict escalation in the team.

Some respondents expressed that managers in their home countries have technical expert knowledge about the tasks that were ahead of the teams which does not seem to the case with managers here, who in most cases mainly have people management knowledge. The respondents didn't express any preferences between either technical expert knowledge managers or people management knowledge managers. Even when the researcher expected the respondents to be critical, none expressed any strong critical views about the lack of technical expertise among the managers. Representative views from respondents are RE7, RE2 and RE11.

> Yeah, managers in India had both managing skills and technical knowledge whereas here in Sweden, the manager lacks technical knowledge though has managing skills like ensuring the team play their roles, managing conflicts and more of such kind. [RE7].

In Germany most managers have the technically knowledge needed to support the team but here managers have good people management skills mostly. [RE2].

Yeah, I can say that managers in Italy are technically equipped with all the knowledge, skills that the team needs unlike here in Sweden the scrum master has more responsibility of people management then it's the product owner with the technical knowledge. [RE11].

5.3.2 Hierarchy

This involves employees at different levels of the organisational structure identifying the chain of command and serve as a reference point for decision-making. Hierarchy according to Pfeffer (2013) is one of the leadership processes that cannot be affected by modern trends. Today we see a shift from some organisations in different contexts where there is less hierarchy compared to others. This relates with Pfeffer's (2013:272) argument in his article "You´re still the same: why theories of power hold over time and across contexts."

Organisations with much hierarchy tend to have less employee involvement in decision-making as a section of few people at top management make all decisions with no consultation of employees, but even in times when employees are consulted their in-put is never put into consideration (it is just for formality). However, on the other hand some organisations have less/no hierarchy meaning that top management exists but instead gives employees an opportunity to be part in the decision-making process which in the long term leads to organisational growth as employees put in enough effort to implement the decisions made since they were part of the entire process.

Most respondents explained that in Sweden there seems to be a flat hierarchy since even the managers who are in this case the leaders tend to empower teams, use the self-management approach where each employee has the responsibility to play accomplish his/her duties with less supervision. Representative views from respondents RE2, RE13 and RE1 are listed below.

> There is too much hierarchy in Germany and all top managers want to expose it to their junior employees this means decision-making is from top-bottom so employees have a less involvement since it is only a section of people in the organisation made the decisions. This means employees are told exactly what to do and they must respect it so decision-making is quick. But it is not the case in Sweden, hierarchy seems invisible and not welcomed which means decision-making slow since here employees are engaged and involved by their managers. Also in Sweden a manager

has the ability to say "I don't know" like on several cases the team lead acknowledges he has no idea of how something is supposed to be done let's say a new project if you ask him if he knows he will say I think we can do it like this but if he doesn't, without any shame he says I don't know anything. [RE2].

I would say here it is goal driven they do set goals but in India it's a bit aggressive, like they have goals but you must meet them. There must be some standing on your head to ensure that you doing the work that needs to be done but here you set the goal but no one is there to check on you daily if you done the goals, something like that but they expect you to complete it. [RE13].

From my experience, I would say, I wouldn't say speak for someone else. But would say from my experience in Kenya it is more of bosses than managers. Too much supervision, command and also the bosses must be addressed by sir/madam, but here in Sweden, I address my manager by her first name. [RE1].

One can argue that hierarchy has benefits like effectiveness of organisational growth, creating unity and authority as people from different backgrounds work together as a team and always having someone accountable for things happening as people accomplish their tasks (Pfeffer, 2013). Though much hierarchy is also associated with evils like increased pressure for employees due to continuous supervision from their managers as employees are not independent enough and sometimes even when they accomplish tasks, it for the purposes of completion instead of producing quality. This means that it is very important to balance hierarchy in the organisation as Alvesson & Spicer (2011) explains that the leadership triangle is connected and all the three corners relate with each other. Representative views from respondents RE8, RE5 and RE 7 are listed below.

In my country it's more of hierarchy, here there is no hierarchy. In my country, there are different types of leaders like those that are really open, don't care about hierarchy. But also leaders who think they are supreme and to them hierarchy drives the organization. There is big difference between Spain and Sweden. I think in Sweden the manager is more open actually my manager comes from France but she is open just like the Swedish context is. [RE8].

Also hierarchy like in my home country its huge hierarchy, I mean employees are commanded instead of being supported. Still related to hierarchy, a manager is called sir/madam which is not the case in Sweden we always use his/her first name and actually during lunch time we have the same kitchen where we all warm our lunch boxes and sit on same table while eating. [RE5].

Also hierarchy which I highlighted in the start, transparency and equality are key values in Sweden as a country so even at our company and team there is openness maybe that's why When you asked if I would be unsatisfied with my manager the only thing that crossed my mind was speaking it out freely with big hopes that my manager will listen with no basi. A clear example related to hierarchy here the product owner with all sorts of knowledge about a project can freely say "I don't know but we will discuss as a team to sort it out" honestly in Italy and Japan you can never get such an answer when you ask your supreme. I mean in Sweden it's very normal not to know and it's not a shame. [RE7].

5.3.3 Female managers

Due to globalisation, there has been a shift on the labour market and one can argue that today there is an increase of female employment (Bradley and Healy, 2008). This has seen labour market is characterized by gender occupational hierarchy in a way that there is a shift where women are moving from household to employment sector. In the past, women were involved with specific jobs like care work since men are naturally uncomfortable with such jobs (Bradley and Healy, 2008) however, today women are taking on the professional jobs which has reduced the gender pay gap as it is evident that in some countries like Sweden women are empowered to even take on managerial positions in different organisations.

Respondents mentioned that in Sweden women are empowered and they take on leadership positions like leading teams in the automotive company and tend to perform well in such positions. Representative views from respondents RE2, RE13 and RE 10 include the following.

> In Germany there are less females in management positions unlike in Sweden where I have had three female managers and guess what, they were all respected. [RE2].

> Also having a female scrum master in all my ten years working in the automotive industry seriously I have never seen it. In India it is only male but here it is very unique like my scrum master is female and leads a team which has more male developers on it. [RE13].

> Something to note also in Sweden you can have a female manager but in my country no. Women are supposed to be stay home look after the kids instead of building their careers. Actually in some rural areas it's a form of myth to have a woman to work and having financial independence. [RE10].

5.3.4 Distributed leadership

Leadership is a complex aspect to understand (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011) but different scholars have developed many different theories and approaches to explain leadership. Theories like the Great Man Theory which assumes that leaders have unique qualities which cannot be found among the followers, Trait Theory that determines the personal, psychological, and physical traits of strong leaders. Behavioural Theory which focuses on certain types of behaviours those leaders must have exhibit and then determine those behaviours affect the followers, Situational Theories and Contingency Theory assume that each situation calls for a leader to behave different so no universal behaviour can be used to determine who a good leader is. The two recent theories (transformational and transactional leadership) as stated by Bass (1985) and explained (See section 3.3).

Most respondents expressed that self-management approach (one can relate it to transformational leadership) is common in Sweden where managers impose no supervision as the employees work daily unlike in their home countries. Representative views from participants RE6, RE9, and RE10 are as follows.

> In India, leading is specifically task based whereas here in Sweden tasks go in hand with personal relationships to ensure work is produced. [RE6].

> I think it's more of micro management and that's according to my experience, so, can we say, it's more of self-management like in Sweden, you feel that the goal is set but they expect the person to manage yourself than in France where the goal is set but then someone keeps reminding you. [RE9].

> One difference is, in Uganda, even when you see the strategy your boss is telling you to use is wrong, you won't say it out because it can cost you your job but here in Sweden it is am always free to say what l feel and think, actually this means me say it's a manager instead of a boss. [RE10].

6

Discussion and Analysis

In this section, the results are analyzed and discussed. The analysis uses the themes in the above summary (5.1-5.2). The results of RQ1 are analyzed and discussed first. The saint metaphor, the buddy metaphor and the gardener metaphor are analyzed and discussed in relation to the leadership metaphors discussed in the theoretical framework. Then the leadership styles are analyzed and discussed in relation to the leadership styles discussed in the theoretical framework (transformational and transactional). Secondly RQ2 if any differences, is then analyzed and discussed using Hofstede's cultural dimensions and previous literature.

6.1 RQ1 - How do employees with a foreign background experience the leadership styles of their managers in the automotive company?

The results indicate that three leadership metaphors (the saint, the buddy and the gardener, Alvesson & Spicer, 2011) connected with how foreign employees perceived their respective managers. According to Alvesson & Spicer, followers (employees) who are a component in the leadership triangle (see chapter 3) link with the other two components to understand the leadership ambiguity, meaning that how they describe and perceive their leaders is important for the organisation since the leaders help to use potential skills of employees into reality for the organisation to achieve its goals.

6.1.1 The Saint metaphor

Most respondents argued that-, they were trusted by their managers to be experts in their duties and that they could manage quite well on their own. This relates well with Alvesson & Spicer (2011:52) that the Saint metaphor calls for "shared leadership" that involves enabling, facilitating, and providing the employees with the right working conditions to accomplish their duties best by themselves. Additionally, when the researcher asked the HR staff about the leadership strategy of the automotive company, the HR staff's answer corresponded well with the Saint metaphor. The researcher believes that descriptions and narrations from most respondents linked to the Saint metaphor like how managers are encouraged to stand firm and represent the interests of their teams since the team expresses their intentions and problems to

the manager who at all times should know what is best for his/her team. This connects with the sub-metaphor 'the Martyr' who sacrifices him/herself to benefit his/her team just to ensure that the team achieves its goals (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011:63).

6.1.2 The Buddy metaphor

More to that while trying to categorize the managers' leadership approach, the researcher found out that most respondents mentioned features which belong to the Buddy metaphor like cheering, equal treatment, including, safeguarding and being there for people with the purpose of making subordinates feel good. The connection became apparent with the sub-metaphor 'the Equal' when most interview participants emphasized how inclusiveness in having shared goals was an everyday activity in their team by the manager (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). A leader with traits of the Buddy metaphor creates a friendly work environment which establishes a sense of belonging to his/her team and enables the followers to feel that the team is not divided based on seniority but rather it is one team that is equal thus making all followers comfortable. This is in connection with "the Party Host" that ensures that they are a good host who ensures that the guests around him/ her are in the best mood since they are comfortable and having the best time (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

Similarly, it was evident that descriptions of the respective managers had traits that relate well with the sub-metaphor 'the Pseudo-shrink", who on several occasions exhibits characteristics of a therapist in a way that he listens, observes/sees to issues that might affect the performance of his/her followers (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

6.1.3 The Gardener metaphor

According to the administrators it was clear that, the leadership strategy at the automotive company could be interpreted not only as Saint but also fits the Gardener metaphor whose major focus is on continuous improvement of the followers which in the long run benefits the growth of the company (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). The Gardener metaphor can be related to talent management which is a key aspect in organisational growth (Boxall & Purcell, 2016) which is strategy that a company may use to maintain its workforce since it involves attracting and retaining employees. Just like Boxall & Purcell (2016) state that managers must play a big role in talent management, the researcher believes it is the key theme of the Gardener metaphor where managers are responsible for ensuring that the employees are motivated through empowerment, facilitating their growth through different trainings. An

organisation can only maintain or build its workforce stronger if it acknowledges the importance and benefits associated with talent management (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). This shows how relevant it is for the automotive company's HR staff encouraging their managers to use the approach of the Gardener metaphor.

One could argue that the bad metaphors (the Command, the Bully and the Cyborg) didn't fit how the foreign employees described their respective managers due to the fact that they in the long run come with negative impacts like increased work pressure at the work-place (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011) and may-be the automotive company advocates for managers to lead their teams with traits that fit with the good metaphors (The Buddy, the Gardener and the Saint) as explained above.

6.2 RQ1 - How do employees with a foreign background experience the leadership styles of their managers in the automotive company?

The results indicate that transformational leadership style was more popular in the sense that it was the dominant style used compared to transactional leadership. Traditionally, the importance of leadership was not given priority but today there is a change moving forward more of the transformational approach which sees leadership not as a fact of managers rewarding or punishing subordinates but rather considering the followers' sense about what they want to contribute (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Most narrations showed that foreign employees perceive the Swedish leadership styles positively compared to the leadership styles used in their countries of origin.

6.2.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership style as explained by employees interviewed has positive impacts like employee commitment which is also stated by Walumbwa and Lawler (2003) that for leaders to achieve higher commitment levels from their employees, they must be more transformational than transactional. This could be because transformational leadership is always an on-going process that involves listening to employees where they express both positive and negative feedback about the organisation's leadership. This leadership approach connects with the theory that for leadership complexity to be reduced there should be interactions between leaders and followers (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). With the interaction between leaders and followers, communication which is a strong aspect in the daily operations of an organisation is clear since managers communicate directly to their teams to

avoid information being received as rumours which might result in conflicts. In the same line feedback is never neglected (Boxall & Purcell, 2016).

Fiedler and House (1988) proposes that transformational leadership seeks to address that the actions of leaders (managers) that cause followers to change their values, needs, goals, and aspirations. This means that the leader must invest a lot of time to influence his/her followers to change which might be challenging considering the fact that a leader is responsible for not only one person but rather a team which has between 4-12 people. This is always more difficult to pursue but once achieved it has long term benefits like increased awareness of followers and clear feedback flow in the organisation (Bass, 1985).

In relation to the above, lies the critical part that was mentioned in the interview session where a few respondents expressed their concerns with much time that is wasted as the manager tries to get an opinion of each member from the team. It slows the process at the automotive company but the respondents related this to the context (Sweden) where it is sometimes difficult for a manager to make a simple decision but rather chooses to consult his/her superiors which sometimes frustrates the teams as they wait.

6.2.2   Transactional leadership

Few respondents perceived their respective managers as transactional leaders. According to Bass (1990), transactional leadership focuses on the clarification of task requirements and the specification of contingent rewards. This approach, does not bring leaders and followers together to pursue higher purposes but rather it is an easy way out to manage a team but with short time benefits like task completion and delivery on time which comes with employees working on too much pressure that might even force them to quit jobs or change companies which sees the organisation fail to retain its talents.

6.3   RQ2 - What differences, if any, in leadership styles exist between Sweden and their countries of origin, as perceived by the respondents?

The differences as listed in section-5.3 will be analysed and discussed using Hofstede's et al (2010) framework regarding cultural dimensions that suits the differences mentioned by respondents as of section-5.3. One a significant finding the researcher can establish is that even when there were differences as narrated by interview respondents, they seemed to like the transformational style, even though they were used to more transactional leadership styles in their home countries.

Basing on Hofstede et al., (2010) the researcher argues that the leadership styles as reported by the respondents correspond well with what might be expected in a society with small power distance, femininity and an individualistic culture.

6.3.1 Flat hierarchy as an aspect of Hofstede's power distance dimension

The analysis revealed that most respondents from countries with large power distance expected to be told what to do and always agree with what their respective managers told them to do as it was interpreted by the researcher from the interview data set. Particularly when respondent [RE9] was asked if there would be any form of dissatisfaction with the manager the reply was "my manager is my boss always and I respect her. She is my senior so a senior is never wrong." This exhibits that even when the respondent has lived in Sweden, which is a small power distance country, the respondent still has that belief of how seniors/managers are always right. People from large power distance countries are raised to be obedient, never criticise their seniors openly (Hofstede et al, 2010) since even right from their families when an elder says something it is always to be regarded right and must be respected by the young ones even when it is wrong. In large power distance countries, fear of elders/seniors is installed by the community in a way that an elder neighbour has the right to punish kids in his/her neighbourhood that he/she feels are in wrong even without the permission from the kids parents. This makes the kids grow up with such fear which they move with even when they join the labour market.

Therefore one could argue that the hierarchy difference is due to the power distance dimension since some respondents narrated how in their home countries managers had to be addressed by either sir/ madam unlike in Sweden where they address their managers by their first names, use the same office space with their managers and even when most respondents were asked how they would go about a situation of having work challenges the reply was "Have an open conversation with him immediately. It has once happened and I immediately spoke to my team lead. He is smart with how to deal with people, we fixed it." This clearly relates to Hofstede et al., (2010) that in small power distance countries like Sweden every individual in the society is respected and his/her concerns are valued unlike in large power distance countries were a group of people are superior and above others.

6.3.2 Female managers as a sign of Hofstede's Masculinity vs. Femininity dimension

The analysis revealed that most respondents from masculine countries had less or no previous experience of female managers. When asked some differences they see with leadership in Sweden and their home countries "Also having a female scrum master in all my ten years working in the automotive industry seriously I have never seen it." was a typical reply. According to Hofstede et al (2010) masculinity societies tend to have male dominance in the highest positions at the workplace and in femininity societies there is equality for both females and males. Sweden is among the feminine countries as stated by Hofstede et al (2010:140) and this could be the reason why some respondents have female respondents since the Swedish context offers equal opportunity for females and males unlike some masculine countries where some respondents originate from where females are still not so welcomed to work in professional jobs to keep them from being independent, earning bigger salaries than their partners, in some masculine societies it's a cultural myth for a man to be the only bread earner in the household thus some men refusing their spouses from working or even in a situation when a wife earns more than the husband she is forced to kept it to herself.

Furthermore, this belief is installed by society right when kids are still young through education, where you find more male students are educated compared to the female students since parents are afraid of wasting their money to pay tuition to educate a girl child who at the end will be forced to be a house wife by her future husband. In relation to this, there are some courses that are considered to be for only male students like engineering, medicine so at the end of the day male dominating in the automotive industries of masculine societies could be a reflection of most male students being admitted in such courses on the university level compared to female.

6.3.3 Distributed leadership as a sign of the power distance dimension

The analysis revealed that most respondents mentioned the difference in the leadership approach where in Sweden it is more of a self-management approach where the managers expect every individual to have a self-responsibility to accomplish his/her duties unlike in some respondents' countries of origin where managers are always supervising employees as they accomplish their tasks. This could be related to hierarchy in a way that large power distance countries have high hierarchy and managers expose it to their subordinates by commanding them and un-necessary supervision since there is a significant power gap between managers/seniors and subordinates/juniors. According to Hofstede et al (2010) leadership is bound to differ in countries where people are divided into classes unlike in a country with equality among people. So one can argue that large power distance

countries tend to use the task-oriented approach since a manager is superior in relation to his/her subordinates then he/she feels like he/she must always tell his/her juniors what exactly to do and it must be respected with no questing it unlike in small power countries like Sweden where most respondents acknowledged the use of the self-management approach due to the flat hierarchy in the Swedish context.

6.3.4 Knowledgeable managers as an aspect of Hofstede's individualistic and collectivism dimension

The analysis revealed that some respondents mentioned the difference in managers with technical knowledge expertise versus people management knowledge expertise, where managers in Sweden where found to have strong people management expertise with less technical knowledge expertise as compared to managers in the foreign employees' countries of origin who were the opposite.

This difference could be explained in this way; - the main responsibility of the managers in the automotive company in Sweden according to the interview respondents is to empower team members to focus on a common goal and ensure that they are all well-coordinated. This could be the reason why the automotive company in Sweden has managers with strong people management skills. This however is in contrast with managers in foreign employees' countries of origin who focus more on getting the project/tasks done with less consideration on empowering the employees, thus having strong technical knowledge.

This difference contradicts with Hofstede et al., (2010) individualism vs collectivism dimension. Whereas Sweden is mostly an individualistic society, but we see strong collective dimension elements in the Swedish automotive company where leadership is aimed at collectively organising teams to solve a problem and indeed interview respondents expressed more collective responsibility than individual responsibility when it comes to the way they work and their deliverables. When it comes to foreign employees' countries of origin like Uganda, India, Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa where as Hofstede et al., (2010) describes them collectivism states, leadership in their automotive companies is individualistic as managers are task oriented towards individual employees rather empowering teams. The contradiction in Hofstede et al., (2010) individualism vs collectivism dimension in the Swedish automotive company could be explained by the company's diversity and inclusion strategy which focuses on realizing the potential between people of different background by organizing them in empowered teams with a more collective responsibility towards the team deliverables and the company success.

6.4 Implications for academic research

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge in leadership and cultural differences research. There exists a significant amount of leadership styles used in organisations. This study is one of the few to explore employee perceptions of leadership with the angle of cultural differences, if not the first in automotive industry to investigate about leadership styles used.

The topic how foreign employees in Sweden perceive leadership styles used by their respective managers has been missing in the current existing literature. With increased migration trends of foreign workers in Sweden, the study reduces the knowledge gap in understanding the perception of foreign employees towards leadership styles used in Sweden, which according to respondents the researcher can established a significant finding that the respondents seemed to like the transformational style, even though they were used to more transactional leadership styles in their home countries, thus requiring academic recognition which can be through conducting more research.

6.5 Implications for industrial practitioners

With the increased migration of foreign workers in Sweden particularly in the automotive industry (Migrationsverket, Work permit statistics, 2020), this study is one of the first studies to provide practice a systematic understanding of the perception of foreign workers when it comes to leadership styles used in Sweden, and how these leadership styles differ from their countries of origin.

This study revealed that transformational leadership was more commonly used compared to transactional leadership in Swedish automotive company. Respondents' descriptions of their respective managers fit with three metaphors according to Alvesson & Spicer's typology (the Saint, the Buddy and the Gardener). These results provide an informed understanding to HR departments and managers in Sweden to acknowledge that the leadership strategy used by an organisation has great importance not only to the success of the organisation but also towards employee well-being and commitment. The study further revealed the existence of leadership differences between respondents' countries of origin and Sweden in aspects like hierarchy, female managers, knowledgeable managers and leadership approaches being used. Such differences are very vital for organizations to understand so as to unleash foreign employee's potential and their rich diverse perspectives into reality to accelerate continued growth in the Swedish automotive industry.

7

Conclusion and Outlook

7.1 Conclusion

This study presents a qualitative case study that explored the leadership styles used by respective managers in a Swedish automotive company, how employees with foreign backgrounds perceive the leadership styles of their respective managers and if there are perceived differences between Sweden and the countries of origin of employees with foreign background. The study involved 15 semi-structured interviews in total but 13 of the interviews with engineers and 2 interviews with HR staff. In meeting the purpose of this study, it was revealed transformational leadership is more used in the automotive company than transactional leadership. Respondents' descriptions of their respective managers fit with three metaphors according to Alvesson & Spicer's typology (the Saint, the Buddy and the Gardener). The study further revealed the existence of leadership differences between respondents' countries of origin and Sweden in aspects like knowledgeable managers, hierarchy, female managers, and distributed leadership being used.

Most narrations showed that foreign employees perceive the Swedish leadership styles positively compared to the leadership styles used in their countries of origin. In summary they find Sweden-based managers as leaders not bosses, who always look at the progress of the team as a "We" effort instead of "I", this was clear when all respondents narrated how their respective managers always dialogue with them to find the best decision instead of commanding them to implement decision made by top management. Foreign employees feel their respective managers are uplifting them through grooming teams equally which inspires every employee to perform better. The Swedish leadership approach calls for a leader who is compassionate and knows that his/her followers come first which has been advocated by leadership researchers like Alvesson & Spicer (2011) who states that followers and leader both complement each other.

According to Dickson (1997), leadership attributed in one context is not necessarily positive in other contexts. This was seen when most of the respondents appreciate the leadership styles used in small power distance countries particularly Sweden as per this study yet they come from different backgrounds. The findings of this study are consistent with previous

studies by Walumbwa and Lawler (2003) who emphasized that leaders that are transformational tend to be more effective in achieving significantly higher commitment levels than transactional leaders. Through the respondents' narrations, one can argue that their commitment is strongly driven by the transformational style. Transformational leadership contributes to the employee well-being since the leaders offer a comfortable work environment with less pressure.

7.2 Future Work

This study provided a systematic exploration of leadership styles and workplace leadership differences between Sweden and other countries. The results revealed existence of leadership differences between Sweden and other countries in aspects like knowledgeable managers, hierarchy, female managers, and distributed leadership. Future research should be conducted to understand why those leadership differences exist and their impact on employees of different cultural backgrounds. This will help managers to better understand and support all employees to turn their potential and diverse skills into reality for continued organisational growth.

8

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8.1   Appendix A- Interview Questions

8.1.1   Interview guide for engineers at the Automotive Company

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Viola thank you for taking the time to do this interview. I am a student at Goteborg University doing a Master Program in Strategic Human Resource Management & Labour Relations. This interview is a part of my master thesis program and it entirely for study purposes. The aim is to explore the different leadership styles in the Automotive Company, how employees with foreign backgrounds perceive the leadership styles of their respective managers and if there are perceived differences between Sweden and the countries of origin of employees with foreign background. This interview will be anonymous; your answers will not be traced back to you. The interview will last for 1 hour Max

Background and demographic questions:

1. What is your role in your team/organization?

2. For how long have you been working in this position?

3. What is your overall experience in the automotive industry?

4. What are your responsibilities and duties as a (Mentioned Position?)

5. Where do you come from? For how long have you lived in Sweden?

Nature of Leadership Questions:

1. Can you tell how you are organized in your team or group?

   •   Follow up questions

   •   Do you have a manager? Any team mates?

2. Who is a leader to you? What are the main roles of your team manager?

3. How is leadership understood /perceived in your organisation?

4. How is leadership understood in your team/group?

5. Do you think leadership is understood differently in your current organization/team compared to the organization/team you were previously employed? To what extent?

Personal feelings/impact questions:

1. How does leadership impact your daily work and skills?

2. Do you think your origin and work experiences have an impact on how you view leadership in your organization today?

3. What do you think about the different leadership styles?

   •   Considering transformational leadership, situational leadership, transactional leadership and servant leadership.

4. Which style do you think your manager uses?

   •   What do you think might be the motive behind it?

5. Would you like your manager to adopt any other leadership style than the one used

   •   Why?

Impact on Organization:

1. Does your manager follow any company leadership guidelines while leading you?

   •   Or he just decides any ways to lead?

2. Does leadership style used by your manager impact positively or negatively to the growth of your organisation?

   •   If yes/no how?

Development and Change Questions: (opinion questions, challenges, difficulties)

1. If you would be unsatisfied by your manager's leadership or guidance how do you go about it?

   •   Do you have any channels where you address your concerns?

   •   Are there any company set goals regarding leadership?

   •   How do you in your work-position contribute to reach these goals?

2. In your opinion do you perceive any differences in work leadership comparing your country of origin and Sweden?

   •   What are those differences?

3. What challenges regarding leadership have you been facing previously?

4. What can be done to overcome/minimise the leadership challenges?

Concluding questions: summary:

1. Do you think that leadership is important for the development of your organization?

   •   If yes, in what ways?

2. What are you proud of regarding leadership by your manager?

3. Do you have something that you would like to add or discuss that we have not talked about

8.1.2 Interview guide for HR staff at the Automotive Company

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Viola thank you for taking the time to do this interview. I am a student at Goteborg University doing a Master Program in Strategic Human Resource Management & Labour Relations. This interview is a part of my master thesis program and it entirely for study purposes. The aim is to explore the different leadership styles in the Automotive Company, how employees with foreign backgrounds perceive the leadership styles of their respective managers and if there are perceived differences between Sweden and the countries of origin of employees with foreign background. This interview will be anonymous; your answers will not be traced back to you. The interview will last for 1 hour Max:

Background and demographic questions:

1. For how long have you been working in as HR personnel in the company?
2. What are your responsibilities and duties as HR personnel?

Nature of Leadership Questions:

1. Can you tell me how your team or group is organized?
2. Who is a leader to you?
3. What are the main roles of your manager?
4. How is leadership understood/perceived in your organisation?
5. How is leadership understood in your team/group?

   • How do your team members perceive leadership?

6. Do you think leadership is understood differently in your current organization/team compared to the organization/team you were previously employed? To what extent?

Impact questions: Personal feelings/impact

1. As an HR personnel, how does leadership impact your daily work and skills?

2. What do you think about different leadership styles?

   • Considering transformational leadership, situational leadership, transactional leadership and servant leadership.

3. Which style (s) does the company recommend managers to use?

- Why?

Impact on Organization:

1. Do you follow any company leadership guidelines that all managers must follow?

   - What do you then base your leadership?

   Does your company support managers to develop their leadership skills?

      How?

2. Do leadership style (s) used by managers' impact the growth of your organisation?

   - How?

Development and Change Questions: (opinion questions, challenges, difficulties)

1. Are leadership problems open for discussion in you organization?

2. What are your organization's goals regarding leadership and what could be leadership-vision of your organisation? How do you in your work-position contribute to reach these goals?

3. What challenges regarding leadership have you been facing previously?

4. What can be done to overcome/minimise the leadership challenges?

Concluding questions: summary:

1. Do you think that leadership is important for the development of your organization?

   - If yes, in what ways?

2. Do you have something that you would like to add or discuss that we have not talked about?