THE MEETING OF CULTURES
Effective Leadership in Multicultural Organisations

Authors: Simon Haile and Ebrima Jabang
Supervisor: Steffi Siegert
Examiner: Mikael Lundgren
Subject: Degree Project
Program: Leadership and Management in International Context
Level: Master
Semester: Spring 2019
Course code: 4FE41E
“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart”

- Nelson Mandela
Abstract

Globalisation has simplified the internationalisation process for companies, and is today not constrained to multinational companies, as SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) are entering global markets in order to attain a sustainable competitive advantage. As a result, more Swedish SMEs are now operating abroad, and SSA (sub-Saharan Africa) is a region that has shown great potential. SSA has a rapid economic growth and SMEs that enter SSA have many opportunities to gain as it is a fairly unexplored region with a boosting economy. However, working in SSA would entail that Swedish SMEs and its leaders would encounter different cultures and try to find a way of coping with the differences successfully. The purpose of this study, is, therefore, to explore what cultural challenges Swedish SME leaders face in SSA, and how they adapt to the cultural challenges.

The researchers chose a qualitative research strategy with an abductive approach and conducted semi-structured interviews with eight Swedish SMEs leaders that are currently active in SSA. The respondents hold various leading positions within these companies. Our empirical findings suggest that there are several cultural challenges that Swedish SME leaders face in SSA, such as time perception, gender inequality, collectivistic behaviour and trust issues. However, the existing hierarchical system in SSA was seen as the main challenge as the leaders were used to a flat organisations structure in Sweden, whereas the culture in SSA advocates authoritarianism. The leaders that choose to adapt their leadership style become more controlling, which showed improvement on the employees performance. Our findings also indicate that some of the leaders did not want to adapt their leadership style but instead sought to transform the current corporate culture in SSA based on a Swedish model.

Keywords

Leadership, Culture, Sub-Saharan Africa, Sweden, SME, GLOBE, Adaptation, Transformation
Acknowledgements

We would like to take the opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the people who contributed to this degree project. Without these people’s experience and valuable input, this project would not have been possible.

We would like to start by thanking our supervisor Prof. Siegert for all the support, patience and guidance throughout this thesis. You have shown dedication and encouragement throughout the long process. We also want to express our gratitude to Prof. Lundgren. It has been a fantastic year, and we are glad to have taken part in this exciting program. We wish you all the best in leading the program further.

We would also like to show appreciation for our families for their tremendous support and patience they have shown us through this challenging but remarkable journey. We definitely would not have come this far without your continuous support.

Lastly, special thanks to the participants who made this thesis insightful, as their contributions made all this possible.

Kalmar, May 21st 2019

Simon Haile Ebrima Jabang
Concept Definition

Fundamental concepts have been defined below, in order to increase the understanding of the study.

- **Adaptation** - Is the act of changing something or changing your behaviour to make it suitable for a new purpose or situation

- **Apartheid** - A system of institutionalised racial segregation

- **Boer** - South African ethnic group descended from mainly Dutch settlers

- **GLOBE** - Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research

- **MNC** - Multinational Corporation

- **SME** - Small and Medium-sized Enterprise

- **SSA** - Sub-Saharan Africa
# Table of Contents

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION** ............................................................................................................. 1  
1.1 Background ................................................................................................................................. 1  
1.2 Problem Discussion ...................................................................................................................... 3  
1.3 Research Questions and Research Purpose ................................................................................. 5  
1.4 Research Aims ............................................................................................................................ 6  
1.5 Research Outline .......................................................................................................................... 6  

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW** .......................................................................................... 7  
2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 7  
2.2 Definition of Culture .................................................................................................................... 7  
   2.2.1 Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory .................................................................................. 9  
   2.2.2 Trompenaars Model .............................................................................................................. 12  
   2.2.3 GLOBE - Cultural Dimensions ............................................................................................ 16  
   2.2.4 GLOBE Cultural Dimensions - Sweden .............................................................................. 21  
   2.2.5 GLOBE Cultural Dimensions - SSA ................................................................................... 22  
2.3 Leadership across Cultures ........................................................................................................... 25  
   2.3.1 Leadership Style Dimensions – GLOBE .............................................................................. 26  
   2.3.2 Swedish Leadership Style Dimension - GLOBE ................................................................ 27  
   2.3.3 SSA Leadership Style Dimension - GLOBE ...................................................................... 28  
   2.3.4 Leadership from a Swedish Perspective .............................................................................. 29  
   2.3.5 Leadership from a SSA Perspective .................................................................................... 30  
2.4 Critical Reflection - Literature Review ......................................................................................... 31  

**CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY** .................................................................................................. 33  
3.1 Research Design and Approach ................................................................................................. 33  
3.2 Qualitative Method ...................................................................................................................... 34  
3.3 Research Strategy - Multiple Case Study ..................................................................................... 35  
3.4 Data Collection ........................................................................................................................... 35  
   3.4.1 Sampling ............................................................................................................................ 37  
   3.4.2 Cases ................................................................................................................................... 39  
3.5 Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................... 40  
3.6 Ethical Considerations .................................................................................................................. 41  
3.7 Research Limitations ................................................................................................................... 42
3.8 Research Credibility ........................................................................................................... 43

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL DATA REVIEW ................................................................................. 45
4.1 Leadership in Transformation - Case 1 ............................................................................. 45
4.2 Democratic Leadership - Case 2 ....................................................................................... 47
4.3 Leader in Control - Case 3 ............................................................................................... 49
4.4 Transforming or Adapting - Case 4 .................................................................................. 50
4.5 Leadership and Trust - Case 5 ......................................................................................... 53
4.6 Adaptive and Flexible - Case 6 ....................................................................................... 54
4.7 Freedom and Control - Case 7 ......................................................................................... 56
4.8 Theatrical Leadership - Case 8 ....................................................................................... 58

CHAPTER 5: EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS ............................................................................. 60
5.1 Reasons for Adapting or Transforming the Corporate Culture ........................................ 60
   5.1.1 Relationship Challenges .......................................................................................... 60
   5.1.2 Societal Challenges .............................................................................................. 62
5.2 How to Adapt ..................................................................................................................... 65
5.3 Transforming the Corporate Culture ................................................................................. 68

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION ....................................................................................................... 70
6.1 Cultural Challenges .......................................................................................................... 70
6.2 Cross-Cultural Adaptation ............................................................................................... 72

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .................................................................................................... 74
7.1 Key Findings ..................................................................................................................... 74
7.2 Theoretical Contributions ............................................................................................... 75
7.3 Practical Contribution ...................................................................................................... 76
7.4 Social Contributions ........................................................................................................ 77
7.5 Limitations and Future Research .................................................................................... 77
7.6 Work progress and Authors’ Contribution ...................................................................... 78

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 79
Appendix A: Interview Guide ................................................................................................ 88
List of Figures

Figure 1: Cultural Pyramid - Hofstede et al. (2010) ................................................................. 8

Figure 2: GLOBE Country Clusters - House et al. (2002) .......................................................... 16

Figure 3: GLOBE Cultural Dimensions Comparison - House et al. (2004) ............................... 24

Figure 4: Cultural Challenges Faced by the Swedish SMEs Leaders in SSA ............................. 64

List of Tables

Table 1: Selection of Respondents ............................................................................................ 38
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce the research, with its background, problem discussion, research questions and research purpose. Finally, the research aim will be defined.

1.1 Background

The world changed dramatically in the 1990s; with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of newly independent states in Europe, Asia and Africa. This would become the starting point of the globalisation that swept across the world, which would lead to increased trade between nations, as a result of removed trade barriers (Mark and Slobodian, 2018). This meant that many SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), were no longer safe to stay in their domestic market and had to change their strategy and become internationalised or at least expand to a new market (Koch, 2001). This also entailed that SMEs and its leaders would encounter different cultures and try to find a way of coping with the differences successfully. The topic of leadership in multicultural organisations seems, therefore, to be of high relevance and interest. However, evidence from most findings in the literature about leadership and culture testifies that multicultural organisations due to fundamental differences in views are more likely to suffer from a lack of cohesion, which often leads to conflicts and the formation of sub-groups within organisations (Lloyd and Härtel, 2010).

As such, it is safe to assume that, the success or failure of any business, and organisation depends highly on the ability of its leaders to influence the organisation in order to reach their maximum potential. This can, however, be very tricky when one finds oneself in a foreign region with substantial cultural differences. The literature on multiculturalism shows, when cultural differences are correctly harnessed, the benefits can be vast (Schneider, 2014). However, most of the current research on leadership and culture has a tendency only to cover western perspective on European, Asian or American business cultures. Africa and in particular SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa) tend to be overlooked, which may be a consequence of the fact that SSA has been seen as a region that is branded by war and poverty (Litow et al., 2014; Kamoche, 2011). However, SSA has in recent years been through significant social and financial development. Analysts furthermore speak of greater political stability and rapid economic growth in the region. The reason for this is the decline of wars, increased democratisation process of nations and new policies regarding improved trade and entrepreneurship (Stein, 2010).
SSA is the world's second fastest-growing region, experiencing an average annual GDP growth of 4.6% for the period 2000-2016. The region's GDP is moreover, expected to grow 3.9% annually until 2022 (AUC, 2018). Furthermore, more than half of the global population growth between 2019 and 2050 is expected to occur in SSA. The region has the highest rate of population growth in the world, growing at a pace of 2.55 per cent annually (UN, 2019). This entails that SMEs that operate in SSA have many opportunities to gain since the region is relatively unexplored with a boosting population and economy. Nevertheless, before leaders of SMEs choose to establish a business in SSA, it is imperative that they know about the culture and how it can affect them.

Schneider (2014) argues that the significant challenge that differ from being a domestic and an international leader are the tasks to understand and to manage effectively across different cultures. SMEs leaders need, therefore, to understand the challenges and opportunities that culture can bring since they cannot face business and management without considering the context of culture. Culture consists of several different components, such as language and customs, which are extremely important in the world of business. Leaders that, furthermore, recognise and promote cultural difference are more likely to lead a more effective and creative organisation, than those that subdue cultural differences (Adler, 2002). However, managing culture differences can also be challenging as it can lead to conflicts. The leader needs, therefore, to be cautious when solving these problems because their leadership will be understood differently in a multicultural setting (Schneider, 2014). Hughes et al. (2002, p. 8) define leadership as "the process of influencing an organised group to achieve its goal". This entails that leadership is a complex social process where the opinions and interpretations in the interaction between the leader and subordinates are crucial. The functions and responsibilities of leaders, such as planning, controlling are usually the same around the world. However, leadership styles tend to vary from culture to culture.

Evans (1995) argues that a society's culture is a dominant factor that influences leadership styles. Child (1981), however, believes that culture affects micro-variables, such as leadership styles, regardless of whether macro-variables, such as organisational structure and technology, converge or not. Leading SMEs across national borders would, therefore, pose a considerable challenge as different cultures require different leadership styles (Rodrigues, 1997). What works in one country does not have to work in another. A Swedish manager in South Africa, with native employees, must take into account and create an understanding of their employees' culture in their actions in order to be successful.
If managers utilise a delegating leadership style that is associated with successful leadership in Sweden can it in return, create confusion and inefficiency among South African employees. At the same time, a South African manager, characterised by authority and control needs, can create confusion and dissatisfaction in a Swedish organisation (House et al., 2004). Effective leaders that select the right leadership style for the current cultural environment can, therefore, increase the likelihood of success. Swedish leaders that operate in SSA need, therefore, to be careful about the cultural challenges and differences. They will need to adapt and use cultural differences as an opportunity in order to gain a competitive advantage (Mårtenson, 1998).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Globalisation has in recent years pushed SMEs to markets around the world, as they may feel that their domestic market is too limited to grow and develop. It is thus logical to expand to a market that has the prospect to meet the demands of the company. As a result, more SMEs are now continuously searching for new markets to enter, and SSA is a region that has shown great potential in recent years. The markets of SSA have become attractive because of its growing economies and its encouragement of foreign investors (Mwika et al., 2018). However, SMEs that enters SSA need to understand that they will encounter different cultures, and it is imperative that the leaders of SMEs have the skills to manage these challenges. It is, therefore, vital for leaders to recognise the influence of cultural differences that come with being a multicultural organisation (Schneider, 2014).

Nevertheless, most studies on culture and leadership focus on Asian, American or European markets. SSA tends to be overlooked, and it is, therefore, crucial that more research on this topic is conducted (Yang et al., 2006). Kamoche (2011) also argues that SSA has been under-researched compared to other regions in the field of international business. Previous research regarding culture in SSA has been studied by Taylor (2012) and Darley and Blankson (2008) that focus on the general business environment. Kuada (2009), moreover, tried to identify the knowledge gaps in existing African leadership studies and link them with African culture and leadership practices. Dorfman et al. (2011) also examined the managerial leadership and its cultural and historical foundations in SSA. This demonstrates that some researchers have indeed investigated the cultural and even leadership aspect of SSA; however, the research fails to provide an understanding of how these concepts are being addressed by western leaders, in particularly Swedish ones.
Even though studies have been devoted to Swedish companies operating in other regions, there is little focus on Swedish leaders experiences conducting business in SSA. It is therefore important to explore how Swedish leaders deal with the cross-cultural challenges, especially with the changing circumstances in SSA. House et al. (2002), argue that there is an active link between culture and leadership style. Lammers and Hickson (1979), moreover state that if the culture of a leader can affect his type of leadership style, then there is a likelihood that the culture of the employees might also affect the leadership style. It is thus questionable on how it influences leadership and how the leaders adapt their leadership style to a specific culture.

Lasserre (2003) emphasises that international companies should have an adaptive strategy including, their perception of leadership since it is imperative that they have a leader that has the capacity to lead employees from different nationalities successfully. This paper, therefore, argues that this is a valid research topic and aims to contribute knowledge on how cultural challenges in SSA can influence leadership styles of Swedish SMEs leaders. Apart from exploring different cultural challenges, the research will focus on how leaders adapt to the new cultural environment in order to lead successfully even though there are existing multicultural influences. This research is essential since it will act as a helping tool for present and future leaders of internationalised SMEs.

Leaders will find out through this research what happens in a multicultural setting and what type of cultural challenges they can expect when operating in SSA and how they can be managed effectively and practically. This research could also in the future be an assisting tool for Swedish SMEs and its leaders that wish to enter SSA. Through it, the researchers hope to be able to offer useful guidelines and suggestions in regards to culture and leadership style that are deemed efficient in the SSA region.

There is presently little to no agreement among researchers on how Swedish SMEs leaders choose leadership style when entering SSA and comparatively few academics and journals have focused on SSA markets in general, which would make this research significant since it contributes to theories regarding leadership and culture in a SSA context. This study, therefore, aims to explore the concepts of culture in SSA and subsequently, how to manage them, out of a Swedish SME leader’s perspective.
1.3 Research Questions and Research Purpose

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), the research question should clarify to the reader the exact topic and area of the study, and it should furthermore inform what makes the topic an interesting field of research. The researchers wish, therefore, to provide a deeper understanding of effective leadership in multicultural organisations.

This research wants, moreover, to gain insight into the experiences and recommendations from Swedish leaders and see how all of this is correlated with leadership and cultural theories. After reviewing previous literature, it is shown that there is a lack of research dedicated to Swedish SMEs leaders’ experience dealing with the cultural challenges in SSA. This led to formulating the research question:

- RQ1: What cultural challenges do Swedish SME leaders face in SSA?

This research question is formulated in a logical way, where it wants to explore the cultural challenges in SSA. This entails that the research will focus on leadership and culture with a Swedish perspective. However, this question is quite narrow and does only answer one aspect of the purpose of the research. This paper argues that there is a case to research, as to how and to what extent do cultural challenges impact Swedish SME leaders when conducting business in foreign markets, particularly SSA markets. It would, therefore, be suitable to introduce the second research questions.

- RQ2: How do Swedish SME leaders adapt their leadership style to the cultural challenges in SSA?

This question is more specific in exploring how the leaders deal with the cultural challenges they encounter and adapt. This is vital since it leads to an understanding of how SME leaders operate in SSA and how they can utilise the culture challenges in order to gain a competitive advantage. There are currently few studies that cover this topic, and this research would, therefore, be very beneficial for Swedish SMEs that want to establish themselves in that specific region.
1.4 Research Aims

Grounded on the aforementioned research questions and research purpose, clear aims were set for this study:

- To take a qualitative research approach in looking at the different cultural challenges Swedish SMEs leaders face in SSA
- Explore how leaders adapt and manage cultural differences
- Learn from Swedish SMEs leader’s cultural experience in SSA

1.5 Research Outline

This project degree consists of seven different chapters and is organised in the following order: Chapter one is an introductory chapter, where the background of the study, research problem, research purpose, research questions and aims are outlined. The researchers will, moreover, discuss the importance of their topic in relation to being a leader in a multicultural setting. Chapter two consists of the literature review; in it, the researchers look at different studies of how cultural aspects affect leadership. Chapter three consists of the methods of study, with a description of the research strategy, and the methodological choice that has been utilised in order to obtain necessary data to conduct the research. It will also include what type of data collection methods that were used, such as semi-structured interviews, and how the respondents for the interviews were selected, and how the data will be analysed to reach the results.

Chapter four contains the empirical review; here is where the researchers provide their findings from the data they collected from the interviews with the Swedish SME leaders. Chapter five is the empirical analysis section, which provides the reader with an analysis of the findings from the empirical review. It will further show the researchers effort in linking the findings to the theories embodied in the pool of literature.

Chapter six is the discussion, which will consist of the researcher’s efforts of answering the research questions by looking at all the data collected, compare it with previous work and make a final assumption. Chapter seven will consist of a conclusion in which the researchers will give their own reflections, and make suggestions for future studies on the topic. Then the paper will conclude with a list of references.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This part will provide a summary of some of the most significant literature that can shed light on the topic of leadership in a multicultural organisation. The main focus will be on the GLOBE study.

2.1 Introduction

This research wants to explore Swedish leaders' cultural experiences in SSA, and therefore, it is necessary to clarify the different theories that will be included in this research. The literature review provides the relevant and necessary theoretical background for this study and is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter introduces the topic of culture and its impact on leaders and followers. Moreover, Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Trompenaars cultural dimensions are explained in order to clarify the history and background of the GLOBE study that will be used as the leading theory when evaluating and exploring the cultural experiences of Swedish SMEs leaders in SSA markets. Moreover, this part provides cultural dimensions to demonstrate that cultures are distinguished from each other when it comes to values. The second subchapter will explain the concept of leadership and different leadership styles that could be utilised. This is vital since it will help the readers to comprehend the concept of leadership and provide them with knowledge about different leadership preferences. The literature review also contains a more in-depth examination of leadership perspectives in Swedish and SSA. Lastly, a critical reflection of the literature will be presented.

2.2 Definition of Culture

The term culture derives from the Latin word “cultura” which roughly means 'processing', 'cultivation' and 'education' and which in turn originates from “colo” 'cultivate'. The concept has gained a significant meaning and, in a broad sense, refers to all human activity. Culture is also defined as patterns of life, such as, language and values that have been transmitted socially from generation to generation (Ek et al., 2019). Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 6) define culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another”. The concept of culture is, therefore, vast, with several different definitions that involve people’s tradition, habits, religion and beliefs. It also has a crucial role in the interpretation of events and how people understand the context around them. Moreover, culture is not always visible, but generally, something that is deeply embedded within people and societies (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). Furthermore, Hofstede (2010) explains that culture is something that is learned through time and not inherited. Hofstede argues that peoples thought patterns originate from social environments such as, family, school, work and society.
This entails that people’s mental programs vary since they are being developed in different social environments. Every individual is unique, and its mental program consists of three layers: Human Nature, Personality and Culture. Human nature is inherited and determined by our genes and lays the foundation for our basic physical and mental functioning, such as, our ability to feel, fear, joy and love. The personality consists of unique schedules and scripts that can either be inherited by human nature or learned through a socialisation process. Each individual has, therefore, their own thought pattern, emotional reactions and actions, which are created during early childhood. Culture determines what people do with their emotions and is modified by the collective programming in the socialisation process. People learn these patterns from previous generations and teach them to the next. Culture can be seen as a template or a tool to give meaning to reality and to influence it. It provides a person with rules in order to cope with the social game. Culture is, therefore, a learning process understood in a particular context (Hofstede et al., 2010).

![Cultural Pyramid - Hofstede et al. (2010)](image)

Furthermore, globalisation has in recent years, changed the concept of culture in several aspects. Culture was in the past seen as the main characteristic of a country, but are now based on social relationship (Hannerz, 1998). Di Luzio et al. (2001) argue that culture is centred on communication and constant exchange of information between individuals. Leaders in multicultural organisations need, therefore, to focus on communication, since that can create meaning. Communication and creating meaning between different cultures has become vital as a consequence of the globalisation processes (Hall et al., 2013).
2.2.1 Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory

Culture is according to Hofstede, the operating system of the mind that helps a group of individuals to separate themselves from other groups. It is a collective agreement of behaviour that a specific group accepts as a way of living (Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede developed a framework using data from more than 116,000 surveys with almost 90,000 workers in different organisational fields around the world between the years 1967 - 1973. Hofstede later expanded his study further to cover an additional ten countries from the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Hofstede used a "country level factor analysis", to categorise his first 40 countries into four groups or dimensions. The four original dimensions consist of; Individualism vs Collectivism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity vs Femininity (Hofstede, 1980).

A. Individualism vs Collectivism

Individualism comprises of groups of people who are loosely connected and as such are only responsible for taking care of themselves and their immediate families. The needs of the individual in such cultures are valued above the needs of the group and society, and the individual possesses the right to hold a different thought than the one shared by the mass. People in individualistic cultures are responsible for providing their own needs and also for achieving one’s own goals in life (Mead and Andrews, 2009). In contrast to this is; collectivism which comprises of groups of people with a close social link in which one can distinguish between “in-groups” and “out-groups”. The in-groups are expected to look after each other, and in return, they offer absolute loyalty to the group (Kirkman et al., 2006). In such cultures, identity is connected to the group, and group need is valued above the individual needs (Mead and Andrews, 2009).

B. Power Distance

Hofstede referred to the second dimension as Power Distance, which he described as the extent to which a society view and accept the unequal sharing of power of its institutions and organisations. In such cultures, power is hierarchical, and leaders are expected to be autocratic in their decision making, in fact, and it is more the norm than the exception in such societies. Organisations in such societies function easier as decisions are hardly questioned, and as such leaders can easily delegate work without much resistance. Whereas in low power distances cultures, hierarchy is mostly weak (Mead and Andrews, 2009). The relationships tend to be based on more equal terms and inequality is avoided at any cost. Organisations in such societies give more freedom and inclusion to their employees.
Leaders are expected to involve and consult with the subordinates in decision making processes, and subordinates are encouraged to share their views without fear of harm. Leaders expect and count on their subordinate participation and contributions (Mead and Andrews, 2009).

C. Uncertainty Avoidance

Hofstede referred to his third dimension as; Uncertainty Avoidance which he described as the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertainty and tries to avoid such by devising strategies and ways to maintain stability by creating formal rules that can avoid unfamiliar ideas and behaviours. Moreover, individuals rely more on absolute truths and wisdom of expertise (Kirkman et al., 2006). Organisations in such societies tend to have clear guidelines and expectations. They try to avoid conflict at any cost and are less inclined to engage in high competition. Contrary to this are cultures with low uncertainty avoidance levels. They tend to suffer less from factors such as, high stress and fear, and members of organisations within such society are more likely to take risks and are more open to change. Furthermore, leaders within such organisations are usually young, and loyalty is not as valued as in societies with high uncertainty avoidance. Competition is encouraged and seen as vital for advancement and can lead to innovation. Change and trying new things are also seen as innovative and as such people from different or foreign culture are easily accepted into the new cultures (Mead and Andrews, 2009).

D. Masculinity vs Femininity

The fourth dimension comprises of two subcategories which Hofstede referred to as the Masculinity vs Femininity. In this cultural dimension, one’s gender determines which role and position one holds in society. Hofstede explains the extent to which masculinity dominates the values in society, such as assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and caring only for oneself. Whereas ‘Femininity’ is the total opposite of “Masculinity”, in which equal rights and caring for others is dominant (Kirkman et al., 2006). Women are expected to be more concerned with building and maintaining relations. However, gender roles are less transparent in such societies. Men and women have equal rights and access to job positions in society. Household work and taking care of their family falls to the lowest earner in the relationship. For instance, in a relationship between a man and a woman, if the man earns less than the woman, he can sacrifice and take care of the house chores in order to allow the woman on concentrate on work and providing for the family (Mead and Andrews, 2009).
E. Confucian Dynamism

Hofstede kept developing his cultural dimension further, and together with Michael Harris Bond they created the fifth dimension, which was referred to as “Confucian dynamism” (or long-term vs short-term orientation). In this dimension, a distinction is made between the past, present and future actions. Long-term orientation focuses on the future and emphasising values, as persistence and thrift. Short-term orientation referring more to values of past- and present-orientation, such as, maintaining old traditions and sustaining obligations to family and society (Kirkman et al., 2006). Moreover, the focus is directed to western concerns about truth (Mead and Andrews, 2009).

F. Indulgence vs Restrain

Hofstede’s six and final dimension came out in 2010. He called it ‘Indulgence versus restraint’. Hofstede claims that national culture carries huge significance in people's behaviour, which also tends to be evident in the organisational life of those actors. However, this statement implies that other cultural and non-cultural influences are neglected, as well as sub-national differences and changes (Jones, 2007). Hofstede described his sixth dimension as a cultural dimension based on the extent to which people can restrain from their desires (Hofstede et al., 2010). He claimed that this dimension could measure the tendency one allows basic and natural human desires to dictate how people live their life, basically making a choice about one’s lifestyle regardless of the norms in society. Contrary to that is ‘restraint’ which he defines as the conviction to curb such gratification due to the social norms of the society. It fundamentally entails having to live under conventionally and traditionally accepted guidelines and ways of life acceptable to society (Hostede et al., 2010).

Criticism of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

The theory has, however, been criticised and labelled as somewhat outdated since the research was conducted in the 1970s, and the world has changed dramatically since then (Ahlstrom and Bruton 2009). Moreover, Hofstede endured vast amounts of criticism from other researchers who claim that his reduction or categorisation of culture into only four and later six dimensions is too simplistic. It moreover, limits the sample to a single multinational corporation and as such it fails to capture the malleability of culture over time, which leads to the minimisation of culture into one significant entity (Kirkman et al. 2006). Another critic directed at Hofstede’s six dimension theories is that the methods he employed, for example, surveys to extract his data and eventual findings have their shortcomings (Jones, 2007).
It is also argued that he makes generalisations on the national level, ignoring the fact that most nations consist of subgroups and ethnicities whose culture sometimes are utterly different. His critics claim that cultural dimensions might influence an individual’s behaviour but not to the extent claimed by Hofstede, at least not on organisational relations (McSweeney et al., 2016). Furthermore, he does not offer proof of how cultural dimensions significantly influence an individual’s behaviour (Jones, 2007). McSweeney et al. (2016) criticised Hofstede theory, implying that one cannot predict the social actions of an individual just by looking at their national culture. They claim that, though they do not contest that national cultures can sometimes have an impact on people’s behaviours, they are not in agreement with Hofstede’s as to the extent it can impact an individual’s behaviour.

They assert that they have reached such a conclusion by looking if there are facts of regular statistical association in the literature to support such claim, which they did not find (McSweeney et al., 2016). Regardless of all the critics that Hofstede faced on his six-dimensional framework, it is nevertheless highly favoured within researchers, simply because of its distinctness, parsimony, and consonance with managers (Kirkman et al., 2006). Moreover, it is still vital to mention Hofstede cultural dimensions since it defines differences in cultures, which is part of multicultural organisations. The theory was, furthermore, used as a point of references when creating the GLOBE study (Ahlstrom and Bruton 2009).

2.2.2 Trompenaars Model

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions were further developed by researchers Trompenaar and Turner (1997). They argue that there exist substantial cultural differences between national and international boundaries that affect the outcome of conducting business and management in organisations. Their definition of culture is simple but comprehensive, as the means, a group of individual's uses to understand and reconcile their differences. Trompenaars and Turner credited their cultural dimensions and came up with seven opposing attitudinal dispositions that they claimed can be found in every culture. They are as follows: Universalism vs Particularism, Individualism vs Communitarianism, Neutral vs Emotional, Specific vs Diffuse, Achievement vs Ascription, Sequential vs Synchronous and Internal vs External control (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).
A. Universalism vs Particularism

According to Trompenaars in universalism cultures, there is a strong belief that the existing ideas in society can be applicable everywhere. In such cultures, the reality is perceived as static, and as such, they tend to depend on formal rules. Adhering to rules and regulations are more important than keeping personal relation. Contrast to this are particularist cultures, where personal relationships are more important than maintaining rules and regulations. People are more concerned with their obligations to their close network than society in general (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

B. Individualism vs Communitarianism

In individualist cultures, the focus is on oneself and one's close relatives. In such cultures, loyalty to oneself and family is believed to be more important than the group. People are expected to take care of themselves first, and as such, decisions that will benefit one's wellbeing are cherished. Individual performance is rewarded with praise and rewards and making personal decisions are encouraged. Moreover, personal needs come before organisational needs and creativity and mistakes are allowed. Contrast to this is communitarianism, where group needs are put before individual needs. Loyalty to the group is more critical as the group is the provider of the safety net necessary for survival and wellbeing. As such personal freedom can be sacrificed to achieve group belonging. Praise is given to the group performance, not to the individual, decisions are collectively made, and personal privileges are discouraged (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

C. Neutral vs Emotional

In neutralist cultures, emotions are not openly expressed. People in such societies are expected to be always capable of controlling their emotions. Their actions are to be based on reason rather than emotions and sentiments. Showing emotions openly is seen as signs of weakness and as such, is avoided at any cost. When conducting business in such societies, emotions are expected to be put aside. Contrast to this is emotional cultures, where it is typical and expected to show emotions both privately and publicly. Emotions are expected to be visible in communication with others, and it is usual for decisions at the workplace to be influenced by emotions at least to some extent. In such cultures, conflicts are openly discussed and managed (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).
D. Specific vs Diffuse
In specific cultures, individuals try to separate between public and private space. Public space is what people share with other individuals such as co-workers, and private space is what people share with their close friends and associates and is heavily safeguarded. Such cultures also dictate the level at which responsibility is explicitly given or reluctantly accepted. Furthermore, people have a deep belief in the need to separate professional and personal aspects of the individual's life, and as such, go to grave levels to make a distinction between the two. Interactions between people are very well-defined. The separation between personal from professional relations means that people believe they should be able to work together without the need to have an excellent personal relationship with their colleagues (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997). Contrast to this is the diffusely oriented culture, where people are more open and integrated, seeing different aspects of their existence as one connected whole. Everything and everyone is connected somehow, and as such maintaining a reasonable relation to the different elements are seen as necessary, more than just keeping the personal relation. In such cultures, personal and professional lives overlap easily. Maintaining a good personal connection is seen as vital, especially for a successful business outcome. The lines between relations in the workplace and personal relations are often blurred (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

E. Achievement vs Ascription
This cultural dimension measures how people achieve status in a society and if it is earned or given. In achievement cultures things in life are earned through hard work, status is not given but earned through the acquisition of skills and knowledge. However, respect in organisations within such cultures is achieved through the level of commitment to the organisation, not through the skills one possess. Contrast to this are ascription cultures, here status is not dependant on what people do or did, but on what social background they have. It is believed that people should be valued for who they are, and as such titles and credentials are essential to acknowledge (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

F. Sequential vs Synchronic
In sequential cultures, people prefer events to take place in chronological order. Respect for time and punctuality is encouraged. Moreover, planning is seen as essential and deadlines are taken seriously. Time is seen as a valuable and scarce commodity that needs to be managed right. Contrast to this is a synchronic time culture, where people see a connection between the past, present, and future, and as such, it is normal for them to plan and to work on several projects at once (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).
G. Internal vs External Control

In internal direct cultures, people perceive the environment as a vast, complex entity that we can control and benefit from, with the right expertise. There is a strong belief that human beings have a right to control and use nature as we see fit. This view does not only concern the natural environment alone, but it includes the social environment as well. In such cultures, how we treat each other in society reflects how we treat the environment (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

Contrast to this is the outer-directed culture, where people have a more holistic view of nature. Nature is the supreme entity that is always there and that humans are just one of the many variables that exist within it. Therefore it is humans that need to adjust to the forces of environment and nature, and it is people who should try to live in harmony with the other existing variables in the environment. In such cultures, people's relation with the social environment, for example, in the workplace or relationships, the focus should be directed on others, not oneself. Here people are expected to be considerate in their dealings with other people, and tension and conflict are avoided at any cost in such cultures (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

Criticism of Trompenaars Model

Trompenaars main criticism comes from Geert Hofstede, in his article “Riding the waves of commerce” (1996). Hofstede claimed that Trompenaar on his seven dimensions did not summarise his answers into country scores, which he claims makes it difficult to identify where a country is positioned and neither did he made clear how country scores on the dimensions are validated (Hofstede, 1996). Furthermore, he claimed that only two out of Trompenaars seven dimensions could be identified and both of them had similarities to his own individualist dimension theory (Hofstede, 1996).

However, this claim of Hofstede was detested by Trompenaar and Hamden-Turner, who claimed there were considerable differences in the two approaches. They claim their approach is more focused on the creational aspect of culture, whereas Hofstede’s dimension was more focused on the analytical aspect of national cultures (Trompenaar and Turner, 2012). Another criticism that Trompenaar faced was that his model does not acknowledge the importance of personal characteristics on individual conduct, and as such misses to see the importance of other aspects such as education and upbringing. It is furthermore claimed that Trompenaars theories make differentiations in regards to various cultures but does not offer guidelines as to how to interact within the different cultures (Hofstede, 1996).
2.2.3 GLOBE - Cultural Dimensions

The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) is a collaboration project of 200 researchers from different countries and fields. The study lasted for 11 years, and the data was collected from 17 000 managers all across the world in order to explore what is relevant for "effective leadership" (Javidan et al., 2005). The comprehensive research used interviews, archival data, questionnaires and analysis of media in order to generate data. The data was then analysed and used to determine the GLOBE dimension and rank different nations in line with their characteristics (House et al., 2004). The study focuses on understanding the connections between leadership attributes and national culture and aims to investigate how cultures influence the expected behaviour of a leader. The GLOBE study explains that effective leadership is embedded in societal and organisational norms. Moreover, the study describes culture as a concept of shared beliefs, identities, ideas and norms that are based on shared experiences of members of a society which has been conveyed through different generations (Hoppe, 2007). The purpose of the GLOBE study is, therefore, to enhance the cultural knowledge of leaders that operates in a cross-cultural environment (House et al., 2004). The Hofstede (1980) and Trompenaars theories (1997) was used as a point of references when creating many of GLOBEs dimensions (Ahlstrom and Bruton 2009). House et al. (2004) explain that the GLOBES study concentrates on 61 societies in six continents, which would represent all regions in the world. GLOBE research team later grouped the societies into ten separate clusters. The nations in the same cluster show a higher degree of cultural similarity, while countries in different clusters display more cultural differences (Hoppe, 2007).

Figure 2: GLOBE Country Clusters - House et al. (2002)
House et al. (2004) moreover, explains that the project is comparable to Hofstede and Trompenaars dimensions. GLOBE’s nine established cultural dimensions help to categorise different cultural characteristics, and each of the selected nations in the study received a value-score for the different dimensions of; uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation and humane orientation. GLOBE is based on a 7-point scale, where “1” is considered as a very low score and “7” as very high. Many of GLOBE’s dimensions share the name with Hofstede, but the context of the dimensions for the studies differ. Hofstede’s dimensions are linked with practices and values, whereas GLOBE dimensions are associated to how the society is currently practising the dimensions and how they should be practising the dimensions in accordance to their cultural values (Javidan et al., 2005). A brief description about GLOBE’s cultural dimensions will be given below:

A. Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension describes to what extent the members of one organisation or society strives to avoid uncertainty by relying on social norms, rituals and bureaucratic methods in order to avoid unpredictable future events (House et al., 2002). High uncertainty cultures are seen as organised and rely heavily on policies and procedures. From a leadership perspective, this means that leaders must be careful not to lose legitimacy and trust of their followers. Countries that score low on uncertainty avoidance tend to agree that a business deal would be sufficient to seal with a verbal agreement. While those societies that score high on these dimensions believes that a spoken agreement needs to be documented and clarified in legal contracts (House et al., 2004). Accounting for all 61 societies, the average score for uncertainty avoidance practices was 4.16 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

B. Power Distance

The degree to which members of society accepts and endorses authority and power differs. Societies are divided into different classes and in those cultures that score high on this dimension view power as a construct for social order, harmony and stability (Grove, 2005). Leaders are, moreover, anticipated to bring order, and the members of the society should follow without asking questions, debating or arguing the leader’s view. The power is vertical with the leader at the top and the subordinates at the bottom. Furthermore, social mobility is restricted, and assets are reserved for a small group of people. Leadership in these cultures is, therefore, seen as paternalist and authoritarian. However, a low score society sees power as a mean of corruption and dominance.
Leaders should act as a facilitator and limit the abuse of power and corruption. This entails that leaders should have a democratic, consultative and inclusive attitude towards their followers (House et al., 2004). The average score for power distance practices was 5.17 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

C. Institutional Collectivism (I) and In-Group Collectivism (II)

Institutional collectivism is the degree to which people are encouraged by organisational institutions to share resources collectively and partake in shared activities (House et al., 2004). Individuals that are part of a society that scores high on this dimension assume that they are much interlinked with the organisations they work for, and group loyalty is highly supported and encouraged, even though it can affect and undermine individual goals. Promotions and rewards are mostly dependent on what is most suitable for the group and on seniority rank. Members are also expected to stay within the same organisations throughout their careers. However, members that are part of a low score society tend to see themselves as interdependent from their organisation and focuses more on their own individual goals. Promotions and rewards are furthermore, mostly guided by an individual's contribution to success (House et al., 2002). Moreover, the economic system of these nations encourages personal and individual interests instead of group goals. The average score for institutional collectivism practices was 4.73 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

In-group collectivism defines individuals pride, loyalty and cohesiveness towards their organisation, employers and families (House et al., 2004). Social behaviour in high score societies tends to motivate duties and obligations. People also emphasise with groups, instead of individuality. However, individual needs and attitudes are seen as important indicators of social behaviour in societies with a low in-group collectivism score. Personal goals are also seen as more important than group goals. The average score for in-group collectivism practices was 5.13 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

D. Gender Egalitarianism

This dimension explains how and to what extent a society tries to reduce differences between the two genders while meantime supporting gender equality. Women have a higher status and a more significant role when it comes to decision-making processes in high gender-egalitarian cultures. Moreover, women are more represented in the labour force and in education. The GLOBE study argues that people that live in societies that are seen as more gender egalitarian are more likely to have longer life expectancies and greater economic prosperity. In low gender-egalitarian cultures, fewer women are in positions of power and sex segregation is more common.
Women in these types of societies are expected to stay at home and take care of their family, instead of pursuing a career (House et al., 2004). Moreover, the educational level of women is lower compared to that of men, and they have almost no significant role in community decision making. The average score for gender egalitarianism practices was 3.37 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

E. Assertiveness

The GLOBE study argues that assertiveness is an essential characteristic of a society's culture, but it has been overlooked in cross-cultural literature. GLOBE project definition of assertiveness is "the degree to which individuals in organisations or societies is assertive, tough, dominant, and aggressive in social relationship" (House et al. 2004, p 395). Assertiveness is, therefore, seen as a soft variant of aggressive behaviour that is required to be successful in business (Grove, 2005). Societies that have a high level of assertiveness encourage success, progress and competition that lead to organisational value. There is more focus on results over relationships and creating trust based on competence and calculation. The societies have, therefore, more sympathy for strong individuals that try to pursue control over the environment they operate in. Moreover, the communication techniques of people are seen as direct and unambiguously. However, low assertiveness societies favour modesty and cooperation instead of assertiveness. Equality, relationships and life quality are more crucial than success. There is more sympathy for the weak and individuals utilises indirect communication in order to "save face". Moreover, trust is built based on predictability and the followers are expected to be loyal (House et al. 2004). The average score for assertiveness practices was 4.14 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

F. Future Orientation

Future orientation deals with how individuals in societies participate in future-oriented activities, such as, value planning, future investments and delaying individual or collective gratification. This dimension can define essential characteristic when describing human behaviour (Grove, 2005). Individuals in high future orientation societies, value long-term success and have the ability to save for the future. Organisations and leaders are also seen as more flexible and adaptive for the environment. Furthermore, people in these types of cultures have the ability to comprehend and develop a future vision, which makes leaders opt for visionary leadership. The leaders are, therefore, more capable of controlling chaos and uncertainty. However, people in a low score society tend to be more spontaneous and have the mind-set of "one day at a time". They put minimum effort into reflecting on past events and do not have any particular future plans. There is also an urge to spend now instead of saving and more focus on short-term rewards.
Moreover, organisations and leaders in these cultures stress short-term strategic orientation and emphasise leadership that revolves around repetition. Organisations and leaders are, therefore, seen as inflexible and struggle with adaptations (House et al., 2004). The average score for future orientation practices was 3.85 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

G. Performance Orientation

Performance orientation reflects how success is defined within a society and how they encourage excellence, innovation, high standards and performance improvement (Grove, 2005). The GLOBE study argues that this dimension has not gained much attention in business studies. It is, therefore, essential to address how a society deals with challenges of external adaptation and internal integration, through setting challenging goals and focusing on performance orientation. This dimension explains to what extent leaders set challenging goals and the expectations they have for their followers. High score societies pay much attention to training and knowledge development in order to gain a competitive advantage. There is also more emphasis on initiative taking and setting high-performance targets. Furthermore, these types of cultures view feedback as an essential component for performance improvement. However, low performance oriented societies pay more attention to social and family relations and stress loyalty and tradition. Formal feedback is seen as judgmental that would lead to discomfort, and they use subtle and indirect language. There is, furthermore, focus on seniority, and age is seen as a vital factor in becoming promoted (House et al., 2004). Accounting for all 61 societies, the average score for performance orientation practices was 4.10 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

H. Humane Orientation

Humane orientation is defined as the "degree to which an organisation or society encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others" (House et al., 2004, p 569). The study argues that technology and climate are factors that influence if a nation is either a low or a high score culture. Humane Orientation is higher in nations with harsh climate and physical condition and lower in countries where technology has taken over human activity. Individuals in high score societies tend to think that others (neighbours, family, friends and community) are more significant than themselves. Moreover, kindness, love and generosity are seen as crucial components of human behaviour. Relationships between individuals are also seen as informal, and everyone is accountable for promoting the well-being of others.
This type of relationships in business helps to offer developing opportunity for employees since there is minimum influence by the state or different type of legislation. However, in low score societies, self-interest is seen as vital, and power and material possessions motivate people. A formal relationship is prevalent, which lead that social control is based on bureaucratic practices. Leaders are, therefore, more autonomous and self-protective. The average score for humane orientation practices was 4.09 on the 1-to-7 scale (Grove, 2005).

2.2.4 GLOBE Cultural Dimensions - Sweden

Sweden is included in the northern Europe cluster in the GLOBE project, together with Denmark, Finland and Norway. Uncertainty Avoidance is relatively low in Sweden according to the GLOBE study, which demonstrates the collective value of striving for order in the society. The reasons for this could be that high emphasis is placed on its welfare system with comprehensive social security, unemployment and maternity leave. Moreover, Swedish culture reflects a sense of order when it comes to people's approach to time. The social norm of "being on time" is used for both business meetings and social gatherings. Swedes frequently use different types of agendas to ensure a sense of order during business meetings, but also at birthdays, weddings and social meetings (Warner-Söderholm, 2012).

This also implies that Sweden has a lower preference for avoiding ambiguity, making Swedish leaders focus more on strategic concern than operational activities (Szymura-Tyc and Kucia, 2016). Sweden is also placed as a low Power Distance society. This is manifested in business practices such as minimum usage of titles, dress codes and practical attitudes to work. Furthermore, the roles and hierarchy system are reflected in the egalitarian practices at work. For instance, all the organisation members, whether the CEO or trainees usually have their “FIKA” together, where they can drink coffee and socialise. The complex tax systems and the generous welfare states are in place to protect and encourage Sweden’s egalitarian values (Warner-Söderholm, 2012).

Sweden shows a high score when it comes to Institutional Collectivism. Sweden’s high number of members in labour unions and the high taxes is good indicators of this dimension since it represents their collective support for the society. Moreover, the GLOBE study explains that Sweden has a low score at In-group Collectivism. Cultures where different generation live together and where the family take collective responsibility for the elders' generally score high on in-group collectivism. However, Swedish tradition assumes that the state should take care of its elderly and sick people, rather than imagining the family taking collective responsibility.
Moreover, Sweden is famous when it comes to its Gender Equity, considering its promotion of equal status to men and women. Equal opportunities for both genders in the labour market have been vital for the political and social debates (King et al., 2011). Furthermore, most Swedish workplaces offer maternity/paternity leave with flexible working hours (Esping-Andersen and Korpi, 1987). Sweden scores, however, very low when it comes to Assertiveness. Foreigners generally view Swedes as reserved and ‘cold-hearted’ due to their incapacity to reveal their emotions openly. It is seen as rare that Swedes have heated argument at work or even in private life.

Moreover, it is seen as rude and inappropriate to blow your horn in traffic or to push past in the queue (Warner-Soderholm, 2012). Future Orientation is high in Sweden as a result of a culture that encourages saving for the future and long-term planning. Majority of the population in Sweden have some private or company pension funds in order to save for financial security (Warner-Soderholm, 2012). However, Sweden has a lower score in Performance Orientation. Holmberg and Akerblom (2006) argue that this is a consequence of political policies. Sweden's developments as a welfare state were through a plan that would combine capitalism and socialism. This would be accomplished in a joint effort by the state, labour unions and workers.

The balance between capitalism and socialism had, therefore, an impact on the performance orientation, since it becomes somewhat weaken by collectivist values. Modest behaviour is also embedded in the culture where no-one should better than someone else “Law of Jante”. Furthermore, Sweden is known for being a country that is fair and generous towards other countries, such as, aid work and refugee programmes. This might be seen as an indication of high Humane Orientation towards others. The welfare state can also summaries the fairness and care that can be expected in Swedish society (Warner-Soderholm, 2012).

2.2.5 GLOBE Cultural Dimensions - SSA

The GLOBE Sub-Saharan Africa cluster consists of Namibia, Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Uncertainty Avoidance is relativity high in SSA according to the GLOBE study which can be the cause of high corruption rates (Getz and Volkema, 2001). Corruption has for long been seen as a problem that permeates the socioeconomic life in SSA, such as, conducting business, closing deals and securing contracts. This has led to negative perceptions of SSA leaders in both organisational and political positions (Dorfman et al., 2011).
Furthermore, the societies in SSA, in contrast to Sweden, reflect a culture that is relaxed when it comes to the concept of time. Mbiti (1990) argues that time is seen as a foreign and abstract concept and that people of SSA have a different dimensional conception of time (a long past, present and virtually no future) than to the western (an infinite past, a present and an infinite future).

The SSA culture has thus a polychronic time orientation, which entails being late for meetings is seen as normal (Onwubiko, 1991). Moreover, SSA reflects high Power Distance, where they seem to accept and endorse authority and power differentials. It is essential for the subordinates in SSA to show respect for hierarchy and obey unconditionally to instructions directives. The leaders are, therefore, expected by the followers to be autocratic or authoritarian (Dorfman et al., 2011). Institutional Collectivism score is moderate, mostly due to the misuse and corruption that has characterised many institutions in SSA.

However, the SSA scores high at In-Group Collectivism, where the emphasis is on the collective need rather than the individual. Group members do often belong to the same tribe or extended family and thus take pride in the group. Individuals are often prepared to sacrifice individual ambitions in order to achieve the goal of the collective, which can be linked with the humane orientation in SSA (Ovadje, 2014.)

The GLOBE study explains that Humane Orientation is high in SSA, as the need for belonging and affiliations is seen as motivating forces. Members of the society are accountable for the well-being of others and the promotions of paternalistic norms and patronage relationship. SSA also scores high in Future Orientation, which indicates that the society places a high value on long-term success. The high future orientation values in SSA can also reflect the high priority that societies put on spiritual orientation and preferring elements that are linked with spirit on a long-term basis (Seriki, 2007). Furthermore, SSA scored high when it comes to performance orientation, where the society encourages high standards of performance. People that perform well in these cultures can expect rewards and bonuses from their employers (Dorfman et al., 2011).

Gender Egalitarianism is low in SSA, due to male dominance in both business and the political sphere. The culture traditions state that status and respect should be given to males. There is moreover, gender-specific roles, where men should work, and women stay home and take care of the households (Dorfman et al., 2011). SSA is, furthermore high in Assertiveness, which indicates that individuals can be seen as harsh, dominant and aggressive in social relationships. Dorfman et al. (2011) argue that the high level of assertiveness may be the cause of corruption and violence that can be found in several SSA nations.
Criticism of GLOBE

GLOBE will be used as the main reference point for this study, but there is still criticism directed at this project. The GLOBE Study was completed in 2004, and criticism can thus be directed towards how relevant the result is today. However, the leadership attributes used in GLOBE can still be seen as applicable, since they are underlying leadership qualities whose definition should not have changed significantly (Venaik and Brewer, 2013). Moreover, Hofstede (2006) targeted criticism at GLOBE as the study was only conducted in the financial, food and the telecommunication industries. Thus, criticism can be directed towards the fact that the results in project GLOBE are not representative of more industries than the three industries that were examined.

Hofstede (2006) moreover, criticised how the GLOBE study embraces the assumption of cultural homogeneity. The project, despite more included variables than Hofstede’s survey, cannot circumvent the problem of categorising and generalising human cultures. The cultural dimensions that the research project has divided into different categories can be perceived as too narrow and stereotypical. Javidan et al. (2006) however argue that it is crucial to have an idea of how different cultures construct the view of the leader and that this awareness is vital for managers who work globally, in order to create mutual understanding and trust between themselves and their employees.
2.3 Leadership across Cultures

Numerous studies have been conducted on the concept of leadership, to explain the purpose of leaders and how an effective leader should act and behave (Alvesson et al., 2017). Yukl and Kaulio (2012) explain that a common position shared by most of the leadership researcher is that leadership is a process, where one or several individuals intentionally influence others in order to facilitate, structure and lead relationships and activities in an organisation or group. The GLOBE project defines leadership as an individual's ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute to the organisation's success (House et al., 2004).

As a result, leadership is often related with being; authentic, charismatic, coaching, ethical, and transformational and other characteristics that make leaders effective (House et al., 2004). Smircich and Morgan (1982) argue that leadership is a social phenomenon, which is described as a relationship between followers and leaders and its shared context. Max Depree (1987) claims that effective leaders can transform followers, through visions, motivation and influence.

In this approach, a distinction is made between management and leadership, where the first is about creating stability and the latter about creating and managing change. Leadership should be viewed as a tribal approach rather than a scientific, where the importance should be on building relationships instead of gathering information. Leadership has, therefore, the ability to generate differences of the people that allow leaders to lead (Max Depree, 1987). The relationship between leaders and followers can, therefore, be described as asymmetrical, where leadership calls for followership. It is thus the followers that define leadership and determines how efficient the leader is. The leaders should care for the followers and enable them to develop and perform (Alvesson et al., 2017). Bennis (1989), moreover, explains the importance of mastering the environment, since there is a high chance that leaders that are unconcerned regarding the operating environment, will end up being absorbed by it.

Therefore, leaders that have the ability to adapt their leadership style after a specific situation can be seen as crucial in today's globalised and interconnected world (Sims et al., 2009.) Newman and Nollen (1996) argue that leaders should adapt their leadership's style to the different national cultures in which they operate in which in turn can increase the chances of gaining competitive advantage. It can, however, lead to employee's dissatisfaction if the leadership style differs from the cultural expectations and values of the employees. Nilsson et al. (2014) explain that different cultures have various demands on an individual's leadership, which means that the culture and the employees' pre-understanding are factors that are important for how the leadership is experienced.
2.3.1 Leadership Style Dimensions – GLOBE

The GLOBE study argues that international leaders should have creativity, experience and knowledge in order to face today's more complex situations that can be difficult to interpret. The nine cultural dimensions identified by the GLOBE project lead to the classification of 21 leader characteristics that are regarded, as contributors to effective leadership and eight that are generally seen as undesirable leadership traits. Findings of the study resulted in the development of six global leadership styles (dimensions) that are seen as universally recognised as contributing to effective leadership (House et al., 2004). These leadership style dimensions are defined as follows:

A. Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership

The performance-oriented style (called "charismatic/value-based" by GLOBE) helps to inspire and motivate followers through a vision, which can create a passion among subordinates to perform based on firmly held core values (House et al., 2004). The GLOBE study explains that most cultures worldwide commonly associate this style with outstanding leadership.

It moreover shares similarities with transformational leadership, since charisma can inspire devotion and commitment to the group's goals (Grove, 2005). This leadership style includes six primary leadership characteristics subscales; inspirational, integrity, decisive and performance oriented, visionary, self-sacrifice (House et al., 2004).

B. Team-Oriented Leadership

This leadership dimension emphasises team building for generating a common purpose within a group. Moreover, societies and organisations that want to reduce uncertainty are more likely to endorse team-oriented leadership (Grove, 2005). It emerges in second place in terms of what manifests outstanding universal leadership. It includes five subscales; cooperative, diplomatic, team integrator, malevolent and administratively skilled (House et al., 2004).

C. Participative Leadership

Participative leadership reflects which degree leaders involve their team members in making and implementing. This type of leaders delegate tasks and roles to their followers in an egalitarian way. Moreover, high-performance orientation is linked with the participative leadership style (Grove, 2005). This leadership style is linked with democratic leadership style and involves being participate and non-autocratic/non-dictatorial (House et al., 2004).
D. Human-Oriented Leadership

This leadership style is characterised by supportive, considerate, compassion and generosity of the leader towards the team members (House et al., 2004). The leaders encourage and reward their followers for being fair, unselfish, friendly, generous, thoughtful and kind to others (Pucko and Cater, 2011). Moreover, high uncertainty avoidance and highly in-group collectivism are associated with Humane-Oriented leadership (Grove, 2005). Humane-Oriented leadership involves two subscales: modesty and humane orientation (House et al., 2004).

E. Autonomous Leadership

Autonomous leadership is when leaders are independent and favour working alone without including others. The GLOBE study argues that this leadership dimension has not previously appeared in the literature. This leadership style emphasises individualism, independence, autonomy and unique attributes (House et al., 2004). Moreover, high-performance orientation is associated with autonomous leadership style. It is linked with only one subscale: autonomous (Grove, 2005).

F. Self-Protective Leadership

Self-protective leadership describes leaders that are egocentric, face-saving, secretive, indirect, and asocial (Pucko and Cater, 2011). Emphasis is on guaranteeing the safety and security of the individual and group. This leadership is perceived universally as the least effective of GLOBE's six leadership styles. Grove (2005) argues that leaders in some societies may need to protect themselves from criticism and assure that they will not be made into scapegoats for a political end. It is associated with five subscales: self-centred, status-conscious, conflict-inducer, face-saver, and procedural (House et al., 2004).

2.3.2 Swedish Leadership Style Dimension - GLOBE

Sweden classifies charismatic/value-based leadership, participative leadership and team-oriented leadership as contributors to leadership effectiveness. The charismatic characteristics that are encouraged involve a vision, high-performance orientation, integrity, and decisiveness. Sweden also values team-oriented leaders,' who can generate exceptional teams and using their interpersonal and administrative skill to form cohesive work groups. Moreover, Sweden scored among the highest on the Participative dimension among all GLOBE clusters.
Human-orientated leadership is viewed as rather positive and Autonomous leadership as neutral for contributing to outstanding leadership (House et al., 2004). However, Self-protective leadership is perceived as negative, and the score is the lowest for all clusters demonstrating the refusal of this leadership style. Overall, an effective Swedish leader would be someone who is performance oriented, visionary participative, high integrity and degree of self-reliance. The GLOBE project explains that the Swedish leader should disregard any form of status enhancement and self-centeredness (House et al., 2004).

**2.3.3 SSA Leadership Style Dimension - GLOBE**

Like most GLOBE cluster, SSA strongly endorses charismatic/value-based leadership as contributing to outstanding leadership (House et al., 2004). SSA leaders should exhibit characteristics of this type of leadership through the art and skill of oratory (Dorfman et al., 2011). Team oriented leadership was also strongly endorsed in SSA, which reflects traditional elements of tribal leadership. Furthermore, SSA did not score exceptionally high on participative leadership. The high power distance in SSA has most likely limited the use of Participative leadership, and the fact that this leadership style is seen as contributing to effective leadership supports the society's desire for less power distance. The endorsement of these leadership styles is consistent with many other cultures, such as Sweden (Dorfman et al., 2011).

However, SSA has the second highest score of Humane-Oriented leadership for all GLOBE clusters. Humane Orientation is viewed as very important for outstanding leadership and permeates the core of societal and organisational life in SSA. The Autonomous dimension is viewed as slightly negative and has the second lowest score on this dimension, demonstrating that it is seen as being more negative than most other clusters. The Self-Protective leadership dimension is perceived as unfavourable and restricting outstanding leadership (House et al., 2004).

Dorfman et al. (2011) argue that Africans reject the vision of leaders that act alone and protect their personal interest, which characterised many SSA leaders in the post-colonial era. However, SSA national leaders still possess these characteristics today, and many countries struggle for equity and fairness in the resource. Overall, an outstanding SSA leader according to GLOBE would be charismatic, team-oriented, and participative. They should avoid being mainly independent, but most likely enact democratic oriented leadership (House et al., 2004).
2.3.4 **Leadership from a Swedish Perspective**

Devine and Williams (2005), argues that there is a unique leadership and management approach in Sweden, which is more focused on team performance than individualistic goals. Swedish society, in general, is seen as a social individualistic society, one deeply rooted in a collective value system (Holmberg and Akerblom, 2006). Lawrence and Spybey (2018) described the Swedish leadership style as "Participative". They claim that Swedish leaders and managers tend to involve their subordinates in the decision making processes by often consulting with them before making final decisions, and their views and ideas are given importance. As such leaders in Sweden trust their employees and subordinates to perform their duties and tasks well because they believe by getting them to involve in the decision-making process, they become more committed to the tasks. Swedish leaders are also described as “change-oriented”. They are portrayed as people who value good personal relations with their co-workers and subordinates. They strive to keep their workers motivated and enthusiastic. The Swedish leader is highly concerned with doing the right thing according to the values of society, and relies on formal rules, regulations, values and accepted norms. This is mainly due to the belief in the Swedish culture that relies heavily on equality. Swedish workplace and leaders-subordinates relationship are often informal (Lawrence and Spybey, 2018).

There is open communication between leaders and employees, and the leader’s door is open to everyone within the organisation. Listening and being attentive is expected. Furthermore, Swedish leaders tend to give their employees autonomy in performing tasks, and supervision is only called upon when necessary. However, the ultimate responsibility for the outcome of the tasks lies upon the leader. Moreover, Swedish leaders are known for conflict avoidance; however, new studies suggest that the modern Swedish leaders prefer to deal with conflicts at its early stage, rather than ignoring it and hope it would dissolve by itself as the traditional Swedish leader would probably have done. Nowadays, it is believed that the longer people wait to deal with a problem, the more likely for it to evolve into a bigger problem (Devine and Williams, 2005). However, despite the worldwide increase of emotional quotient, the Swedish society is still not at ease with highly emotional displays. Ironically, despite their unemotional expression, Swedish leaders are considered to be very caring and supportive of their employees. They believe that employees are the most valuable components that can affect the outcome of productivity. Some example of their caring nature is shown in their willingness to engage personally in their employees' problems.
This is also evident in the countries friendly social laws and frameworks which is very favourable to employee’s family situations. Such laws include extended paternity leave for both men and women employees, five weeks of pay holidays each year and good health benefits. Swedish leaders believe a successful leadership style requires happy and motivated employees (Devine and Williams, 2005).

2.3.5 Leadership from a SSA Perspective

The leadership styles of SSA are based on the regions complex and volatile history. The history of SSA dating back to colonialism, brought about European culture, religion, such as Christianity which may have influenced the leadership approach of the region (Masango, 2002). However, most of the SSA region is inhabited by related ethnicities known as the Bantu. These are Nomadic people who lived in close hunter-gather communities. They worked with each other in an egalitarian manner for their survival. As their numbers grew, the Bantu formed hierarchically organised communities under one ruler. Leadership was highly dependent on gender, age, wisdom, and wealth. In such communities, leadership or kingship was dependant on power passed on through inheritance. Wisdom was ascribed to the elderly, and it automatically grants seniority. In those times and in such communities, the leader’s role was more of a mediatory duty who settles claims and disputes between the people than someone who gave orders and directives (Dorfman et al., 2011). This role of leadership defers hugely from a modern and western perspective of leadership. In contemporary literature, leadership is described as having power and authority to decide important issues concerning society, and in so doing having the power to influence people (Masango, 2002). However, coexistence among these ethnic groups in the SSA region was hugely disrupted by events of colonisation and the commercial slave trade that took place in Africa from the 18th century. The Europeans demarcation of Africa, which completely ignored the existing ethnic and historical boundaries, led to the disappearance of the functioning communities and their leadership mentality (Dorfman et al., 2011). The colonial rulers introduced a variety of new systems of governance, which was designed to dominate the local people and their leaders into submission, a policy referred to as “divide and rule”. They also introduced the Western educational system and imposed their customs to the people as well. Another factor that led to the weakening of the existing leadership practices was that traditional leaders and kings who have been forced to converge into the colonial ruler's administrations were used to help suppress any political dissent within the people. All these factors led to the establishment of ethnic rivalries that dominated post-colonial SSA politics and societies (Dorfman et al., 2011).
Despite the limited literature available on SSA leadership style, there is a general view and consensus that SSA leaders are profoundly ineffective and not capable of dealing with the demands of globalisation and the increased interconnectedness of the twenty-first century (Kuada, 2009). However, with regards to the history of Africa, it is not surprising that authoritarian leadership style is the dominant sort of leadership practice in the region. Kuada (2009) argues that culture acts in most instances as a frame of reference or means of understanding the behaviour of leaders. As it is claimed, culture provides the shared values and norms that members of a society or organisation can use as a defining factor that binds them together as one homogenous entity. SSA is still benevolent and affiliated with the existence of strong power-distance relationships. Status is ascribed with age and gender. Some SSA cultural dimensions are contradictory to western traditions. Like having a deep respect for the elderly and viewing their knowledge and experiences as wisdom, people of different age groups keep an aristocratic and paternalistic relationship (Dorfman et al., 2011).

Family and close relatives provide the building block for tolerance and forgiveness in society and organisations, which indicates the significance of keeping personal relations over achieving individualist goals and achievements (Kuada, 2009). However, the importance of family or tribal interests over individual needs in the SSA organisation is demonstrated in different ways. SSA leaders feel duty-bound to satisfy the social and financial needs of their relatives, this paternalistic orientation mostly leads to leaders feeling obliged to bestow favours and in return, they obtain obedience and allegiance from the group. This phenomenon offers a unique perspective on in-group collectivism and reflects a response to collective need rather than individual performance (Kuada, 2009). Researchers and theorist alike have made efforts to identify what are the core values of African leaders. Mbiti (1990) in an attempt was able to identify five core values representative of African leadership style: Respect for other people’s dignity, solidarity towards the group, importance of the team, service to others, and the importance of keeping harmony and interdependency (i.e., ‘we need one another’), which is locally referred to as the spirit of “Ubuntu”.

2.4 Critical Reflection - Literature Review

Critical reflection encompasses the researcher’s general impression of the literature review and the different research gaps. The research raises the question of whether the aforementioned theories and models are enough for understanding the phenomena of Swedish SMEs leaders’ cultural experiences in SSA.
The literature review indicates correlations between different theories regarding both the concepts of culture and leadership. Furthermore, the literature review also demonstrates how culture can affect societies, business and leaders. In the culture section, three cultural models were explained and criticised; Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions (1980), Trompenaars Seven Dimensions (1997) and the GLOBE Study (2004). Even though GLOBE is the most comprehensive study regarding social sciences, it does not refute or replace Hofstede’s or Trompenaar’s Dimensions. Many researchers were limited to these models before the creation of the GLOBE Study. However, many decided to opt for the GLOBE study today, since its dataset is seen as more contemporary for the globalised environment. It is moreover, equipped with comprehensive measurements; such as cultural dimensions and data about different societies, which was established and developed through an international collaborative cross-cultural research involving several different industries (Smith, 2006). Hofstede’s theory was, however, devolved during analysing the employees of IBM (IT Company) during the 60s and 70s. The theory has, therefore, been criticised and labelled as somewhat outdated and lacking generalisability since it was a homogeneous organisation research (Shaiq et al., 2011).

Moreover, the researchers of this study conducted a critical analysis of all three models, and it was concluded that the GLOBE study show more credibility in comparison to other models, since it offered comprehensiveness, transparency and a more up-to-date dataset, which motivated the researchers to opt for the GLOBE Study as the research model, when conducting the analysis. It was, however, necessary to mention Hofstede’s and Trompenaar’s, due to their contribution and understanding of culture, and the contribution in developing the GLOBE study. Furthermore, different leadership style was presented, both from the GLOBE leadership dimensions and the societal profile of Sweden respective SSA. This, demonstrated significant differences when it comes to leadership style approaches, which can further imply the importance of adaptation for Swedish leaders to SSA cultures in order to establish relationships that further lead to successful business operations. Moreover, the researchers found it necessary to discuss Swedish leadership perspective in order to allow the reader to understand the mind-set of a Swedish leader, especially one working in a multicultural context such as that of SSA. It was also essential to highlight SSA standpoint on what corresponds for an effective leader, in order to compare the Swedish and SSA perspectives. Significant differences seem to exist between Swedish and SSA, both when it deals with culture and leadership according to the literature. This makes it interesting to examine how these theories apply to explore Swedish SME leader’s experiences when working in SSA.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This part evaluates and examines the selected research design and methodology. Essential choices and assumptions about the method of research are presented. This chapter also examines how the data will be collected, and the selected data analysis method is presented. Ethical considerations, research limitations and research credibility are moreover outlined.

3.1 Research Design and Approach

Research design is the blueprint for research, which guides the collected and analysed data (Yin, 1994). Research can have several different purposes, such as exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, and evaluative approach. The research questions that were formulated want to explore a specific phenomenon. This study, therefore, uses an exploratory approach, with the purpose to explore Swedish SME leader’s cultural experiences in SSA. Exploratory research aims to explore the relationships between the areas of study and to seek an understanding of the cause and effect of a phenomenon (Cameron and Price, 2009). Exploratory research utilises theory and often focuses on "how" and "what" questions, and is, therefore, more beneficial when wanting to ask open questions to gain new insight and understanding within a subject of interest (Saunders et al., 2016). Exploration seems, therefore, to be the most reasonable purpose for the research, since only a few studies have been conducted on this phenomenon. Furthermore, one can approach scientific research in three different ways; deductive, inductive or abductive approach. Bryman and Bell (2011), argues that it is rare that research utilises either an inductive or deductive approach, since there may be traces of deduction in the inductive approach, which could indicate a form of abduction.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2017) describe the complexity of the abductive approach and that it should not be seen as a pure mixture between induction and deduction. Abductive, like the inductive approach, is based on empiricism but is still seen as closely linked with the deductive approach, since the theoretical pre-understanding has a particular significance. The deductive approach is based on theory and inductive approach to practical experiences. The abductive research is, however, used to comprehend empirical data in connection with the theory. The abductive approach allows researchers to move between the empirical findings and theory in order to explore and explain patterns and gaining a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. This research applies an abductive approach since it will use a collection of qualitative interviews, which makes the approach suitable. Furthermore, the abductive approach is common when using multiple case study, since the collecting and analysing of data occurs parallel. Insights and ideas that might arise, for example, in the first case study, then affect how to proceed with other cases (Merriam, 1994).
This study has, therefore, been characterised by an abductive approach, since, the researchers conducted a joint analysis of what emerged during the interviews with the respondents. Direct reflections, questions and interesting themes that were identified were documented in the empirical review and have served as a basis for the continued work and the final analysis. An abductive research approach would, moreover, be suitable, since it already exists research on cultural issues in SSA from a western perspective, but the researcher of this study has extended this by explicitly examining Swedish SMEs leader’s cultural experiences in SSA, seeking to explore on this phenomena and learn from it.

3.2 Qualitative Method

There are three types of research methods that one can apply: quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. Quantitative method refers to a way of collecting and analysing the data that will generate numerical data and analysing it with the help of statistical tools (Saunders et al., 2016). The qualitative method, however, produces words, instead of numbers, as data for analysis, and is typically interrelated with the abductive approach. The qualitative research method is regularly associated with the interpretivism research philosophy and is focused on rising clarifications of a social phenomenon (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Therefore, it can be determined that the qualitative method is the most fitting for this research because it aims to extract themes from the collected data, before analysing it in order to attain a comprehensive and exact depiction of the cultural experiences that Swedish SME leaders face in SSA. By using qualitative research methods, the researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of their participants, which will allow us to understand how meanings are formed in the cultural context it is taking place (Saunders et al., 2016). Qualitative research can furthermore help the researchers to interact with the respondents on a level that facilitates understanding their experiences and stories of the phenomenon. Klenke et al. (2015), argues that qualitative research enables the interviewer and respondent to collaborate in the data collection that will result in a story that reflects the voice of the respondents. The researchers, therefore, opted for the qualitative method since it will allow the research to attain information from the respondent’s perspectives and their authentic experiences. As such, the research questions were formulated in a way that will enable the researchers to explore a specific phenomenon. Furthermore, a qualitative method is beneficial when conducting small-scale research, which further allows a holistic perspective and a depth of the research (Yin, 2014).
3.3 Research Strategy - Multiple Case Study

Saunders et al. (2016) define research strategy as the plan on how the researchers will go about answering the research questions. Case study is the selected strategy because it goes in line with the research purpose and research questions. Case study allows the researchers to achieve a high level of conceptual validity and being able to identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts that the researcher intends to test. It focuses on an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting, mainly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not evident (George and Bennet, 2005). This leads to rich empirical descriptions; in this instance, the challenges leaders face when operating in a multicultural setting. The strategy is furthermore beneficial when researching and challenging and testing existing theories. Moreover, the case study strategy conveys a detailed explanation of context and procedures (Yin, 2014). The case study is thus a form of qualitative research method with the purpose to explore rather than prove, which is in line with the purpose of this study. Case study is, however, time-consuming, since it is necessary to identify, define and gaining access to case study settings (Saunders et al., 2016). The case strategy can, moreover, be separated into a single against multiple cases. A single case study is used when the research is limited to only one case.

However, this research utilises a multiple case study, since the empirical findings are collected from eight leaders from different SMEs, in order to allow a comparison of the cases and identify similar or dissimilar patterns. Moreover, a multiple case study should clarify whether the key findings in the first case also takes place in other cases and then being able to conduct generalisations, which gives greater reliability to the results. Therefore, a multiple case study provides the researchers with the opportunity to go more in-depth with the phenomena of leadership in multicultural settings, since the data are generated from several and not a single case (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, the aim with a multiple case strategy is to examine cases with essentially similar characteristics, in order for the research to ask the respondents similar questions. Multiple case study, can, therefore, permit the researchers to explore culture and leadership as a social process.

3.4 Data Collection

Primary data was utilised during this research since it is intended to explore a particular research problem that evaluates and explores Swedish SME leaders' cultural experiences in SSA. This entails that the researchers interviewed leaders that have operations in SSA markets, in order to gain information about the challenges the respondents might encounter when dealing with SSA cultural aspects and how it affects their leadership styles.
The researchers used their personal network, LinkedIn, emails and phone calls in order to receive access to the different leaders. These different channels were utilised to effectively structure and systematise the selection of possible candidates for the study. Once the researchers established contact and interest, the respondents received an email with relevant material and information about the themes and subject beforehand in order to prepare respondents for the interview-session and promote credibility and validity for the researchers (Flick, 2014). The researchers have informed the respondents that their answers would be treated with anonymity if wanted. Exploratory approach with semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions was used in order to let the interviewees develop their opinions and understand reality through their perspective. Moreover, this is mostly applicable within an interpretivist paradigm (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Semi-structured interviews contain key questions instead of many detailed questions, which allows to have a focused, conversational, two-way communication (Keller and Conradin, 2019).

The interview questions were founded around themes from concepts within the literature review and the research questions. The interview guide (Appendix A) comprised of questions regarding culture, cultural challenges, SSA culture, leadership, leadership styles and cross-cultural adaptation. Moreover, the researchers followed the guideline during the interviews and utilised topical trajectories in the interviews when it seemed appropriate, which permitted the researchers and respondents the flexibility to go into details when needed (Keller and Conradin, 2019). Given the vast geographical distance between Sweden and SSA, and the limited resources associated with student research, telephone and internet-mediated video interviews were solely utilised. David and Sutton (2016) argue that face-to-face is the most desirable interview method since telephone and internet-mediated interviews lack observable body language and non-verbal cues. Sullivan (2012), however, argues that a semi-structured interview through telephone or an internet-mediated tool as Skype has its advantages compared to face to face interviews. It is a lower cost process and easier to conduct interviews when the interviewer and respondent are geographically dispersed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). All of the interviews took about 30-45 minutes to conduct and were held in Swedish since that would be the most convenient for the respondents who were all from Sweden. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed in order to carry out the data analysis and to structure the results coherently. The researchers needed to translate the interviews into English, which was a bit tricky as some phrases in Swedish were hard to explain in English, however, with the help of Swedish synonyms, were the researchers able to figure out what each respondent meant to say. The main part of the interviews was conducted with the presence of both researchers.
3.4.1 Sampling

The aim of using sampling is to create reasonable and correct conclusions without having to collect data from each member from a research group. Furthermore, the concept of sampling comprises either of, probability or non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is based on random selection from a research group and tends to be associated with large-scale surveys with quantitative data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, non-probability is defined as a sample that is not randomly picked, which gives some samples a greater chance of being selected (Denscombe, 2011). This research opted for non-probability since it is mostly used in qualitative research. Moreover, this research utilised two non-probability sampling techniques; purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is when the sample cases or respondents are selected strategically, through their relevance towards the topic and research questions. This sampling technique was, therefore, utilised, since the researchers selected a set of criteria’s that the respondents needed to meet in order to answer their research questions (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The choices of the respondents are based on these criteria; having a leading position in a Swedish SME that is established on a SSA market.

A particular type of SME was not necessary in order to answer the questions. However, it is, essential to point out the criteria's for what constitutes of a SME. European Commission defines SME (small and medium enterprise) as companies which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euro (European Commission, 2003). Moreover, snowball sampling is utilised when it is hard to find data for the research. The research, therefore, utilised the sampling technique, when getting access to some of the respondents, by first contacting the SMEs general contact information email, in order to refer the researchers to leaders that had knowledge about their operations in SSA. However, the purposive sampling technique was mostly used, with specific criteria’s in order for the respondents to assist in answering the research questions. The criteria’s helped the researcher to find suitable Swedish SMEs leaders that could participate, and provide the research with a diverse knowledge when it comes to being a leader in SSA. The selection of the respondents was, therefore, based on the person’s title and insight on their firm’s operations in SSA. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that it is impossible to know the exact number of respondents to achieve theoretical saturation. This is when no new or relevant data will be discovered during the data collection process. Saunders et al. (2016), however, explains that the data need to reflect factors that are linked with the research when conducting a qualitative study, with in-depth semi-structured interviews.
It can also depend on the population, which usually entails around 5-25 respondents. The eight respondents that were selected had many years of leadership experience and represented SMEs within different industries. All respondents have been between the ages of 30 and 65. Six of the leaders were men, and two were women, even though a significant effort was made into finding a balance between the segmentation of men and women, without losing the above selection criteria’s. The interviewed leaders are listed below, with the fictional name of the respondent (because of anonymity), position, industry of the SME, the SSA market they are established in, the date for when the interview was conducted and the medium that was used for the interview. A more elaborate narrative of the companies and leaders are in chapter 3.4.2 (Cases).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent (Alias)</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Medium of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>23.04.2019</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>Congo (DR)</td>
<td>24.04.2019</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>26.04.2019</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Call Centre</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>26.04.2019</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengt</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Furniture Manufacturer</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>30.04.2019</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Head of Growth</td>
<td>Start-Up</td>
<td>Senegal - “West Africa”</td>
<td>01.05.2019</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Travel Agency</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>02.05.2019</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>03.05.2019</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Selection Respondents**
3.4.2 Cases

Case 1: Consulting Firm

The first case is about a consulting firm in South Africa, which provides leadership, project management and sales training for professionals and companies. They have offices in Sweden, South Africa, USA and Bulgaria, and have been doing business in SSA since 2006. The company have a total of 115 employees, and 18 of those are living and working in South Africa.

Case 2: Mining Company

The second case deals with a mining company with production in Congo (DR). The company has its main office in Sweden which handles all the processing and selling of its minerals. Their operations in the SSA region started in 2014, which have three full-time employees and 30-40 part-time employees during high seasons.

Case 3: Engineering Firm

The third case concerns an engineering firm that specialises in water purification. Their head office is in Sweden, where the company’s CEO and its director of operations have their offices. They started operating in the SSA region in 2008 with their factory in Rwanda. The company has a total of 32 employees and eight of those work at their plant in Rwanda.

Case 4: Call Centre

The fourth case is about a company that operates a call centre in Senegal, where they provide different type of services for foreign clients, mainly from Scandinavia and Sweden in particular. The company started doing business in the SSA region in 2013. They also have offices in Estonia and Moldovia with their head office in Sweden. The company have 400 employees, 120 of those work in their office in Senegal.

Case 5: Furniture Manufacturer

The fifth case deals with a furniture manufacturing and designing company in, Tanzania. The company undertakes commissions for private and corporate clients, and large projects such as hotels, restaurants and bars. They have 20 employees, mainly based in Zanzibar.
Case 6: **Start-Up**

The sixth case revolves around a start-up tech company, who are based in West Africa. They focus on developing the tech market with solutions for micro-taxation. They started in Dakar, Senegal in 2012 and are now expanding rapidly on the African continent. The company have a total of 14 employees.

Case 7: **Travel Agency**

The seventh case is about a travel agency with operations in South Africa. They specialise in Destination Management, providing customised group tours and events in South Africa. The company was established in 1999 with its head office in Cape Town. The company have a total of 8-10 employees that are all based in South Africa.

Case 8: **Hotel and Safari**

The last case is about a hotel in Kenya. The company was established in 2006, and it offers hotel accommodation and safari experience to its client. The company have 17 full-time employees and mainly operates in Nairobi.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Case studies can be constructed in numerous different ways and combined with several approaches (Gillham, 2010). This research starts its data analysis process with the explanation building approach, where each of the eight cases will be reviewed individually and create a narrative story around them (Klenke et al., 2015). This was decided since each case is unique and slightly different from each other. In this step, the research will able to present the reality of the different leaders. Moreover, each case is chronologically presented as a story.

Transcription of the interviews has been ongoing during the data collection and summarised in order to identify similar and familiar information. They were later divided into systemic themes by using the thematic approach, in order to look for themes and similarities that emerged in the empirical review (Saunders et al., 2016). Braun and Clarke (2006), argues that the thematic approach is methodical while it, moreover, offers a flexible way for a qualitative analysing.
The themes that will be identified will be based on the most significant empirical findings in order to answer the research questions. It is, hence, essential that the analysis is in a systematically way, and that the researcher's impression is in an ordered and transparent form. The study uses the guidelines described by Braun and Clarke (2006), which constitute the thematic analysis in six steps: (1) become familiar with the collected data; (2) create codes from the collected data based on what is interesting for the study through open coding and then group them into categories; (3) search for themes; (4) review the themes; (5) define and name the themes, (6) write the report. The analysis began with the fact that all transcripts were read through several times in order to get a holistic view of the material, but also to start linking similarities and differences in the respondents' answers.

The interview guide was based on questions that were connected with the literature review, which become the starting point for the coding. After the coding was completed, much time was spent grouping them. Some categorisations were facilitated to some extent by the interview guide's subdivision because many responses were pre-sorted under the same themes and issues. Finally, the search for themes began. Although the interview guide had formulated themes in advance, the analysis was not based on them, but a new categorisation was made so as not to exclude any valuable information that emerged in the collected data.

The main themes analysed in this research; (1) Reason for adapting or transforming the corporate culture; (2) How do adapt; (3) Transforming the corporate culture. Descriptive information from the interviews will offer the analysis explanation and interpretation of Swedish SME Leaders. The qualitative data analysis evolves on thematically understandings, of the interviews. It is, therefore, crucial that the analysis is in a systematically way, and that the researcher's impression is organised and transparent.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The ethical concerns would emerge in the initial level of designing and planning the research, seeking access to different SMEs leaders, collecting and analysing the data and finally reporting and presenting the outcome of the research. The ethical aspects, therefore, refers to the standard of behaviour that will guide the two researchers conduct in regards to the different respondents. The primary step is making sure that the research topic would not cause any harm or distress to the respondents and that the topic is formulated in a way that manifests the objectivity of the research.
The researchers are, furthermore, full-time students at LNU (Linnaeus University), which means that they approach the different SME leaders as external researchers, which would entail to negotiating access in order to conduct interviews. It is therefore crucial that the researchers intend to contact the potential interviewees and explain their intended research and the validity of it to their field of business, in order to be permitted to conduct the necessary data collection process. Once access is granted, the researchers would start to think of how they would formulate the interview questions in order to comply ethically towards the research respondents. The researchers should also follow the same guidelines and principles which are governed by Swedish data protection laws. This will ensure the participants of confidentiality and anonymity, which will, in turn, enhance the reliability of the data the researchers would collect (Saunders et al., 2016). The data collection stage has several ethical issues, and its, therefore, vital for the researchers to remain objective. The researchers need to collect the data truthfully without conducting subjective selectivity, which is linked with being reliable and valid (Yin, 2014). Being objective is, moreover, imperative when analysing the collected data. The researchers will not be selective about which data to report. Every respondent in the interviews are furthermore, volunteers, and need to give their consent to the researchers before the interview. Moreover, a letter of information was handed over to the leaders before the interviews, which consist of: who the researchers are, the purpose of the study and how and where the results will be published (Yin, 2014).

Culture is furthermore, a sensitive topic to study since the findings can lead to vindicate stereotypes about cultural groups. Vindication is how the researchers’ ignorance of such stereotypes, and consequently their potential lack of awareness of how stereotypes may affect their decisions about research unconsciously. This can have implications on how research questions are set up and how the researchers interpret their findings. Matsumoto and Jones (2009) argue that most researchers interpret the collected data through their own cultural filters, and these biases and pre-existing stereotypes can affect their interpretations of the findings to certain degrees. It is, therefore, imperative that the researchers comprehend how this can be the case, and to use a research design that can minimise this risk (Saunders et al., 2016).

### 3.7 Research Limitations

This research is a multiple case study which focuses on small samples of interviews, as a result of limited time. However, despite these limitations, the research still provides a foundation for, analysis and conclusion. Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that the conclusion of a study that constitutes of a small number of interviews is inadequate to generate a generalisation.
That being said, the respondents in this research are not meant to represent every Swedish SME leaders that have operations in SSA. The quality of the data is more vital than the assessment of generalisation. The research has, therefore, linked the respondent's answer during the theoretical conclusions which will generate explanations to the phenomena of Swedish SME leaders in SSA. As aforementioned, not much work has been done in regards to our research area, which makes it more demanding in terms of finding empirical data to support the thesis.

In most instances access to collect data needs to be sought out and granted before research can begin, and this implies even in traditional data collection methods such as interviews. However gaining access to conduct research depends highly on the individual or organisation that the researchers wish to conduct a study about, which is also dependant on various variables, such as interest in the project, time it requires, lack of value to the respondent, credibility and perception of the researcher or sensitivity of the data (Saunders et al., 2016). Second, the researchers have to find suitable candidates as in SME leaders to interview, which itself can be very time consuming, for two reasons, one there are not many Swedish SME’s operating in SSA, and two those that do, are located in different geographical areas.

Thirdly, hence the researchers wish to conduct interviews, data protection laws have to be taken into consideration, since the research seek to gather information from the interviewees in regards to their experiences in working in foreign regions and cultures, there could arise sensitive information, for example, discriminatory remarks, which might make them reluctant to share such with the researchers (Sanders et al., 2016).

3.8 Research Credibility

The concepts of validity and reliability are viewed as indicators in examining the quality of research. Having good validity and reliability increases the chances of creating a generalisation that could be transferable for other studies. Qualitative research should, therefore, continuously work with this concept throughout the project, since it can have implications on the data collection and the analysis of the collected data.

Validity and reliability in studies with qualitative focus are about being able to describe that data has been collected and processed systematically and honestly (Malterud, 2003). However, the concepts of validity and reliability are usually referred to as quantitative research, and some researchers may also prefer to utilise other criteria's for assessing the quality of qualitative studies.
Credibility is one of them, which can be demonstrated by showing that the choice of theoretical perspective and concepts are relevant for the research. It is furthermore essential, to have a clear description of how the study has been conducted and that the purpose of the study has been answered and discussed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Klenke et al. (2015) argue that a good way of ensuring credibility is to utilise the notion of triangulation, which entails that the researchers should study the phenomenon from several angles.

The research should, therefore, interview respondents that might have dissimilar perspectives towards the phenomena. Triangulation can, hence, strengthen the credibility of the research, since the data is collected from different sources. This research interviewed leaders from different industries and backgrounds when dealing with the SSA market, which helped the researchers to attain cross-checking information from multiple perspectives of the phenomenon of culture and leadership styles.

Furthermore, it is argued that a small number of interviews are insufficient to generate a generalisation. It is, therefore, essential to clarify that the respondents in this research do not represent a broad segment (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, the researchers of this study argue that the findings and result can be seen as beneficial for future studies and transferable to other cases. Bryman et al. (2011) argue that it is the quality of the theoretical inferences from the collected data that is essential to the assessment of creating a generalisation. It is, therefore, possible to connect the findings from the eight cases to theoretical conclusions and, consequently, generate something comparable to a generalisation.
CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL DATA REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the findings drawn from the data gathering process from eight cases. The interviewed respondents hold leading positions in Swedish SMEs and work in different industries. Each case will be reviewed individually as a narrative story and then be analysed in the next chapter.

4.1 Leadership in Transformation - Case 1

Oliver is the co-founder and CEO of a consulting firm. He has been working as a leader since 1991, starting his career in the armed forces. He and his company decided to enter the SSA market in 2006 when they bought a small consulting firm in Johannesburg, South Africa. They chose to enter South Africa since it is an English speaking country and a booming market regarding the consulting industry. He also explained that Sweden has a good reputation in South Africa when it comes to being reliable and trustworthy. Oliver lives in Sweden.

Communication in a Complex Society

Oliver believes that culture is an essential concept for leaders and companies since it is an expression of collective behaviour. He explained that culture is based on communication and that leaders, therefore, work with consequences. “It is crucial for employees to get praise from their managers when they do the right thing and get feedback when doing wrong” (Oliver, 2019). His initial feeling when entering SSA was it would be fun and inspiring with leading a culturally diverse company.

However, he stresses that it has not been a comfortable journey. He argues that the culture is entirely different from Sweden's and that South Africa is a very complicated country. Many cultural aspects affect how people behave and work in everyday life, such as, the old apartheid system, boer, laws, corruption and the tribal system. This has furthermore more affected the future workforce of South Africa. He explains that young black people have all the opportunities ahead of them, compared to young white people who are leaving the country at a rapid pace. He furthermore explained that the people in South Africa are very collectivistic in their approach and still has a tribal mind-set. He gave the example of some of his employees who did not desire to get a pay-rise since they would, in the end, share the salary with their villages. They, therefore, thought it would be unnecessary to get more work duties and only keep 20 % of their wage "Why should you work more, but still not keep the money for yourself? “ (Oliver, 2019).
Employee Engagement

Oliver said that his leadership is characterised by having common and clear goals in order to involve his employees. He enjoys involving and delegating responsibilities to his followers. This has led that he is able to get his employees more engaged and feel more appreciated in the organisation. He furthermore, explains that he despises micromanagement and controlling what his employees should do. "It is not important how they do they work, but that they complete their work” (Oliver, 2019).

The Leader Decides

Oliver explained that he experienced a culture shock regarding the South African leadership style. "The leader is viewed as a boss, and what the boss says is right, even if it is wrong” (Oliver, 2019). He argues that the South African corporate culture is, therefore, very different from the culture that exists in Sweden. “Subordinates do not have to agree with their leader in Sweden” (Oliver, 2019). He says that this type of employee-manager relationship would be impossible in South Africa. Oliver, therefore, thought it was tough to adapt to the South African corporate culture and had a hard time formulating himself during meetings. He argues that the South African leadership style, emphasise control and follow-up. “The relationship between managers and employees are not based on trust, but on control” (Oliver, 2019). He explains that middle-managers cannot have discussions with their top-leader in front of the employees since this would question the leader's authority. The leaders are, therefore, very authoritarian according to him.

Achieving Results

Oliver said that his leadership style has changed over the years, thanks to experience, and not mainly because of the cultural challenges in South Africa. After spending 13 years as a leader for South African employees, he learned that “Good leadership is good leadership whether you are in South Africa or Sweden” (Oliver, 2019). He explains that the South African leadership style of controlling employees prevents growth since the employees will only do what as they have been told and never exceed expectations. Oliver mentions that this has led to conflicts between him and his South African management team. "We have another way of looking at the relationship between the manager and the follower; bosses micromanage everything in South Africa” (Oliver, 2019). However, he explained that he still enjoys good collaboration with his managers and that the next step is to transform their leadership style and the way they lead their employees in South Africa. This will take a long time, according to Oliver, but be beneficial. “The Swedish way of leading is more employee and company friendly” (Oliver, 2019).
Understanding Differences

He, furthermore, argues the importance of SME leaders to contemplate about the culture that exists in Sweden when it comes to leadership. “This will help leaders to be better prepared when entering a SSA market and to understand the underlying context of both societies” (Oliver, 2019). He argues that Swedish leaders that want to change or adapt his leadership style in SSA need to comprehend what to change or how to adapt since; otherwise, it will lead to consequences. "That is why I would recommend other Swedes to understand the Swedish leadership culture and the leadership culture that works best in Africa since it depends on whether you want to adapt or transform yourself into something else” (Oliver, 2019).

4.2 Democratic Leadership - Case 2

Alexander is the CEO of a mining company. He founded the company in 2014 after receiving a permit for mining in Congo (DR). However, he has been working in SSA since 2006. Alexander has always been fascinated by Africa; the opportunities, challenges and the potential. His primary responsibilities as CEO are linked with administrative and financial tasks. Alexander lives in Sweden.

Exciting but Challenging

He clarifies that culture is embedded in people, “It guides how we behave and act with each other, and can furthermore, affect people’s work ethics” (Alexander, 2019). He thinks it is fascinating working within a multicultural setting, as in getting insight into other people's frame of references. However, managing cultural differences is not easy, according to him. He explains that in many cases, the differences with the western way of looking at entrepreneurship, leadership and planning differ considerably in SSA and the challenges are, therefore many.

He mentions challenges with the administrative part and explains it does not work as efficiently as it does in Sweden, which has mostly to do with the time perspective. “Swedish people like to plan and organise beforehand, but in SSA, it is different”(Alexander, 2019). He explains that the people in SSA do not plan for the future, which can create issues when it comes to contracts and employees coming late for work. Alexander tries to solve most of these issues by himself from a distance, when working from Stockholm, Sweden. However, he has a supervisor in Congo who is responsible for solving this type of challenges.
Alexander explains that he and his company have been accustomed to the cultural challenges when it comes to time and bureaucracy, and that is important not to be optimistic when it comes to time and being pragmatic with the bureaucracy. “It may take months when it should take one week” (Alexander, 2019) - referring to contracts and agreements.

**Responsive Leadership**

Alexander explains that his leadership style is characterised as being responsive and humble with his followers. “It is vital to have trust between the manager and the employees, which will create a more cohesive work environment” (Alexander, 2019). Alexander explains that his company employees around 30-40 Congolese, who are not permanently employed. They work with digging diamond-bearing gravel by hand with spades which are then washed in rivers and receive part of the findings like a commission. They have furthermore, three full-time employees, who work with administrative duties, with a fiscal salary. Alexander explains that Congolese managers are usually very authoritarian and that the employees expect the leaders to control everything.

**Democratic Adaptation**

Alexander explains that it is essential to change the work process in SSA. He, therefore, decided to hire a local supervisor, who has the responsibilities of the employees and the mining operation. His company chose to utilise this specific supervisor since he almost has the same mind-set as a Swede. Alexander explains that the supervisor has a western leadership style. He emphasises the importance of treating the employees with respect and value. "The employees, in return, work more efficient since they are being treated with respect and not bossed around" (Alexander, 2019). Alexander explains that this manager is very different from all SSA managers he had encountered. According to Alexander is the Congolese supervisor very democratic in his leadership style, which may see as rare in a society that is characterised by authoritarianism.

**Building Trust**

Alexander explains that it is crucial for Swedish leaders that operate in SSA, to be quick and responsive to the cultural differences. It is furthermore vital to show respect to people, which will lead to trust with the people you are working with. This will make it easier to operate ones foreign business when not present in the country. He moreover, emphasises that is important not to stress and have patience with the workers and cultural challenges since after a time, it will become easier to adapt.
4.3 Leader in Control - Case 3

Sebastian is the CEO of an engineering company that specialises in water purification, since 2008. He has, however, held other leadership positions with different companies dating back to the 1970s. His adventure in SSA started when he travelled to Rwanda on a business conference, where he met a Rwandan woman from Sweden, who gave Sebastian and his colleagues a business tour. He and his company realised that they could do business in Rwanda and at the same time help the country improve its water processing system. They got in touch with the local water authority and were granted a license to start their first project. His company are today operating a factory in Kigali, Rwanda, with the Rwandan lady as the branch supervisor. Sebastian lives in Sweden.

Culture is Life

Sebastian argues that culture is crucial for leaders, and when a group of people are working together, they are consciously or unconsciously, creating and sharing culture. He says this is why different regions have different cultures, and he enjoys when different cultures meet. He argues that people who live in the northern part of the world are more accurate with time, especially in Germany and Scandinavia, whereas in SSA people seem not to keep time. “Here you can decide a meeting at 2 pm, and then you arrive at 3:30 pm, and think it is completely okay” (Sebastian, 2019). He said that this could be very frustrating at first, but that is important to be patient since that is how the culture in SSA works. He also claims that it is vital to change their perspective as well, and show each other different ways of doing things in one’s own culture. Like the importance of coming on time.

Sebastian explains that he has no problems with those he works with anymore when it comes to respecting time because he made it clear that coming in time is crucial for him and that it is disrespectful in Swedish culture to come late. Sebastian said everything is very much about having an open mind. "People should not come to SSA and believe that they are smarter and have more knowledge than the locals” (Sebastian, 2019). He said humans are all the same, no matter skin colour or ethnicity, and it is, therefore, important for people with different cultures to meet on open ground. "I always try to understand what is important to them. Otherwise, they will not want to understand what is important to me” (Sebastian, 2019). Moreover, he believes that when working in a different culture, especially one as diverse and varied as SSA, leaders have to be like a chameleon. He says it is all about adapting quickly to new ways of doing things. For example, in Sweden, every employee refers to him by his first name "Sebastian", but in Rwanda, everyone calls him boss.
Hard Decisions

Sebastian describes his leadership style as inclusive. He explains it is essential to let everyone to be heard and try to listen and be attentive when dealing with his employees. He said problems are bound to arise in an organisation but minimising or avoiding them whenever as possible is the key to success. He said leadership and management are all about getting the best out of the available resources and that the most crucial asset in an organisation is its employees. “However, getting the best out of your employees can sometimes require leaders making some hard decisions” (Sebastian, 2019). Sebastian believes his leadership style is different from the SSA leadership style, which has a hierarchical nature, and where the leaders are seen as authoritarian.

Nevertheless, Sebastian said in such cultures; one must always obey his leader, and furthermore, explains “I have learned this and adapted into taking advantage of it, now my employees take me more seriously when it comes to business since the Boss is the Boss in Africa” (Sebastian, 2019). Sebastian argues that Swedish leaders that come to SSA need to be able to combine authoritarian leadership with the Swedish leadership style. Moreover, Sebastian believes the best way for a Swedish leader to learn about how to act and manage in SSA, is to learn by doing. He said it is better to travel to SSA and see how things work there, rather than enrolling on specific courses.

4.4 Transforming or Adapting - Case 4

Erik is the Managing Director of a company that handles call centres. He has been working as a leader for over 25 years and has extensive experience when it comes to operating foreign businesses. His company opened a branch in Dakar, Senegal which Erik is also the director of operations, since 2008. His company entered Senegal since they needed an office in a low-cost country with political stability, and who shares the same time zone with Sweden since their working towards the Swedish market. Erik explained that the operation in Senegal are going well and the company is planning to open more offices in SSA.

Code of Conduct

Erik defines culture as a code of conduct, where it guides people’s norms and behaviour towards other people, the environment and to authorities. “It also reflects how much a manager governs through authority, and how much the manager controls through competence and power” (Erik, 2019).
Erik thinks that is exciting working in a multicultural environment because people have to re-examine their own frame of reference. "What one thinks is obvious is not always the case for other people" (Erik, 2019). He believes this is where cultural differences are more significant, since working in a new cultural environment, enables people to learn new experience and sometimes even strange behaviours.

He explains that the Swedish mentality of working life and way of conducting business is totally different from the Senegalese. He said that westerners often take things for granted and assume it is obvious to find out that it is not that obvious for others. He gave an example, how Senegalese employees receive more wages when having more dependency burden (family and children). "Our employees expected higher salaries because they had children or were getting married; this was very strange for us, and a perspective we did not have. We had to explain to them that this is not how we decide extra benefits in regards to wages in Sweden and that we would not be able to provide such" (Erik, 2019). He also explained that his employees in Senegal expected that the company should provide for their lunch since that was seen as the norm in Senegal. Erik thought this was bizarre, but accepted their request. "This matter was seen as very important for the employees, and we had, therefore, to comply for their demands" (Erik, 2019).

**Not the Employees Fault**

Erik stated that initially, they had problems with their staffs not being on time. However, they realised that this was not a conscious choice on the part of their employees, but because the society in Senegal functioned in a way which makes it difficult to get anywhere on time. For example, the buses and the public transportation system are always late, which makes it harder to be on time. "Time becomes a problem, but more of a practical problem than a cultural one" (Erik, 2019).

He said getting to work on time is easier in Sweden than in Senegal, which is thanks to the better public transportation system. Erik said, bureaucracy also adds another complication to getting things done on time in Senegal. “There are problems with paying bills, and they are behind their digitalisation process compared to Sweden in Africa” (Erik, 2019). He explains that rules and regulations are not always followed, which can be difficult for a Swede to comprehend, and a lot of vital working hours goes to dealing with the bureaucracy, which can be frustrating.
Adapting to the Swedish Model

Erik defines his leadership style as a mixture of coaching and goal orientation. "I am not authoritative; instead, I let my co-workers create their own situation. I am managers of managers and give much room for my followers to create their own situation" (Erik, 2019). Erik explains that leadership is all about enabling followers to reach their full potential. It is context related, sometimes it requires authoritative means and sometimes coaching and inspirational. He said that top-managers need to find a good mixture of middle managers with these different qualities. He explains that his branch in Senegal is a bit special, where they built their organisation on Swedish corporate values, and where part of the employee’s introductory courses is to learn the Swedish language and its corporate culture.

He also said that their office managers in Senegal have a different approach on how an effective leader should behave. "Leaders in Senegal decides what employees should do or not do, they are not very much about sharing and getting the employees involved in decision-making processes, and there is not much coaching either; which is very different from the Swedish leadership style" (Erik, 2019). He, therefore, argues that a lot of time and training has been directed to their managers in Senegal, for them to adapt to the Swedish leadership style since Erik and his company do not want their employees to be managed by fear and authoritarianism.

However, Erik feels it is crucial for Swedish leaders operating in a foreign country and culture to understand what basic perception their employees have. He said when he appoints a first-line manager; he would ask them to explain their understanding of being a leader because he believes, there seem to be many different views and stereotypes about how a leader should behave. Erik said that he and his company have an idea of how there managers should act and behave, but the local employees in Senegal also have another, and the important thing is to have an open dialogue and explain terms and conditions of work and behaviour. “One would be surprised as to how quickly people can adapt once they put their mind into it” (Erik, 2019).
4.5 Leadership and Trust - Case 5

Bengt is the founder and owner of a furniture manufacturing company in Dar el Salam, Tanzania. Bengt left Sweden in his 20s and has been living in SSA since 1990. His story in SSA began in Zambia where he worked as a teacher for five years, and then in 1995 when he decided to start his own company in Zanzibar, after realising the market opportunities in SSA. “Africa has huge market potential, and it is not properly portrayed in Western media” (Bengt, 2019). Bengt lives in Tanzania.

Bureaucratic Culture

Bengt defines culture as to how one sees life and society in general. He explains that culture has a lot to do with one’s upbringing and rules that guide behaviour, which provides people with a sense of right and wrong. "Our behaviour at home, work and society are all guided by our cultural upbringing” (Bengt, 2019). He believes that this is what makes meeting and working in a different cultural environment exciting, especially one as unique and varied as SSA in comparison to the one he was brought up in. However, leading in such a diverse and different culture has its own challenges. He explains that SSA has a different approach compared to the western way of conducting business, planning, and leadership relationships.

He thinks that significant challenges come from the bureaucratic nature of the government structures. He said obtaining a simple thing as work permit can take a frustrating time. “You would have to run back and forth between agencies before you would even get to the right authority (Bengt, 2019). He explains that people are not very concerned with time, which makes planning very difficult. When living in Sweden, he was used to authorities who could help in a fixed time. However, in SSA, it is the opposite since you have to fight with the authorities to get help, and there is no time limit to processes.

Coaching Leadership

Bengt believes that his leadership style is of a coaching approach, where workers are given the freedom to take initiatives. He believes that a leader needs to able to motivate people. He explained, having worked as a teacher, had given him experience in dealing with people. Bengt believes being patience and understanding makes leadership easier, and being able to be flexible. He explains the necessity to be able to adapt to changing events, which are very common in SSA, for example running out of electricity in the middle of production should not course much of a breakdown, as it might have done in Sweden.
He also explains the importance of adapting one's leadership style in order to take tough decisions, since he believes a leader should be able to do whatever is required for the success of the organisation, which is expected in SSA according to Bengt: "The boss has the final say" (Bengt, 2019). He explained that due to the enormous cultural differences, most Swedish leadership practices would not work in SSA; for example, leaders will be deemed weak if they compromise too much. “You cannot let them run you over” (Bengt, 2019).

He explains that Swedish leaders in SSA need to be firm and authoritative in their stance and show their ability as an effective leader. However, Bengt believes some aspects of their leadership should not be compromised, such as, respect and integrity. He thinks to be successful in SSA; it is essential to get first to know the area and culture. His advice to future Swedish leaders willing to do business in SSA would be, to either first live in the region for a while or employ a local manager to assist with the cultural aspects.

**Trust is a Two-Way Street**

Bengt believes that gaining the trust of employees is the first vital aspect of conducting business and becoming a successful leader anywhere. However, he said people in SSA would give leaders the benefits of the doubt at first, and it is up to the leader to either maintain that trust or lose it. He said one needs to be careful not to lose that trust because once you lose, it is almost impossible to regain. He also explained it is also vital as a leader to show trust towards the employees. "You cannot start a working relationship by mistrusting people; it is needed to boost motivation, which is ultimately what you need to succeed" (Bengt, 2019)

### 4.6 Adaptive and Flexible - Case 6

Maria work as the Head of Growth for a start-up tech company, where she is responsible for the operational markets in West Africa, such as, recruitment and training. She joined the start-up in 2016 but had worked in several different SSA markets previously. Maria lives in Sweden.

**Respect for Culture**

Maria clarifies that culture is something that develops over time and is based on history, social norms and languages. It is, therefore, crucial for leaders to embrace the culture, since it will make it easier to relate to employees. She finds it enriching and stimulating to work at multicultural settings. "You get insights into new dimensions that you had not previously thought of" (Maria, 2019).
Working in SSA has thought her that culture plays a vital role in everyday life and business. She explains that the people of SSA have a completely different outlook when it comes to the concept of time. “There is a problem with time in Africa. I wasted a lot of time sitting around waiting (Maria, 2019). She, however, said that it is crucial to have a readiness when it comes to this, and not to be frustrated and get affected, since it is a part of their culture “One must be able to respect their culture, and be responsive, and understand how it works there” (Maria, 2019).

Role Model

Maria defines her leadership as being flexible. She argues that Scandinavians are accustomed to being flexible to others and having an awareness of cultural differences. This has helped her working life in SSA since the employees found it hard adapting to her Swedish way of leading. "Something I noticed when working in SSA, is that they did not understand the concept of cultural differences, and the concept of integration” (Maria, 2019). She needed, therefore, to adapt to the SSA leadership, which emphasised micromanagement and control. She explained that she dislikes this type of leadership and that she did not seek to become an authoritarian leader, but that it was a necessity. "In Africa, you should control people, since you cannot count on the work being carried out without; clear instructions and follow-up” (Maria, 2019). She claims that employees in SSA would not accomplish their work duties, without clear directions from their managers, and continuous monitoring. She, moreover, argues that the employees in SSA will not take their leader seriously if they are not authoritarian. "The Swedish leadership style does not work in SSA; you will need to become authoritarian and show that you are in charge” (Maria, 2019).

According to Maria, she became an icon working in SSA. The employees looked up to her and that she acted as a promotional product. ”It was vital for me to be a role model because it had a significant impact on others” (Maria, 2019). She explains that there should be a clear distance between the leader and the employees. The leader was expected to only interact with the employees if it was work related. As a result, Maria gained more authority and respect from her followers, but at the cost of not being able to integrate at the workplace. ”I gained respect from the employees, but I felt extremely lonely, unintegrated and isolated at the office” (Maria, 2019). This type of hierarchical system was something new for Maria, and it took a long time before she was able to adapt. She also argues that being a woman could also have implications of not being accepted in the beginning, since many SSA societies, proclaim that men should be the leaders. "It was hard for me as a woman to be accepted in the beginning, but managed to overcome this by displaying authoritarianism” (Maria, 2019).
**Values and Principles**

However, even if she was able to adapt to being an authoritarian leader, she still wanted to keep some aspects when it came to Swedish corporate culture. “*We wanted the employees to adapt on the way we work, such as work discipline and being able to find a compromise*” (Maria, 2019). Maria, moreover, argues that she and her company, did not want to adapt too much with the culture in SSA societies, since there were some elements that went against their morals “*It was essential for us to not forget our own cultural principles and values, such as zero tolerance regarding bribery and corruption*” (Maria, 2019).

She explains that many of her employees and business partners were willing to adapt to the Swedish model when it came to corruption. "*They think that Sweden is a strong brand since they know that it is a country that functions well*” (Maria, 2019). Maria, therefore, argues that it is imperative for leaders to be aware of their values and principles since they will allow leaders to control one's decisions. She explains that this also helped her in becoming flexible and adaptive for the local contexts.

Furthermore, Maria works mostly with business development and explains that it would be impossible to adapt to the SSA culture, without, receiving assistance from natives that could advise her regarding the cultural aspects. “*Our site manager is from Senegal but has lived in Sweden for many years. She is an important asset, as she understands the two cultural aspects*” (Maria, 2019). She, furthermore, advice future Swedish entrepreneurs that want to establish a business in SSA, to come and visit, since it is impossible to fully understand the context of SSA societies and create any real solutions from a distance. “*Culture is the only problem I have encountered in Africa as a leader; and everything else is irrelevant if you do not handle the cultural barrier*” (Maria, 2019).

**4.7 Freedom and Control - Case 7**

Veronica is the founder and CEO of a travel agency in Cape Town, South Africa. She is currently the co-owner with her husband. She had previously worked in the tourist industry in Sweden and came to South Africa in 1999. Veronica lives in South Africa.

**Culture is about Experiences**

Veronica believes that culture is about experiences that influence people's development in life. She considers culture as a fundamental concept that also shapes how leaders and followers interact. Moreover, she enjoys working in a multicultural setting since it is educational.
“You learn how peoples frame of references can differ and that it can affect how people act and behave” (Veronica, 2019). However, she believes that it is challenging working in SSA as a leader since the culture is significantly different from Sweden. She explains that Swedes and Scandinavians, in general, are very “Lutheran”. “We do as what we are told, come in time, listen and take on information” (Veronica, 2019). She was accustomed to leaders that were democratic towards their employees from previous working life in Sweden.

This also had an impact on her personal leadership style, where she describes as participating. She always tries to involve her employees, as much possible, in order for them to feel valued and a part of the organisation. She furthermore, explains that this can build trust since it brings transparency that instils a sense of responsibility in the workplace when the leader allows their followers to voice their opinions.

Managing by Fear

Veronica explains that she has eight employees, where two are South Africans, and the rest are Swedes. The reason for only having two native employees according to her is that a majority of her customer base comes from Scandinavia, which makes it imperative to know the language. However, this led to a division in corporate culture at her office. She explains that the South African leadership is based on managing by fear, where controlling and monitoring one's employees is seen as a necessity, whereas she was used to delegating responsibilities to the employees, and encourage work autonomy.

Veronica claims that performing at work is vital for Swedes, even without monitoring from managers since it will lead to prosperity and personal development. However, the corporate culture is entirely different in South Africa, according to Veronica, since the employees will not perform their work duties if not controlled by their leader. "Those who have worked for us got surprised when we gave them freedom and responsibility (Veronica, 2019).

Chameleon Leadership

According to Veronica, the division in the workplace between the Swedish and South African employees led to a significant cultural and managerial challenge. She explained that she wanted to use the Swedish leadership style on both the Swedish and South African employees, but noticed that it did not work, since the South African did not take her seriously. “This was a challenge, as I needed to change my leadership style towards the South African employees and become an authoritarian leader” (Veronica, 2019).
She, therefore, decided to adapt her leadership style towards different employees, being democratic and participating towards the Swedish employees and being authoritarian and controlling with the South African. "Then you become a bit like a chameleon, you adapt to different cultures" (Veronica, 2019). Veronica argues that it is critical for Swedish leaders in SSA to check and control the employees, since otherwise there is a risk that they will not do their work.

4.8 Theatrical Leadership - Case 8

Peter is the founder and owner of a hotel in Kenya, since 2002. He first travelled to SSA in 1998, as he has always been fascinated by the regions rich wildlife. He got inspired after the trip to open a hotel that offers safari tours. Peter lives in Kenya.

Frame of References

Peter said that culture is about how people behave at home, private and at work. He moreover explained that culture enables people creating their own frame of references. “The further you get away from your own environment, the more challenging the cultural differences get” (Peter, 2019). Peter, however, explained that this only makes the world more interesting, since people may look and act differently, but are the same deep down. “We all want the same things at different levels” (Peter, 2019).

He moreover, explains that the culture in SSA is very much different from the Swedish culture, and conducting business in the region would be very hard without the assistance of his Kenyan wife. Peter said that his wife taught him how the culture in SSA works, especially when it comes to dealing with people and authorities. Peter argues that a significant cultural challenge is not being able to plan more than a day ahead. “We Swedes like to think and plan ten years ahead, but in Africa, you think here and now, Which makes it very difficult to plan for the future” (Peter, 2019). He moreover, explains that there are specific gender-rolls and that men should not be involved in household chores.

In this regard, he said that there is a vast difference in the mind-set of a Swede and a Kenyan, which can be difficult for a Swedish leader. He moreover, explains the necessity to adapt because the benefits will eventually overcome the difficulties. “For a Swede to conduct a successful business in Kenya, he needs to be quick to adapt” (Peter, 2019). Peter, however, claims that there is no direct book of rules or courses that can prepare a Swedish leader wishing to conduct business in SSA.
He said things that westerners are not used to, will transpire regularly, and it is imperative to be prepared. He explained that he had problems with employees stealing goods from his business “This is time-consuming because then I have to fire them and hire new ones” (Peter, 2019). He furthermore explained that people in SSA do not use references, which makes it harder for employers to know whom they are hiring. He, therefore, introduced a system in which every employee needs someone to vouch for their trustworthiness “One must be strict, and use Swedish rules when hiring someone (Peter, 2019).

Adapting is the Key to Success

Peter explained that he has a typical Swedish style of leadership, where it entails being a participative leader. He enjoys involving his employees and making himself available to everyone. He believes that his role is to improve the work quality of his staff, as he wants his employees to perform, which he feels cannot be obtained through intimidation.

However, he said this is nevertheless difficult in SSA as his employees expect him to be an authoritarian leader, and behave in a bossy way. Peter explained that in SSA, there should exist a distance between the worker and the leader. “The leader should not be part of the gang” (Peter, 2019). However, this required Peter to play some theatre with his employees, which is difficult according to him. “It is not my personality to behave rude and bossy towards people, however acting too nice will weaken your authority” (Peter, 2019).

He explained that it is essential to be seen as authoritarian; otherwise, the employees will not take the leaders seriously, which can have an impact on daily business operations. “The staff will become lazy if the leader is not tough towards them” (Peter, 2019). He, therefore, explained that playing theatre can help leaders to adjust to the culture in SSA. He said the key to becoming a successful leader is able to take on different roles. “Be the boss when you need to be and play the coach or teammate whenever possible” (Peter, 2019).
CHAPTER 5: EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter provides the analysis of the findings derived from the empirical data review and linking the significance of these findings to the theories embodied in the pool of literature. The themes presented in this chapter are: Reasons for Adapting or Transforming the Corporate Culture, How to Adapt and Transforming the Corporate Culture.

5.1 Reasons for Adapting or Transforming the Corporate Culture

The first theme that emerged was the different cultural challenges that exist in SSA, which either makes Swedish SMEs leaders willing to adapt or to transform the existing culture.

The Swedish SME leaders had comparable answers when defining culture, as they believed that culture is an essential concept that affects how people behave and act towards others. Maria and Veronica argued the importance of embracing culture since it creates a stronger relationship with the employees. Moreover, all the leaders thought it was inspiring to work in a multicultural environment since it allowed them to get new perspectives on corporate and social life. Peter explained that working in a multicultural setting in SSA enabled him to understand other people’s frame of references, which differed from his own. This goes in line with Hofstede (2010) and Kuada (2009), statements that people’s mental programs (frame of references) vary since they are being developed in different social environments. This had mostly an impact on why all the respondents expressed that there were many underlying differences between the cultures in Sweden and SSA.

5.1.1 Relationship Challenges

Hierarchical Structure

There seems to be an agreement between the respondents that the relationships between employees and leaders in SSA are entirely different from that in Sweden. Oliver, for instance, were used to having discussions and arguments with his employees in Sweden but explained that this type of relationship would be seen as abnormal in SSA, as it would question the leaders' authority. Many of the respondents argued that subordinates in SSA anticipate leaders to take all the necessary decision and being firm in their stance. Based on the respondent's answers, there seems to exist a dominant social relationship in SSA between leaders and employees, which can be linked with GLOBES dimension of assertiveness, where SSA received a high score and Sweden a low score (House et al., 2004).
Dorfman et al. (2011), argued that the high level of assertiveness in SSA is due to corruption and violence. Many of the leaders, however, argued that this is a result of the existing hierarchical system. Sebastian argued that employees were expected to obey their leaders. His employees, moreover, addressed him by "boss", which is rare in Sweden since there is minimum usage of titles (Warner-Soderholm, 2012). Bengt, moreover argued that leaders would be considered weak if they asked for advice from their employees in order to make a decision. This is, therefore, in line with SSA being a high power distance region in the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). Maria also had a similar experience, where the employees viewed her as a role model and where she could not interact with the employees if it were not work-related. Peter also explained that there should be a distance in the relationship and that the leader should not be viewed as a “member of the gang”. This is related to Dorfman et al. (2011) argument that it is essential for subordinates to show respect for hierarchy in SSA.

All of the leaders thought that this differed substantially from the flat organisational structure that exists in Sweden, where leaders and employees interact in an informal way (Warner-Soderholm, 2012). This would explain why Sweden is categorised as a low power distance society in the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). Many of the respondents also expressed that their employees had a relaxed attitude towards work if the leaders did not control them frequently. Veronica explained that Swedish corporate culture is characterised by people working even without out being monitored by their managers. However, this type of managerial approach does not work in SSA according to the respondents, since the employees would not take the leader seriously. Many of the leaders, therefore, explains that the employees were used to be “managed by fear” where control was seen as a necessity (Dorfman et al., 2011).

Maria and Veronica argue that it is imperative that leaders give clear instructions and even micromanage the workers, as otherwise there is a risk that they will not perform their work duties. Peter also explained that there could be a massive impact on daily business operations, if the leaders are not tough towards the workers, as they will not perform. This could, furthermore, be related to GLOBES performance orientation dimension, where Sweden received a low score, whereas SSA scored high (House et al., 2004). Dorfman et al. (2011), argued that people in high scoring performance orientation societies perform well because they expect rewards and bonuses from their employers. However, many respondents argued that workers will only perform if the leader is controlling and having regular follow-ups.
Trust

Devine and Williams (2005) argue that Swedish leaders trust their subordinates to perform their duties and tasks well. Trust is also a repetitive concept among the interviewed leaders. Alexander mentions that trust is essential between the manager and the employees as it creates a more collaborative work environment. Bengt, moreover, argues that trust is essential, but that leaders in SSA must be careful not to lose the legitimacy and trust of their employees since it will be hard to regain. This statement would classify SSA as a high uncertainty avoidance society, as the employees avoid uncertainty by relying on social norms in order to avoid unpredictable future events (House et al., 2004). Some of the respondents, however, believed that the relationship between leader and worker is not based on trust but control. Peter had even introduced a system where employees needed someone to vouch for their trustworthiness when being hired. The leader-worker relationship in SSA seemed, therefore, to be very different from the one in Sweden, which created challenges for the SMEs leaders.

5.1.2 Societal Challenges

Time

All of the respondents agreed that the relationship aspect was a challenge, but also mentioned many different societal challenges. The concept of time got mentioned frequently by the Swedish SME leaders regarding a cultural challenge, which goes in line with Onwubiko (1990) statement that the people in SSA have a polychronic time perception. People have a tendency of being late, which is seen as acceptable. Moreover, the SME leaders may have a Swedish perception of time, whereas the local employees are being influenced by their culture (Hofstede, 2010). The leaders, therefore, expressed the importance of being ready when it comes to time since it can generate challenges regarding planning and employees being late for work. This goes, moreover, in line with GLOBEs assessment on uncertainty avoidance regarding both Sweden and SSA (House et al., 2004). Sweden scored low on this dimension, which indicates a culture that strives for order, whereas SSA scored relatively high, which can explain why people are more relaxed towards time. However, the attitude regarding time may be due to cultural factors, but on the other hand, it can also depend on poor infrastructure and a limited transportation network, which was also mentioned by Erik. He explained that his staff struggled for coming in time, but was restricted by Dakar's public transportation system. It is, therefore, important for Swedish leaders to understand that poor infrastructure can impact people ability on being present for a meeting or being on time for work. Many of the respondents also argued that the problem with time affected their ability to plan.
This can moreover be identified in GLOBEs future orientation dimension, where Sweden has a high score since their culture encourages long-term planning. However, SSA also scores high on this dimension, but the respondents in this research would think otherwise. Peter explained that people in Sweden think and plan ahead, but that people in SSA only think in present terms. This goes in line with Mbiti (1990) argument that SSA has a different dimensional conception of time, where only the past and present exists and virtually no future. This can create challenges but can be avoided if there is a willingness from the side of the leaders. It seems that the problems with time and planning can be solved according to the leaders, with clear communication, by informing employees or business partners that planning and time are essential (Di Luzio et al. 2001). Some of the respondents also mentioned that the problem with time is linked with the poor bureaucracy system in SSA. Erik argued that rules and regulations are not always followed, and a lot of vital working hours go to dealing with the bureaucracy. Peter also argued that it is common to fight with the authorities in order to get help and there is no time limit to processes.

**Gender**

Two of the interviewed leaders were women, and one of them felt discriminated because of her gender. Maria explained that the employees did not accept her at the beginning of her stay in SSA as she was a woman. This supports SSA low score on gender egalitarianism in GLOBE (House et al., 2004). Maria explained that the lack of acceptance was because men dominated the business sphere in SSA. Moreover, Peter also explained that men should not be involved in household tasks. This is in line with Dorfman (2011) statement that there are gender-specific roles and that status and respect should be given to males. The other female leader, Veronica, did, however, not face gender discrimination from her employees. This may be because, 75 per cent of her workforce were Swedes, which would decrease the chances of being discriminated since GLOBE ranked Sweden high on the gender egalitarianism dimension. King et al. (2011) also argued that there are equal opportunities for both genders in the labour market in Sweden.

**Collectivism**

The people in SSA seem to be very collectivistic orientated, according to some of the responses from the leaders. Oliver explained that some of his employees shared their salary with their villages. This strengthens the GLOBES argument that SSA is a high in-group collectivistic region, where the emphasis is on the collective need rather than the individual. The employees are often prepared to sacrifice individual ambitions in order to achieve the goal of the collective, which can also be linked with the humane orientation in SSA (House et al., 2004).
Oliver’s statement goes moreover in line with Ovadje (2014) argument that group members in SSA often belong to the same tribe or extended family and thus take pride in the group. Furthermore, Erik’s employees expected a higher salary after getting married or having children. However, Erik refused this and told them that this was not a norm in Sweden. They moreover, expected that Erik’s company should provide lunch for the employees every day, which the leader also thought was abnormal, but accepted. This would rank SSA high on the institutional collectivism dimension since the employees are encouraged by organisational culture to share resources collectively and partake in shared activities (House et al., 2004). SSA, is, however, ranked moderately when it comes to institutional collectivistic, whereas Sweden is ranked as a high score society.

**Corruption**

The literature mentions that SSA is a society characterised with corruption, that hampers the socioeconomic life in SSA, such as, conducting business, closing deals and securing contracts (Dorfman et al., 2011; Getz and Volkema, 2001). However, only one of the interviewed leaders found that corruption was a specific problem that needed to be dealt with. This may be due to the fact that many SSA countries have in recent years been through significant social and financial development. Stein (2010) argues that many governments are implementing new policies regarding improved trade and entrepreneurship that could have a significant effect on eradicating corruption in the region. This is also supported by Marias’s statement that many of her employees and business partners were willing to adjust to the Swedish model when it came to corruption, which would entail zero tolerance. Even though corruption still exists as one of the respondents pointed out, it seems not as alarming as it is being claimed in the literature. This can be due to that, many countries in SSA are fighting for a better business environment (Stein, 2010).

![Figure 4: Cultural challenges faced by the eight Swedish SMEs leaders in SSA](image-url)
5.2 How to Adapt

In this theme, the researchers will give an analysis of how the different Swedish SMEs leaders adapted their leadership style towards the cultural challenges in SSA.

Swedish Leadership

All of the Swedish SME leaders had comparable answers with the theories assignment of what characterises Swedish leadership. Most of the respondents explained the importance of involving employees in decision-making processes. They, moreover, expressed the significance of delegating responsibilities to the employees, since that would make them engaged and feel appreciated in the organisation. Some also, described their leadership style as inclusive, as they wanted to be attentive regarding the workers' opinions (Devine and Williams, 2005; Warner-Soderholm, 2012).

All of this also goes in line with GLOBE Participative Leadership style, where leaders try to delegate tasks and roles to their followers in an egalitarian way. Sweden also scored among the highest on the participative dimension among all GLOBE clusters (House et al., 2004). This is also supported by Lawrence and Spybey (2018) where they argued that Swedish leaders tend to involve their subordinates in decision making by often consulting with them before making final decisions, as their views are given importance.

Some of the respondents also described their leadership style as being “coaching”, where the leader tries to motivate employees and enabling them to reach their full potential. This is in agreement with Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership, where the emphasis is on inspiring and motivating employees, which creates a passion among subordinates to perform based on firmly held core values (House et al., 2004). Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership was also strongly endorsed as the most effective leadership style in Sweden according to GLOBE. Alexander, was the only exception from the leaders, as he described his leadership style as being responsive and humble with his followers, as he argued that this would generate a more cohesive work environment. This could be linked with GLOBEs Human-Oriented Leadership, where the leader is characterised by modesty and compassion towards their followers. However, this type of leadership is not considered to be one of Sweden's main preferences according to the GLOBE study, where Participative leadership, Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership and Team-Oriented Leadership, are seen as the most desirable choices. However, SSA has the second highest score of Humane-Oriented leadership for all GLOBE clusters, since it is seen as an essential tool for outstanding leadership.
SSA Leadership

All of the eight respondents stated that leadership style in Sweden and SSA differs significantly. Five out of eight leaders were willing to adapt their leadership style in order to tackle the challenges and to adjust to the local culture. The willingness of the respondents to adapt is in line with Mårtenson (1998) and Newman and Nollen (1996), who states that leaders should adapt their leadership style to the different cultures in which they operate. As previously mentioned, all of the respondents thought that the relationship between leaders and employees in SSA are based on control and that there exists a clear power distance, which indicated a hierarchical structure that was utterly different from what the leaders were used to in Sweden.

The employees also expected that their leaders should be harsh and controlling. This was seen as the biggest challenge for the Swedish Leaders (as seen in figure 4). All of those who choose to adapt to the SSA culture did it because of the hierarchical system that existed between the leaders and employees. Veronica explained that her employees got surprised when she did not monitor or controlled them since they were used to authoritarian leaders. This corresponds with Dorfman et al. (2011) argument that SSA leaders are expected by their followers to be authoritarian. Kuada (2009) also states that authoritarianism is the common dominant leadership style in SSA.

However, many of the respondents disliked this form of leadership, since it did not correspond with their value and believes, which emphasised a more democratic approach, where involving employees is seen as crucial. However, as previously mentioned, many of the respondents noticed that this type of approach did not work, since the workers expected clear instructions and follow-up. This corresponds with Newman and Nollen (1996) statement that it can lead to employee’s dissatisfaction if the leadership style differs from the cultural expectations and values of the employees. Many of the respondents, therefore, choose to adapt and become authoritarian, since there was a risk that they would be considered as weak leaders if they stuck to the Swedish leadership style. This goes, moreover, in line with Nilsson et al. (2014) statement that cultures have various demands on an individual's leadership, which means that the culture and the employees' pre-understanding are factors that are important for how leadership is experienced. The leaders, however, experienced a significant difference after they adapted their leadership style. Sebastian noticed that his employees took him more seriously after becoming more authoritarian. Maria also experienced changes in their behaviour, as her employees started to respect her and even viewed her as a role model. This corresponds with Adler (2002) statement that leaders who, recognise and promote cultural difference are more likely to lead a more effective and creative organisation than those that subdue cultural differences.
Combining Leadership

All of the five leaders that decided to adapt to the authoritarian leadership style of the SSA still kept some of their core Swedish values. Peter thought that the SSA hierarchical system, was hard to comprehend and that it took a long time before he was able to become authoritarian. He explained that it was not in his personality to behave rude and bossy towards people, but explained that acting like a Swedish manager would weaken his authority. He, therefore, explained that playing theatre and being able to take on different roles can help leaders to adjust to the culture in SSA.

Veronica explained that she acted as a “chameleon”, combining leadership style, where she was being democratic and participating towards the Swedish employees and authoritarian and controlling with her South African employees. Sebastian argued that it is essential to be able to combine authoritarian leadership with some Swedish values, which can be the reason he was able to change his employee's perspective, by explaining to them the importance of being on time and that it was essential in Swedish culture (Warner-Soderholm, 2012). Maria, who was able to adapt to becoming an authoritarian leader, stressed the importance of retaining key aspects when it came to Swedish values and principles since it could allow Swedish leaders to control their decisions. She also explained that this also helped her in becoming flexible and adapting to the local context. Bengt also argued that leaders should not completely adapt to becoming authoritarian, and insist they should keep some of their Swedish values, such as integrity and respect for the individual.

This is also supported by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), who argues that culture is not always visible, but generally, something that is deeply embedded within people, and Hofstede (2010) explains that culture is something that is learned through time and not inherited. This implies that the Swedish SME leaders cannot fully adapt to becoming authoritarian since they were raised with values that contradict with those values that exist in SSA.

Some of the respondents, therefore, utilised local talents that could help them to adjust to the SSA way of leading. The local talents understood the existing culture in the society, and could, therefore, navigate through the different challenges with greater ease than the Swedish leaders. They could furthermore supply the different leaders with knowledge and skills that were seen as crucial, such as dealing with employees and authorities. Some of the local talents had even lived in Sweden, which was seen as an extra benefit for the leaders since they understood the cultural aspects of both SSA and Sweden.
5.3 Transforming the Corporate Culture

Our empirical review discovered that some of the leaders did not adapt to SSA culture challenges due to strong core values, and even wanted to change the existing hierarchical system.

Swedish Model

A theme that has been recurring throughout the multiple case study is keeping Swedish values and principles when operating in SSA. Although a majority of the respondents conferred the need to adapt one's leadership style, there were, however, three leaders who held contrary beliefs to this. One of them is Oliver, who believes that adopting the SSA leadership style of controlling and authoritarianism will only prevent growth because employees will only do what they are told and never exceeds expectations. This belief of his is very much correspondent with the Swedish leadership style, where it is believed that giving employees freedom will lead to more determination and motivation (Lawrence and Spybey, 2018). Furthermore, his view of the leader-employee relationship was very different from the views in South Africa, where the relationship between the leader and the employee is based on total control from the leader's side.

Therefore, he did not want to adapt his leadership style and explained that if his type of leading is efficient in Sweden, then it should also be applicable to South African employees. Moreover, Oliver is based in Sweden and explained that he has been in conflict with his South African management team, regarding their way of treating employees; such as control and monitoring. He, furthermore, explained that he was in the process of transforming his South African management team and the way they lead their employees, as he argued that the Swedish way of leading is more employee and company friendly. This statement goes in line with Depree’s (1987) claims that effective leaders can transform followers, throughput visions, motivation, and influence.

Erik was also one of the leaders who did not desire to change his leadership style in SSA. Erik's company in Senegal have their clientele base in Sweden and Scandinavia. Erik agrees that it is necessary to adapt to new cultures but not too much of it either; otherwise, one might run the risk of losing one's identity in the process. He and his company choose not to adapt to the local ways of doing business, and instead trained their employees into adopting Swedish corporate values and even the Swedish language. However, many of his office managers in Senegal still utilises the authoritarian leadership style approach. That is why his company invested in leadership training directed to their managers in Senegal, for them to adapt to the Swedish way of leading.
Eric moreover explained that it is vital for leaders that go to SSA or a foreign country to understand what basic perception their employees have. Eric had an idea of how their managers should act and behave, but the local employees had another, and that is why he argues that it is important having an open dialogue regarding work ethics and behaviour. This goes in line with Di Luzio et al. (2001) statement that culture is centred on communication and that leaders in multicultural organisations need to focus on dialogue with their employees since that can create meaning.

Alexander is another Swedish SME leader who did not want to compromise his leadership style by adapting to the authoritative leadership style associated with the region. He deemed trust between employee and manager vital as he is confident this will lead to a better working environment. Alexander, who is based in Sweden, decided to hire a local supervisor who has all the responsibilities of the employees. It was furthermore, important that the supervisor had a “Swedish mind-set” where the emphasis is on treating the employees with respect and value. He, moreover, argued that his manager is very different from all SSA managers he had encountered in a society that is characterised by authoritarianism (Dorfman et al., 2011). Oliver, Eric and Alexander proclaim that Swedish leadership style is more efficient than the local approach since it values good personal relations with their co-workers and subordinates, which would, in turn, lead to content and motivated employees, which is also consistent with Devine and Williams (2005) evaluation of what characterise Swedish leaders.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This chapter will go through the research questions and evaluate the arguments provided by the literature and compare them with the findings from the eight case studies.

6.1 Cultural Challenges

The purpose of this research was to explore and understand the cultural experiences of Swedish SMEs leaders in SSA markets, which led to formulating the research question:

- What cultural challenges do Swedish SME leaders face in SSA?

The research found out that all of the respondents had experienced different varieties of cultural challenges in SSA. The challenges that the Swedish SMEs leaders faced in SSA consisted of; Time, Collectivism, Corruption, Gender Inequality, Trust and the Hierarchical System (as seen in figure 4).

Challenges regarding time were mentioned by five leaders, which entailed problem with planning and employees being late for work. One of the leaders also explained that poor infrastructure could be a reason why employees are late (Onwubiko, 1991; Mbiti 1990). It is therefore essential that leaders have a readiness when it comes to the concept of time in SSA since it is seen as ordinary of being late. The issue with time did not, however, have a significant impact on the different leaders, as a majority of them explained the need of flexibility and patience regarding time since it is part of SSA culture. Furthermore, collectivism was mentioned by two of the respondents as a challenge for their companies, but not specifically for the leaders. However, there is a risk that these collectivistic behaviours can decrease the motivation of performance if the employees share their salary with their village since money can be seen as a big motivator, which also was mentioned by one of the respondents (Oliver, 2019).

This can entail that leaders have to find different ways of motivating their employees. One respondent mentioned corruption as an issue that exists in SSA, but the leader had never been affected by it personally. Even though corruption still exist as the respondent pointed out, it seems not as alarming as the literature claimed (Getz and Volkema, 2001; Dorfman et al., 2011). This can be line with (Stein, 2010), argument that many SSA governments are improving the business environment in SSA, which in turn could decrease the level of corruption in the region. There were, however, three challenges that had a direct impact on the respondents; Gender inequality, Trust and the Hierarchical system.
Gender inequality was mentioned by only one of the respondents. This can, therefore, not be seen as a representative number, since only two female leaders were interviewed. However, this leadership challenge is still significant to highlight, since SSA is seen as a low gender equality region according to the literature (Dorfman et al., 2011; House et al., 2004). Trust was also seen as a challenge by one of the respondents, as SSA tends to trust leaders that are seen as competent and controlling, and that it is hard to regain trust. This goes in line with the GLOBEs assertiveness dimension, where high score societies have more trust for strong leaders that pursue control (House et al., 2004).

Challenges with the hierarchical system were mentioned by all the respondents, which demonstrated that the relationship between employees and leaders in SSA were very different from that in Sweden. Swedish leadership style of delegating responsibilities and involving employees in decision-making processes seemed not to work for most of the respondents. The employees became inefficient and lost respect for the leaders since there were considered weak, as they expected their leader to be in control and authoritarian. This was the reason why five leaders choose to adapt their leadership style, as it could have an impact on daily business operations.

Moreover, the research conducted interviews with SME leaders that were operating in; Congo, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Senegal. All of these countries had the same perception, of how an effective leader should act and behave. This is furthermore, an interesting finding that strengthens the arguments that authoritarian leadership style is the most dominant sort of leadership style in the region of SSA (Kuada, 2009; Dorfman et al., 2011). Furthermore, the hierarchical challenges that the Swedish SME leaders faced in SSA were in consisted of GLOBEs assignment regarding both Sweden and SSA. The findings go in line with that Sweden is a low power distance/assertiveness country, whereas SSA is a high power distance/ assertiveness region, which could be displayed with the controlling and authoritarian relationship between the workers and employees (House et al., 2004).

However, findings point out that GLOBES performance orientation dimension did not apply for this case study. SSA is ranked as a high scoring performance region that would indicate employees would perform well because of rewards and bonuses (House et al., 2004). However, this case study found that workers would, in most cases, only perform if the leader was controlling and having regular follow-ups. As previously mentioned was this the reason why the leaders choose to adapt their leadership style.
6.2 Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The second research question wanted to explore how the leaders adapted to the cultural challenges as previously mentioned.

➢ RQ2: How do Swedish SME leaders adapt their leadership style to the cultural challenges in SSA?

The SME leaders shared almost the same view of how an effective leader should behave towards their employees, which is characterised by Swedish leadership style that was displayed in literature, such as involving followers in decision making and giving them autonomy in performing tasks (Devine and Williams, 2005; Lawrence and Spybey 2018; Warner-Soderholm, 2012). Moreover, the findings consisted of GLOBES assignment of the most favourable leadership style in Sweden. Seven leaders utilised either Participative Leadership or Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership, which is ranked top three on the most popular leadership styles. This moreover, strengthens the arguments that Swedish leaders value personal relations with their co-workers and subordinates (Devine and Williams, 2005).

Furthermore, the leaders had different approaches on how to deal with the cultural challenges they experienced in SSA. The five respondents that chose to adapt to the cultural challenges became authoritarian and controlling towards their employees. This was seen as a necessity as their employees did not respond to their Swedish way of leading: the employee's lost respect and the motivation for performing at work. However, the leaders noticed a difference when they were controlling and authoritarian since the employees started to respect their authority as leaders. This is consistent with the literature that pointed out that a society’s culture is a dominant factor that influences leadership style and that leaders need to adapt and use cultural differences as an opportunity in order to gain a competitive advantage (Mårtenson, 1998; Evans, 1995).

The respondents, however, argued that it was imperative not entirely to adapt into becoming an authoritarian leader but to combine SSA leadership with some Swedish values, as it could allow Swedish leaders to control their decisions. Keeping values such as integrity and respect, helped some of the respondents to treat employees in a more fairly and respectable way. One respondent thought it was essential to keep Swedish values as it helped to fight challenges such as corruption and bribes, as locals were even willing to adjust to the Swedish model when it came to corruption. Even though all leaders mentioned challenges regarding the hierarchical structure, where there still three leaders that did not want to change their leadership style.
They believe that the Swedish way of leading employees is more efficient than the leadership style that exists in SSA. Moreover, they wanted to change the existing hierarchical structure and implement Swedish corporate values. Two of them succeeded in doing this, as one had used a local supervisor that was characterised by using a democratic leadership approach. The leader expressed that this worked, as the employees felt more motivated and valued in the company.

Another respondent had, however, changed the whole organisation structure, where Swedish corporate valued was taught during introductory courses. The leader expressed that his managers still used authoritarian leadership since that was seen as the norm. They had, therefore, invested in managerial training, where the native managers were lectured in Swedish leadership practices. The third respondent did not want to adopt the SSA leadership style, as he despised micromanagement and "managing by fear". The leader, therefore, expressed the importance of changing the way his managers in SSA lead the employees, as being an authoritarian leader would be seen as conflicting to his values and believes.

What is interesting with these findings is that all of the leaders that lived in SSA were willing to change and adapt their leadership and becoming authoritarian. However, all those who wanted to transform the culture lived in Sweden. This can entail that there is a relation with being psychical present and leading by distance. This can be linked with Hofstede (2010) claim that culture is a learning process understood in a particular context. The leader that is physically present can, therefore, grasp the existing culture in a better way, and therefore, understand what type of leadership style that is the most efficient. However, this is something that needs to be investigated further, as it would have implications on SMEs managerial practices.

Many of the respondents also argued about the importance for Swedish leaders to be present in SSA, as that will enhance knowledge in culture. Many of the leaders thought that this worked as they gained knowledge as they would otherwise not get in different cultural courses in Sweden. One of the respondents argued that adapting to the culture in SSA was the only leadership challenge that she had encountered and that everything is irrelevant if leaders do not handle the cultural barrier. It can, therefore, be crucial for leaders to have the ability to adapt their leadership style after a specific situation as it can be seen as crucial in today's globalised world (Nilsson et al., 2014).
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This chapter will go through the research questions and evaluate the arguments provided by the literature and compare them with the findings from the eight case studies.

7.1 Key Findings

This thesis aimed to explore what cultural challenges Swedish SME leaders face in SSA and how it influences leadership styles. The findings pointed out that there were significant differences in culture regarding both SSA and Sweden. The respondents mentioned challenges regarding, time, gender inequality, collectivistic behaviour, corruption, and trust issues. However, the existing hierarchical system in SSA was seen as the main challenge, as the respondents were used to a flat organisations structure in Sweden, whereas the business culture in SSA promotes authoritarianism. Moreover, all of the respondents advocated for a leadership style that exemplifies Swedish leadership in the literature, where the focus should be on involving employees in decision making and giving them work autonomy.

However, many of the SSA employees did not respond well to this type of leadership style, as they were used to having controlling and monitoring managers that utilised micromanagement. The leaders, therefore, found that the employees started becoming unproductive and even lazy, as they did not respect the leaders and viewed them as weak. The majority of respondents, therefore, argued the importance of changing their leadership style and adapting it to the culture. All of the respondents claim that they witnessed significant differences after becoming authoritarian, in the work performance of their employees, as they started respecting the leaders’ authority.

The leaders that adapted also argue that it was vital to keep some of their Swedish values with a combination of authoritarianism. These core values remained intact regardless of the cultural challenges and differences. This helped them controlling their decision regarding respecting employees but also having zero tolerance against corruption. The empirical findings also suggested that many of the leaders utilised local talents that helped them to guide them through the different cultural challenges. This can see as important as it facilitated in changing leadership style, but also gaining crucial first-hand knowledge that according to some of the respondent cannot be learnt through managerial courses in Sweden. The findings also pointed out that some of the Swedish SME leaders instead choose to transform the existing corporate culture than to adapt their leadership style. It was shown that the leaders thought that the Swedish model of leading is more efficient than the variant that is present in SSA since it was seen as more employee and company friendly.
The findings also suggested that all of the leaders that choose to adapt were based in SSA, but all of the leaders that choose to transform lived in Sweden. It can, therefore, be argued that there is an active link in leading by distant and being psychological present. It was also shown that the different SSA countries; Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania had the same perception on how leaders should behave. This was a fascinating finding since SSA is seen as a very diverse region with different languages and traditions. Moreover, the findings also indicated that corruption was not seen as a big challenge, which can entail that the business environment in SSA has improved, and the new policies regarding trade and entrepreneurship have been useful. To summarise, the findings suggest that SSA have a unique business culture environment and that it differs from the Swedish perspective vastly. This uniqueness requires leaders to have a sense of flexibility and understanding of the social context, which could enable them to gain a competitive advantage.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

As previously mentioned, research on leadership and culture has a limited focus on SSA (Litow et al., 2014; Kamoche, 2011). There is more specifically, little focus on Swedish SMEs doing business in SSA markets. The researchers, therefore believe that an examination of the subtle ways in which culture affects leadership and business in SSA markets would be seen imperative as the region has been through significant social and financial development (Stein, 2010). This research, therefore, contributes to international business literature from a cultural and leadership perspective, since it explores Swedish leaders experience when working with SSA markets. It, furthermore, contributes knowledge on how the SSA business culture is based on a strictly hierarchical system that advocates authoritarian leaders (Dorfman et al., 2011; Kuada, 2009; House et al., 2004; Masango, 2002).

The research moreover expanded the body of knowledge on how culture relates to leadership adaptation, by showing that changing one’s leadership in to the different culture in which they operate in, can increase the chances of gaining competitive advantage (Nilsson et al., 2014; Mårtenson, 1998; Newman and Nollen, 1996; Evans 1995; Lammers and Hickson 1979). The research, therefore, indicates that there is an active link between leadership style and culture. The research also contributed knowledge in understanding the challenges with corruption, as many of the Swedish leaders did not face this challenge in SSA, which can indicate improvements in the business environment (Dorfman et al., 2011; Stein, 2010; Getz and Volkema, 2001).
Furthermore, this research utilised the GLOBE Study to measure cultural practices in Sweden and SSA from the perspective of Swedish SME leaders. As there have not been any data in the GLOBE Study about Kenya, Rwanda, Congo, Senegal and Tanzania, this research could, therefore, provide a brief overview of the cultural dimensions in these nations. Moreover, the findings point out that GLOBE’s performance orientation dimension did not apply for this research as SSA is ranked as a high score society, but it was shown that the workers would in most cases only perform if the leader was controlling and having regular follow-ups (House et al., 2004).

**7.3 Practical Contribution**

This research builds on the foundation that SMEs are operating in a very global and competitive world. Although the study revealed substantial cultural differences between SSA and Sweden, it also provides knowledge as to how to tackle those challenges. The researchers have highlighted the need to be thoughtful when it comes to cultural differences, leadership styles, hierarchical nature of the society, people’s perception of time and corruption. In sum, the study has offered useful knowledge that can lead to smooth and successful business operations for Swedish SMEs wishing to enter and establish businesses in SSA. Establishing and conducting business in SSA can be very challenging, as it takes a lot of time and patience.

The study advises Swedish SME leaders not to enter the SSA market with the Swedish perception of time, as the people there see time in a different light and do not attach as much importance to it as a Swedish people. This will reduce the amount of frustration for the Swedish leader when dealing with the locals, as it will furthermore help them to be better prepared when planning. Furthermore, specific focus is placed on the need to be conscious of the hierarchical nature of society, especially when it comes to the leadership aspect. SSA societies reflect high power distance, authority and power imbalance.

The study highlights the need for Swedish SMEs to understand the nature of the relationship between subordinates and their leaders that it is essential to show respect for hierarchy. Furthermore, the study can be utilised by both existing Swedish SMEs in the region and the ones wishing to enter the markets. Moreover, it highlights the level of importance which people in the SSA region place in building relationships and how that will lead to trust, which will eventually enhance commitment and lay the foundation for a successful business.
7.4 Social Contributions

This study has social significance for both SSA and Sweden. For the SSA countries, the arrival of Swedish SMEs provides substantial financial opportunities for further development in the SSA region, which will be very much beneficial for its governments and its people. Furthermore, the insights gained in this study will also provide Swedish SMEs doing business in the SSA ways and means of making better use of the opportunities of entering such markets. It will also act as a useful tool for Swedish SMEs who are contemplating entering the SSA market, which will subsequently contribute to the growth of the Swedish economy as well. By finding and establishing themselves in new markets, the Swedish SMEs will gain access to a new group of clients, and that will enable them to continue doing business. As such, it will ultimately lead to financial gains for Sweden as a whole.

7.5 Limitations and Future Research

As stated in the introduction and supported by the literature, SSA is undergoing rapid economic and social development. In consideration of all these significant developments, the researchers believe there are grounds for more studies on the region, concerning socioeconomic issues related to business from a cultural point of view. Due to lack of resources, the study was limited to a small sample, and the researchers could only employ a qualitative research method; however, the researchers believe more thorough research using quantitative methods could be conducted on the study, as it would add more weight and objectivity to the findings. Furthermore, since this research was only centred on Swedish SMEs, the findings might not apply to SMEs from other countries and MNCs (Multi-National Corporations).

In consideration of this, the researcher believes conducting another study on how MNCs and SMEs leaders from different countries than just Sweden, are affected and eventually adapt to the cultural challenges in SSA. Moreover, the sampling had a lack of female representation, since only two female leaders were interviewed. It can, therefore, be beneficial conducting research on female leader’s experiences in SSA, as it can shed some light on gender inequality. It would moreover, be interesting exploring how leading by distance and being physically present can affect leaders leadership style, since that all of the respondents that lived in SSA were willing to adapt their leadership style and those who lived in Sweden wanted to transform the culture.
7.6 Work progress and Authors’ Contribution

Writing this thesis has been interesting and educative from the beginning to the end. The authors were very comfortable working together, which made the process less stressful. We understood the strengths and weaknesses of each other, and as such, we were able to push and motivate each other most of the time. We have tried to involve each other throughout the process. We attended all meetings with the supervisor and examiner in the seminars, and we were able to discuss and utilise the feedback from both the supervisor and examiner. Simon is the quickest in writing of the two of us, as he did most of the writing. We, however, divided our work equally. Simon was mainly responsible for the introduction, methodology and analysis chapters, whereas Ebrima was focusing on the discussion and conclusion chapters. The chapters dedicated to literature and data reviews were jointly written. On the whole, we met on a regular basis and continuously discussed and reflected upon each other’s work by providing recommendations that benefited our degree project.
REFERENCES


House, R.J., Javidan M., Hanges P., and Dorfman P. (2002). Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: an introduction to project GLOBE. *Journal of World Business* 37, 3-10


Sims Jr, HP. Faraj, S. Yun, S. (2009). When should a leader be directive or empowering? How to develop your own situational theory of leadership, Business Horizons, 52(2) pp. 149-158.


Appendix A: Interview Guide

The main objective of this interview is to acquire a deeper understanding of culture and leadership in SSA (sub-Saharan Africa). We hope to gather knowledge about how Swedish SMEs and its leaders conducts business in SSA and how they deal with cultural challenges. The data that will be collected through these interviews will only be used in this particular thesis, and the final material will be made available to the respondents as well.

Finally, we wish to thank you all for agreeing to take part in this research project.

Introduction

- Can you first start by describing your role in the company?
- How long have you had the leadership role?
- How long have you worked with SSA?
- What was the motive behind your company entering SSA?
- Which SSA markets are your company established in?
- How many employees does your company have?
  - How many of your employees are currently working in SSA?

Culture

- How would you define culture?
- How do you feel working in a multicultural environment?
- What type of cultural challenges did you encounter in SSA?
  - When, how and where specifically did you experience these challenges?
  - Were you able to tackle these challenges? If yes, how. If no, why?
- Can you give an example of a situation where you felt a cultural crash in SSA?

Leadership

- What would say are the main characteristics of a leader?
- How would you describe your own leadership style?
- How would describe the leadership style in the SSA?
Cultural Adaptation

- Has your leadership style changed during your stay in the SSA and if so, how and what are the reasons?
- How did you manage to overcome the cultural challenges towards your leadership style you were faced with?

Culture Learning

- Have you learned of any cultural mistakes?
- Are there any educational instruments that you as a leader can utilize to enhance your knowledge in regards to leadership in a multicultural environment? If yes, can you please describe them?

Concluding Questions

- Do you have any sort of recommendation for Swedish SME leaders wishing to enter the SSA?
- Finally is there any other vital information that you have which we have not taken up in the interview?