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French Organizational Cultural Standards from the Portuguese Perspective

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Master in International Management

Supervisor:

Professor Álvaro Augusto da Rosa, Associate Professor with habilitation

Iscte Business School, Iscte– Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

December 2022



**BUSINESS
SCHOOL**

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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To everyone who had a first row sit, who supported and followed me throughout this journey, a huge thank you. It is without any doubt that the conclusion of this dissertation would not have been possible without you.

Resumo

A presente dissertação tem como objetivo compreender as diferenças entre as culturas organizacionais Francesa e Portuguesa, comparando-as e identificando os standards culturais organizacionais franceses na perspectiva dos Portugueses.

Para atingir esse objetivo, foi utilizado o método dos standards culturais e a metodologia correspondente, uma vez que este é um método específico para a comparação de apenas duas culturas, e, assim, as suas três etapas principais foram realizadas. Numa fase inicial, foram executadas entrevistas narrativas com 9 indivíduos portugueses que trabalharam em França durante mais de 5 meses. Estas entrevistas foram realizadas para obter mais informações sobre as suas experiências a trabalhar no país. Em segundo lugar, as transcrições das entrevistas foram analisadas para identificar os incidentes críticos nos encontros transculturais e, deste modo, a versão preliminar dos standards culturais organizacionais em questão foi obtida. Por último, estes resultados foram partilhados com os entrevistados para obter o seu feedback e confirmar as conclusões alcançadas. Tendo isto em consideração, foi então obtida a versão final dos standards culturais.

Em suma, os standards culturais organizacionais franceses na perspectiva dos portugueses identificados nesta pesquisa são: Horário e Modelo de Trabalho Flexíveis, Boas Relações Interpessoais, Importância do Equilíbrio Trabalho-Vida Pessoal, e Nível Elevado de Burocracia.

Palavras-chave: Cultura Organizacional, Standards Culturais, Gestão Transcultural, França, Portugal.

Sistema de Classificação JEL:

F23 Multinational Firms, International Business

M14 Corporate Culture, Diversity, Social Responsibility

Abstract

The present dissertation aims to better understand the differences between the French and the Portuguese organizational cultures by comparing them and identifying the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective.

In order to achieve that objective, the cultural standards method and research methodology was used, as this is a method specific for the comparison of only two cultures, and its three main steps were carried out. Firstly, narrative interviews were conducted with 9 Portuguese individuals who had worked in France for over 5 months. These interviews were performed to gain more insight on the interviewees' experiences while working in the country. Secondly, the transcripts generated from those interviews were analyzed to identify the critical incidents in the cross-cultural encounters that would make up the preliminary version of the organizational cultural standards in question. Lastly, these results were shared with the interviewees to obtain feedback and confirm the conclusions reached. Taking this into consideration, the final version of the cultural standards was obtained.

All in all, the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective identified in this research are Flexible Schedule and Work Model, Good Interpersonal Relationships, Importance of Work-life Balance, and High Level of Bureaucracy.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Cultural Standards, Cross-Cultural Management, France, Portugal.

JEL Classification System:

F23 Multinational Firms, International Business

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1. Introduction

Globalization has been around for many years but in today's world, it is more present than ever. Not only regarding trade and the ease to connect with someone from the other side of the globe through the use of technology, but also because people are in constant movement and whether their stay in different countries is temporary or permanent, the understanding of cross-cultural encounters and the presence of cultural diversity are key to achieve harmony and common respect.

In the present research, the focus will be on France and Portugal. These are countries that may seem quite similar at first glance, but, when taking a deeper look into each of their cultures, some differences arise.

Both France and Portugal are Western European countries with common history dating back to 1485, year of the signing of a Treaty of Alliance and Commerce between the nations. Nowadays, the countries have a bilateral relationship based on cooperation, with France being the second largest importer of Portuguese goods and one the countries with the largest Portuguese community outside of Portugal. They both are also a part of several international organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (Portal Diplomático, n.d.)

The aim of this dissertation is to compare the French and the Portuguese organizational cultures and identify the differences between them. The French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective will be determined through the analysis of the experiences of Portuguese individuals in a cross-cultural environment in France. To pinpoint those differences, the cultural standards method is used. This method relies on identifying critical incidents in cross-cultural scenarios between solely two cultures, in this case, the French and the Portuguese, which provides more detailed insights into the two cultural groups.

With the conclusions obtained in this research, Portuguese people will be able to get more insight on what it is like to work in France and prepare themselves for it.

The dissertation is divided in six chapters. The first presents a brief background introduction of the subject at hand and the geographic scope of the study, the goal of the paper and methods used to achieve it, and its structure.

The second chapter provides a theoretical contextualization of the related topics approached, such as the concept of culture, the definition of organizational culture, and cross-cultural management research. The latter including the cultural dimensions studies of two authors, Hofstede and Trompenaars, and the cultural standards.

In the third chapter, the historical context of the two countries is presented and, in the fourth chapter, there is a more detailed explanation of the methodology used in the research, in specific, the cultural standards method and research methodology.

The fifth chapter presents the results of the research developed, starting with an introduction to the sample group and some technical details about the interviews, followed by the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective that were identified. Lastly, this chapter shows an overview of the feedback obtained and a comparison of the results with Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

The sixth and final chapter concludes the dissertation by summarizing its context and goals, the findings, and some comments. The paper ends with the references used throughout its development and the appendixes section.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Culture

Over the years, the concept of culture has been subject of discussion among the authors. Viewed through the lens of various fields of study, such as anthropology, psychology, among others, culture has been defined in many ways.

One of the first definitions attributed to this concept was developed by the British anthropologist Edward Tylor (1871), who defined culture as a “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. (p.1)

Within the anthropology field, other definitions were developed throughout the years. While Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) defined culture as a series of “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts” (p.181), Edward Hall (1976) associated the concept of culture with behavioral standards for determined situations.

A few years later, in 1984, a key definition of culture was attributed to the concept by Geert Hofstede. According to the Dutch psychologist, culture is “the collective programming of the mind in which distinguishes the members of one human group from another.” (p.21). It is not innate, instead, it is a result of the environment one is surrounded by (Hofstede et al., 2010).

As mentioned by Hall (1976), one of the characteristics of culture that is agreed by anthropologists is the fact that culture is not innate. Even though these definitions differ from one another at some level, the perception that culture is learned is common to all of them, despite their research field. The social environment one surrounds themselves with, the family they were brought into or even their country are groups that have their own behavioral models that are passed to the individuals who are a part of them. As stated by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), culture “is made by people interacting, and at the same time determining further interaction”. (p.24)

2.1.1 The Onion Diagrams of Culture

In addition to introducing a definition of culture that has had a persistent importance in cultural studies, Hofstede has also presented a model where the way culture is manifested is represented by four concepts layered as an onion.

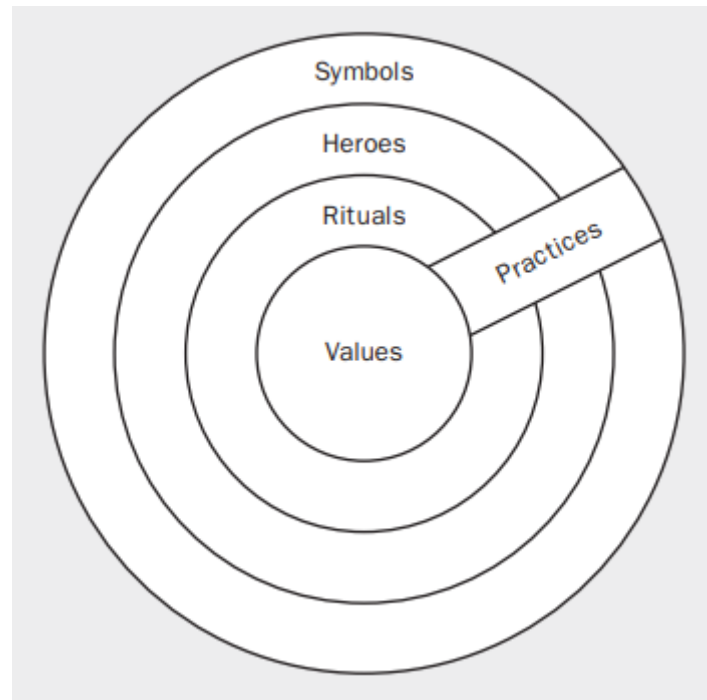


Figure 2.1 – The Onion Model by Hofstede (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.8)

This diagram shows “the skins of an onion, indicating that symbols represent the most superficial and values the deepest manifestations of culture, with heroes and rituals in between.”. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.7)

As the outer layer of the model, symbols are tangible or intangible items that only individuals from a certain culture can acknowledge their meaning and they can easily be copied by other social groups.

The two middle layers are heroes and rituals, as it is seen in Figure 2.1. While heroes are real or imaginary individuals whose traits are idealized and cherished by a culture, making them examples of how someone who is a part of that social group should behave, rituals are group activities that are socially necessary within a culture, such as ways to pay respect or ceremonies.

The concept of practices was one that was also introduced in this model. It involves the three outer layers of the onion model – symbols, heroes, and rituals – and its cultural meaning is only understood by the people who belong to the social group.

The last layer corresponds to values that are the core of culture. They represent a propensity to favor one thing over the other, as they have a connotation of what is positive and negative. (Hofstede et al., 2010)

In similarity to the Onion Model developed by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) also believe that “culture comes in layers, like an onion. To understand it you have to unpeel it layer by layer”. (p.6)

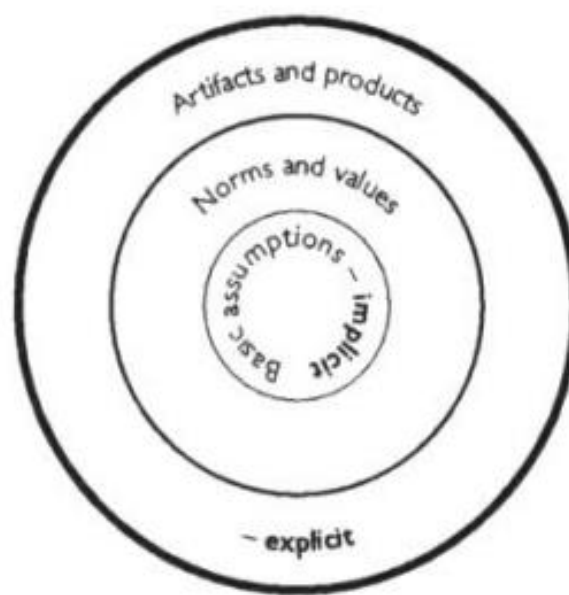


Figure 2.2 – Model of culture by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, p.22)

According to the authors, the outer layer of the diagram corresponds to the explicit products. These are the observable symbols of a culture that represent their language, buildings, art, etc. In the middle layer are the norms and values of a culture. While norms can be written laws or a common sense of what is correct or incorrect (how one should behave), values constitute what is good and bad within that culture (how one aspires to behave). Lastly, the core of the diagram stands for the assumptions about existence. These assumptions differ from one social group to another and represent the way they improve their effectiveness of solving problems by organizing themselves. The respect for authority is an example of a basic assumption, as its extent varies depending on the group. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997)

Both Hofstede and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner view culture as a set of onion skins layered from the most intrinsic part of a culture to the most superficial. However, since the concept of culture is described by these authors in different ways, their interpretations of cultural layers also differ from one model to another.

2.1.2 Layers of Culture

Like other authors, Hofstede has defined the concept of culture and introduced an onion model to better describe it. In addition to that, the Dutch psychologist has also presented an interpretation of the cultural layers.

According to the author's perspective, most people are a part of several social groups simultaneously and, therefore, they "unavoidably carry several layers of mental programming" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.18). These layers represent the levels of culture one can have and they might end up conflicting with one another.

There were identified six different layers of culture: a national level related to someone's country or countries, a regional/ethnic/religious/linguistic affiliation level, a gender level, a generational level, a social class level related to one's education and occupation, and an organizational/departamental/corporate level associated with how employees are integrated within an organization, for those who are employed.

2.2 Organizational Culture

As it was previously explained, the concept of culture has many levels, being one of them the organizational level.

By applying Hofstede's definition of culture to an organizational scenario, the culture of an organization is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from others" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.344). Unlike what happens in the general definition of culture, where its characteristics are only maintained by the ones who are a part of it, the organizational culture is kept by everyone who is involved with the organization as its stakeholders.

The culture of an organization defines behavioral and practical models of how one is expected to act within that environment (Chen et al., 2019). It is composed by various cultural elements that are interconnected and its components can adapt to the state of other cultural elements (Schlaile et al., 2021).

The country of origin of an organization has an impact on its culture. Hence, if the origin country of a company is different from another, their organizational cultures will also be different, even if they are installed in the same country (Lau & Ngo, 1996). Nelson and Gopalan (2003) defend that companies that have stronger organizational cultures are expected to be more successful integrating themselves in other countries with many organizational cultures.

The concept of organizational culture is one that should be differentiated from national culture. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), organizational cultures are related to shared practices and national cultures to shared values. The social environment that one was surrounded by in their first ten years of existence contributes to the mental software acquired then, where their national culture is included. On the other hand, organizational cultures mainly represent the practices of an organization that one enters as an adult and where that culture is acquired.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Management Research

When in a multicultural scenario, the cultural norms that one is used to might not be considered appropriate for a certain situation. By analyzing cultural differences in an organizational perspective, it is possible to better understand how individuals from distinct cultures can efficiently work together.

This type of research has a great importance, specially nowadays, as we live in a world with global trading and people migrating internationally. Hence, managers and employees must be able to “manage and handle intercultural challenges to perform successfully within increasingly competitive and multiculturally diverse environments”. (Primecz et al., 2011, as cited in Guttormsen, 2018)

The cross-cultural management field analyzes how people behave within organizations all over the world, compares those behaviors with other countries and cultures, and teaches them how to improve their ability to work with people from other cultures (Adler & Gundersen, 2008). It derives from the combination of many scientific fields, similarly to culture itself, which encompasses different perspectives on the influence that culture has on organizations and management (Barmeyer et al., 2019).

2.3.1 Cultural Dimensions

Throughout the years, there have been developed many cross-cultural studies with the intent to compare cultures and identify differences between them. This type of research can be done using several methods, being one of them, the identification of cultural dimensions. These dimensions are aspects “of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures”. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.31)

One of the authors whose work in this field has had a great importance, even in recent cross-cultural management, is Hofstede (Barmeyer et al., 2019). Hence, in this section, only his and Trompenaars’ researches on cultural profiles will be discussed.

2.3.1.1 Hofstede’s Research

Between the 1960s and 1970s decades, Hofstede had the opportunity to study the values of employees who worked at subsidiaries of IBM across the world. The author administered surveys in more than 70 countries that resulted in the analysis of over 116,000 responses. In an initial phase, these questionnaires were applied to only 40 countries and the results originated the first four cultural dimensions. Later, Hofstede expanded the study and the fifth and sixth dimensions were identified.

The six cultural dimensions distinguished by Hofstede are *power distance*, *individualism* (vs. *collectivism*), *masculinity* (vs. *femininity*), *uncertainty avoidance*, *long-term orientation* (vs. *short-term orientation*), and *indulgence* (vs. *restraint*).

Power distance is a cultural dimension that is associated with the concept of inequality. It is “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally”. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.61)

Individualism is present in groups where the interests of the individual have more power than the interests of the group and where people tend to look after themselves and their close family. In collectivism, the power of the group prevails over the individual's interests and people belong to loyal in-groups that protect them throughout their lives.

Masculinity is related to the gender roles within a group. In a masculine society, gender roles are well defined and "men are supposed to be assertive, though, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.140). On the other hand, femininity is present in groups where there is no clear distinction of the gender roles and both men and women are expected to have the characteristics of a woman in a masculine society.

Uncertainty avoidance stands for the vulnerability of a group towards situations with ambiguity and uncertainty. In groups where there is a high level of uncertainty avoidance, there is a need for rules and people try to minimize risk and are anxious when it comes to their uncertain future.

Long-term orientation is Hofstede's fifth cultural dimension, introduced in 1991, and is associated with having traits oriented towards future benefits. On the contrary, in short-term orientation, groups are more focused on the past and the present, by saving face and respecting tradition.

Indulgence is the sixth cultural dimension, and it is present in groups that gratify their desires by having fun and enjoying life freely. With restraint, instead, there is a belief that those pleasures should be controlled by social norms.

For each cultural dimension, Hofstede has attributed scores to countries, based on the responses obtained in the surveys. Since the focus of this paper is France and Portugal, it is essential to present a comparison of the scores given to these countries by Hofstede.

When analyzing the scores shown in Figure 2.3, it is possible to see that, even though France and Portugal are countries that are both located in Europe and relatively close to one another, they are still different when it comes to their cultures. While in most cultural dimensions the countries were placed in the same group, in the case of individualism and long-term orientation, France and Portugal have very different scores.

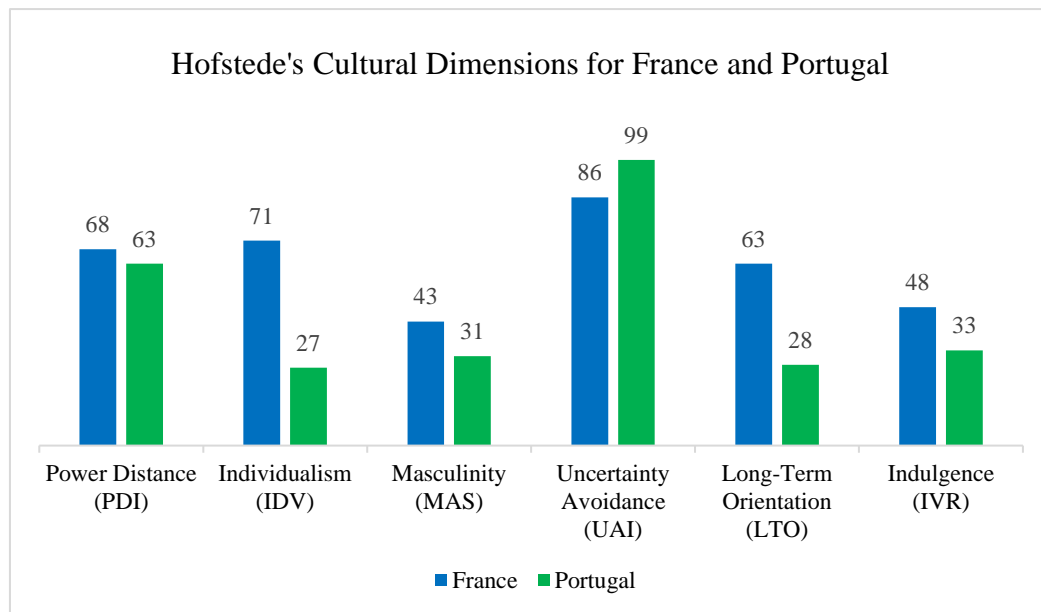


Figure 2.3 – Comparison between French and Portuguese scores of Hofstede's cultural dimensions
(Hofstede Insights, n.d.)

The power distance dimension is the one where France and Portugal have the most similar scores, with 68 and 63, respectively. By being countries with high power distance levels, a certain degree of inequality and the distance in hierarchies are accepted. Thus, there is a large emotional distance between superiors and subordinates, and power is centralized.

In the individualism dimension, France and Portugal are very different, as they respectively scored 71 and 27. While Portugal is a more collectivist society, France is seen as individualist. As a collectivist country, Portugal has a high degree of commitment and loyalty within in-groups, such as family, for example, and strong relationships are prioritized. Even getting a promotion or being hired can depend on the in-group one is a part of. On the other hand, in France, as an individualist society, the individual characteristics of a person are very important and there are clear boundaries between one's professional and personal life.

Masculinity is a cultural dimension where France and Portugal are similar, with scores of 43 and 31, respectively. The countries are both feminine and prioritize quality of life. There is an emphasis on healthy competition, instead of an excessive one, and there is a clear focus on well-being.

In the uncertainty avoidance dimension, France and Portugal scored very high, with an 86 and a 99, respectively, and Portugal is one of the countries that avoid uncertainty the most. With these scores, the countries have a need for rules, security and stability are extremely valued, as well as planning and having strict beliefs.

As for the long-term orientation dimension, the countries are once again placed in different groups, as France scored 63 and Portugal 28. In this cultural dimension, France is placed in the long-term orientation group, since the country is more pragmatic and has the ability to adapt to the situation and the conditions at hand, whether it is by adapting traditions or by accepting that the truth is not absolute and depends, not only on the situation, but also the context and the time, and French people tend to save for their future. On the other hand, Portugal is a short-term orientation country, by being more normative. Portuguese people have an enormous respect for tradition, tend to prioritize achieving fast results, and have a bigger tendency not to save or invest for their future.

Lastly, in the indulgence dimension, France and Portugal scored, respectively, 48 and 33, with France scoring in the middle of indulgence vs. restraint. Therefore, the French have some control over their desires and do not enjoy life as much as it would be assumed. Portugal, however, is placed in the restraint group. The country's culture is one where people's pleasures and actions are controlled by social norms and individuals tend to be more pessimist.

When discussing Hofstede's cultural dimensions, it is important to provide a fresh perspective on the cultural dimension of masculinity. This dimension assumes that the gender spectrum is binary and, therefore, there are only two genders (male and female) and each one is related to certain stereotypes of behaviors and values. However, it is important to mention that, according to the American Psychological Association (2021, as cited in Lewis & Reynolds, 2021), gender is a social construct associated with one's biological sex and the gender identity spectrum is non-binary. Thus, there are more than two gender identities (cisgender, transgender, genderqueer, etc.).

Some of the traits presented by Hofstede are associated with men and others with women, as it is usual in societal stereotypes. Still, as we live in a modern society where everyone should be included and respected, it is crucial to bring up the conversation that there are individuals who do not identify with the terms "man" and "woman", but who are still a part of society.

2.3.1.2 Trompenaars' Research

Besides the research developed by Hofstede, other authors studied cultural differences and identified cultural dimensions, namely, Trompenaars, among others.

Trompenaars developed a questionnaire that was answered by 30,000 managers of multinational and international companies in the process of internationalization, and this database had the intention of helping managers improve their ability to manage and do business in various cultures (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997).

Based on the idea that what differentiates a culture from another is the way they solve certain universal problems, Trompenaars divided those solutions into categories and assessed culture within those same three divisions: relationships with people, attitude towards time, and attitude towards environment. From those categories, the author distinguished several cultural dimensions.

The seven cultural dimensions identified by Trompenaars are *universalism vs. particularism*, *individualism vs. communitarianism*, *neutral vs. emotional*, *specific vs. diffuse*, *achievement vs. ascription*, *attitude towards time*, and *attitude towards the environment*.

Universalism vs. Particularism – In the universalist perspective, there is an emphasis on applying one single way to every circumstance. On the contrary, particularism considers the situation at hand and the importance of relationships. In summary, universalism relates to rules and particularism to relationships.

Individualism vs. Communitarianism – While individualism focuses on the individual, communitarianism emphasizes the group. In individualist societies, people see themselves firstly as individuals, whilst, in societies in the communitarianism spectrum, people think of themselves primarily as a part of the group, putting the community first.

Neutral vs. Emotional – This cultural dimension regards the expression of feelings. In neutral groups, the show of emotion is more controlled, and interactions are objective. On the other hand, in emotional groups, the expression of emotions is common and accepted.

Specific vs. Diffuse – It relates to the level of involvement in a business relationship. While in specific societies there is a separation of the personal and professional lives, sticking to what is stipulated by a contract, in diffuse societies, there is a need for a personal interaction between the parties involved.

Achievement vs. Ascription – In achievement societies, someone's status is based on their accomplishments throughout their lives. In ascription societies, however, the status of an individual is determined by birth, gender, education, their connections, and similar traits.

Attitude towards time – The view of societies towards past accomplishments is one characteristic that distinguishes them. While some societies give more importance to achievements of the past than current ones, others emphasize the importance of the plan someone has for their future instead.

Attitude towards the environment – In some societies, individuals believe that they are the main agent of their lives, and they are the source of motivations and values, whilst other societies “see the world as more powerful than individuals. They see nature as something to be feared or emulated”. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p.10)

Although the cultural dimensions identified by the authors are different, there are still some similarities, such as the identification of individualism vs. collectivism, by Hofstede, and individualism vs. communitarianism, by Trompenaars.

2.3.2 Cultural Standards

Within the cross-cultural research field, one other method used to analyze cultural differences is by identifying cultural standards. These are “forms of perception, thought patterns, judgment and interaction that are shared by a majority of the members of a specific culture who regard their behavior as normal, typical and binding”. (Thomas et al., 2010, p.22)

The cultural standards method is a qualitative type of research developed by Alexander Thomas that provides a great level of differentiation of the differences between two cultures, and it will be discussed in more detail in the methodology part of this paper.

Even though the cultural standards and the cultural dimensions are both under the cross-cultural research umbrella, they are still different from one another. The main difference between them is that the cultural standards method focuses more deeply on two specific cultures and their differences (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002). Therefore, it “delivers a much more differentiated picture of the impact of culture on observed, experienced and perceived behavior than the culture dimension studies”. (Fink et al., 2005, p.10)

3. The Countries

To better understand the context of this research, it is essential to look into each country's background. The influence that the location, the history, the economy, and the political scene of a country have on its culture is humongous. Therefore, it is important to discuss these features in more detail.

In the following pages, a summarized description of France and Portugal is presented, detailing some characteristics of each country.

3.1 France

France is a northwestern European country that has 12 metropolitan regions (Pwc, 2022) and some overseas territories, such as French Guiana, French Polynesia, the island of Saint-Martin, among others (Explore France, 2022).

The country occupies an area of 551,500 km², or 675,417 km² when including the area of the overseas territories (Explore France, 2022), and has a population of 67.81 million people (Statista Research Department, 2022). The official language is French and the French Republic's President is Emmanuel Macron, while the Prime Minister is Élisabeth Borne (Britannica, n.d.).

France has an extensive history. It recorded the 72-year reign of Louis XIV, who registered one of the longest reigns in Europe and led France with the political system of absolutism. In 1789, the country's regime shifted with the French Revolution, and, after years of duration, the First Republic was originated (Britannica, n.d.). With the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte came the Napoleonic Wars, in which he was victorious at first, but ended up being defeated and exiled by European nations (Wilde, 2019).

Later, the participation of the country in the two world wars began. In 1914, the World War I kicked off and Germany declared war on France, while in 1939, during World War II, France declared war on Germany and, in 1940, Germany invaded France (Britannica, n.d.). With the end of the wars, France's Fourth Republic was implemented (Wilde, 2019).

France is one of the countries who founded the European Union. It also adopted the Euro as its currency in 1999, which would start to circulate in 2002.

Following the appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, France's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) registered a drop of 7.9%. As for the next year, 2021, the GDP was 2.94 trillion US dollars due to an increase of 7%. The GDP per capita in the same year had a value of 43,518.5 US dollars per capita (The World Bank, n.d.). The country's exports were equivalent to 17.1% of the GDP in 2021, with the main products exported being machinery, aircraft, vehicles, pharmaceuticals, among others (Workman, 2022).

3.2 Portugal

Portugal is a country located in the Iberian Peninsula in southwestern Europe. In addition to the 18 districts that divide the continental area of the country, the archipelagos of Azores and Madeira complete the Portuguese territory (AICEP, n.d.).

With an area of 92,212 km² (Representação de Portugal junto da União Europeia, n.d.) and a population of 10,343,066 individuals in 2021 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, n.d.), Portugal is a republic and a parliamentary democracy (Expatica, 2022), and its official language is Portuguese. Currently, the country's President is Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, and the Prime Minister is António Costa.

Portugal's history has many relevant occurrences, such as the fact that during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, the Portuguese created one of the largest empires by crossing seas to colonize many territories in Africa, Asia, and South America.

In 1755, the country's capital experienced an earthquake, creating a sea of destruction in the area, and, in the beginning of the 19th century, Portugal was invaded by Napoléon Bonaparte's troops, causing the royal court to move to Brazil, one of the Portuguese colonies, in an attempt to secure Portugal's independence. Later, in 1822, Brazil declared independence.

It was in 1910 that the Portuguese monarchy ended, and the republic took its place, but in 1933 a new political regime was established. "Estado Novo" was an authoritarian dictatorship led by António de Oliveira Salazar. This regime lasted until 1974, when the Carnation Revolution occurred and the Portuguese democracy reappeared, followed by the independence of its remaining African colonies (Representação de Portugal junto da União Europeia, n.d.).

Portugal joined the European Union - European Economic Community, at the time - in 1986 and, in 1999, the country adopted the Euro as its currency, but it was only in 2002 that the currency began being used (European Commission, n.d.).

In similarity to what happened with many countries due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, Portugal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) suffered a decrease in 8.4%. However, in 2021, this indicator increased in 4.9%, reaching a value of 249.89 million US dollars. As for the GDP per capita, it was registered as 24,262.2 US dollars per capita (The World Bank, n.d.). Portugal's main exports in the same year were vehicles, machinery, mineral fuels, plastics, among others, and made up for 20% of the GDP (Workman, 2020).

4. Methodology

4.1 The Cultural Standards Method

As it was mentioned before, the cultural standards method is a qualitative type of research used to identify and analyze the differences between two specific cultures in a cross-cultural context, allowing a deeper level of insight on the comparison of those same cultural groups.

Since the focus of this paper is the comparison of exactly two cultures, the French and the Portuguese organizational cultures, the cultural standards method is the ideal approach for the purpose of the research.

The concept of cultural standards is one that stems from the studies of Boesch, Habermas, Heckhausen, and Piaget (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002). These standards impact how people perceive others' actions and their own (Thomas, 1993, as cited in Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002), and "provide a regulatory function for mastering a given situation and dealing with people" (Thomas et al., 2010, p.22). They may not be shared by every individual who is a part of the group, but they are representative of the majority (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002).

Unless an individual is in contact with someone who has a different cultural background, they tend not to notice how much the cultural standards that are ingrained within themselves influence their behaviors and, therefore, these standards are only identifiable in a cross-cultural environment (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002).

The cultural standards have a relative and bilateral nature, hence, they are not universal and can only be applied when comparing one specific culture to another (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002). In this paper, the cultural standards that will be identified are not universal standards for France, instead, they are solely French organizational cultural standards obtained through the comparison with Portugal.

When identifying cultural standards, Brueck and Kainzbauer (2002) emphasize the importance of the part played by critical incidents. These incidents can be positive or unexpected situations, and experiences that are not in accordance with one's familiar practices or beliefs.

4.1.1 The Research Methodology

The cultural standards method follows specific methodology steps around the identification of the critical incidents mentioned before. Initially, the researcher interviews individuals from a certain culture who were in contact or have relevant work experience with the other, analyzes the narrative texts obtained in the interviews, and categorizes the critical incidents that form an initial version of the cultural standards. Afterwards, those standards are shared with the interviewees and experts to obtain feedback, and the final version of the cultural standards is determined (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002; Fink et al., 2005).

In summary, this methodology can be divided in three main steps: narrative interview, analysis and categorization, and group discussion and feedback. However, the entire research process is shown in Figure 3.1.

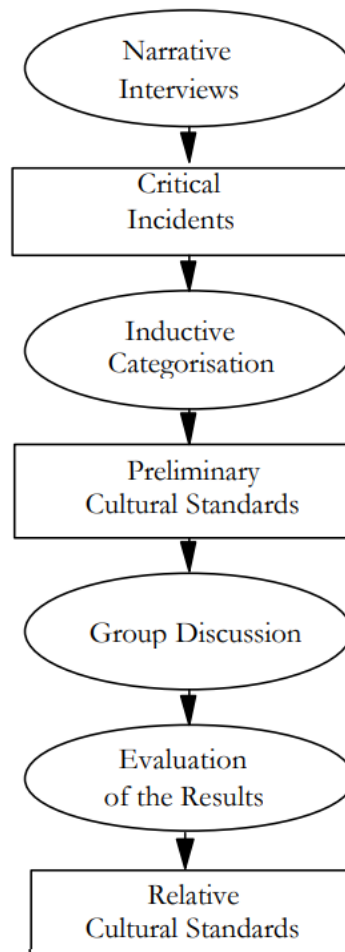


Figure 4.1 – Research process for the identification of cultural standards (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002, p.8)

4.1.1.1 Narrative Interview

The first step of the methodology used to identify cultural standards is to carry out interviews. There are many types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Saunders et al., 2009). For the purpose of this research, unstructured interviews, also known as narrative interviews, will be performed, as they allow the researcher to have more insight into the interviewees' experiences and behaviors (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016), and provide a chance to "collect information/data without restricting data collection by presuppositions (prejudices, previous restrictive assumptions)". (Fink et al., 2005, p.12)

By performing narrative interviews, the researcher collects information about critical incidents that occurred in cross-cultural interactions and are a result of the different cultural standards that are ingrained within individuals of each cultural group (Fink et al., 2005). Researchers who use narrative interviews "tend to let the interviewee control the direction, content and pace of the interview. It is the interviewees' account and they choose what to say and what not to say". (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016, p.632)

To interview individuals who would provide a great contribution to the research on cultural standards, Fink (2002) presented the characteristics that one should have to participate in the research. According to the author, "the interviewee must a) have experienced something, b) still remember the incident, c) find it to be a worthwhile story, and d) be willing to tell the interviewer". (Fink, 2002, as cited in Fink et al., 2005)

During a narrative interview, there are certain stages that usually occur. Although there is not an agreement among the literature on how many stages there are (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002), Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2016) have presented four different stages.

In the first phase about the introduction and explanations, the researcher provides a brief clarification of the interview process and how the focus will be on hearing the interviewee's story in their own terms and expressions, in addition to obtaining their consent.

The narrative stage occurs when the interviewee begins their narration. In this phase, the interviewer should motivate the interviewee to share their story freely by using non-verbal cues, and interruptions by the interviewer should be avoided.

During the questioning phase, it is the interviewer's turn to try to get the narrator/interviewee to open up and add more details to their story. Questions that start with a "why" or ask for opinions should not be included in this process.

Lastly, in the conclusion stage, the interview is completed, and the interviewer explains what the next steps are, like the transcription of the interview, for example.

4.1.1.2 Analysis and Categorization

Once the narrative interviews are finished, the next step is to analyze and categorize the content obtained. The narrative texts that resulted from the interviews contain information about the critical incidents and, to identify them as well as patterns of behavior, a qualitative analysis must be performed (Mayring, 1996, as cited in Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002; Oevermann, 1997, as cited in Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002).

To conduct a rigorous qualitative analysis, Gioia et al. (2013) presented a method based on the organization of the data obtained in the interviews by inductively creating 1st- and 2nd-order categories to form a structured diagram with the data.

Even though Gioia et al. (2013) named these different categories as 1st-order concepts, 2nd-order themes, and aggregate dimensions, when applying these subjects to the cultural standards spectrum, the 1st-order concepts correspond to people's perceptions, the 2nd-order themes to patterns, and the aggregate dimensions to behaviors. Therefore, in this chapter, the terms perceptions, patterns, and behaviors will be used to refer to the two orders and to the aggregate dimensions.

During the 1st-order analysis, the researcher is encouraged to extract more general categories from the information obtained in the interviews, utilizing the terms used by the interviewees and transmitting their perceptions. Consequently, a large number of categories is formed at this stage.

Afterwards, with the initial categories that were identified, the researcher looks for similar characteristics and differences between them, which results in the reduction of their number, and attributes new labels to the remaining categories with terms used by the interviewees.

In the 2nd-order analysis, the researcher tries to recognize the underlying patterns of the perceptions identified before and, subsequently, tries to extract the behaviors that are the basis for those patterns. Then, a data structure is built with the perceptions, patterns, and behaviors.

This type of structure plays a very important part on illustrating the rigor in a qualitative research, since it demonstrates how the researcher treated the raw data during the process (Pratt, 2008, as cited in Gioia et al., 2013; Tracy, 2010, as cited in Gioia et al., 2013). In Figure 3.2, an example of this structure is presented.

Once this method of qualitative analysis is finished and the behaviors are identified, a preliminary version of the cultural standards will be obtained.

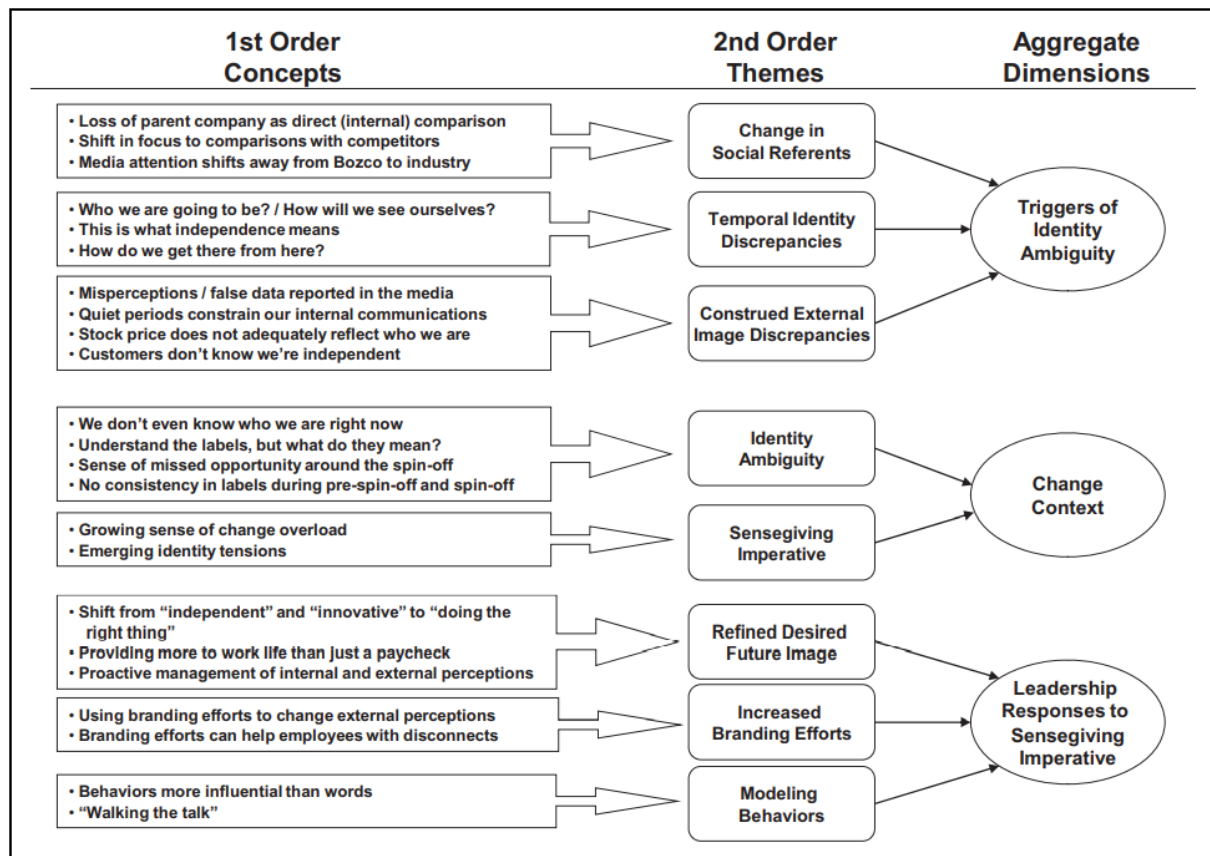


Figure 4.2 – Example of a data structure (Corley & Gioia, 2004, as cited in Gioia et al., 2013, p.21)

4.1.1.3 Feedback and Group Discussion

The main goal of this method is to identify the cultural differences between two cultures without any cultural bias or making assumptions. Therefore, this last step will make it possible to reach the goal of the method and the end result will be the final version of the cultural standards.

The last step of the cultural standards research methodology is to present the critical incidents obtained in the interviews back to the interviewees in a group discussion and to experts to obtain their feedback. By doing this process, it is possible to confirm and evaluate the results obtained and to exclude any situation that was misinterpreted (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2002).

5. Results of the Empirical Research

The following topic presents an overview of the research process used to identify the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective. It begins with a detailed explanation about the sample group, followed by the interviews, the French Organizational Cultural Standards from the Portuguese Perspective, the feedback obtained, and, finally, a comparison between the results and Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

5.1 The Sample Group

This research aims to conclude which are the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective. To do so, the adequate interviewees in the sample group would be able to share their experiences in a cross-cultural environment so that the researcher could identify critical incidents. Therefore, the sample group was composed by Portuguese individuals who have had work experience in both Portugal and France and lived in France for more than 5 months.

The group was formed by 9 interviewees, 5 cisgender men and 4 cisgender women. Their ages range between 23 and 36 years old, with a group average of 29 years old. As for their level of education, 1 interviewee completed high school, while the other 8 interviewees completed a university degree. Among the education levels of the sample group, the most common was a Master's degree. The interviewees lived and worked in France for over 5 months, being the shortest stay of 6 months and the longest 9 years.

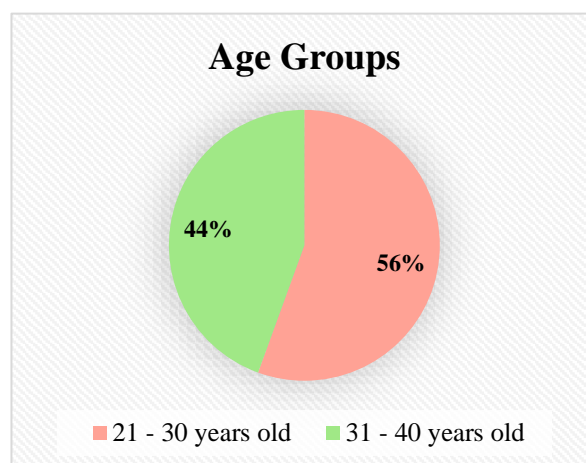


Figure 5.1 – Age Groups of the Sample Group (%)

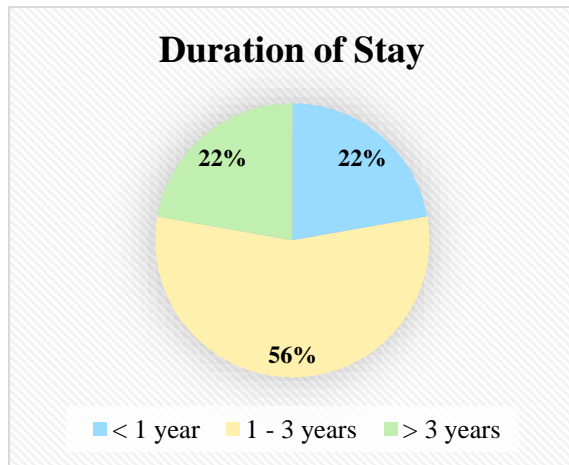


Figure 5.2 – Duration of Stay of the Sample Group (%)

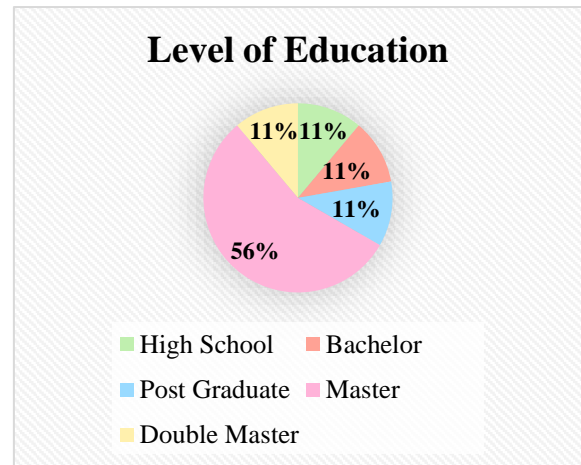


Figure 5.3 – Level of Education of the Sample Group (%)

During the sample group's time in France, one interviewee lived in Toulouse, one in Nice, one in Bordeaux, one in Lille, one in Pau, three in Paris, and one lived both in Paris and Pau. Their knowledge of the French language was divided between an advanced and an intermediate level, with 6 interviewees having an advanced knowledge of French and 3 interviewees with an intermediate level.

The following table (Table 5.1) shows the detailed information of the sample group.

Table 5.1 – The Sample Group: Details.

Nr	Sex	Age	Level of Education	Profession	Duration of Stay in Portugal	City of Residence	Knowledge of the French Language
1	M	24	Postgraduate	Project Manager	1 year	Paris	Advanced
2	F	28	Master	Manufacturing Engineer	7 months	Toulouse	Advanced
3	M	33	Master	Support Engineer	4 years	Nice	Intermediate
4	M	23	Bachelor	Business Developer	2 years	Paris	Intermediate
5	M	36	Master	Global Marketing Director	3 years	Paris	Advanced
6	F	31	Master	Customer Success Manager	9 years	Bordeaux	Advanced
7	M	31	High School	Production Team Manager	3 years	Lille	Intermediate
8	F	26	Double Master	Geotechnical Engineer	2 years	Pau; Paris	Advanced

9	F	28	Master	Drilling Optimization Engineer	6 months	Pau	Advanced
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5.2 The Interviews

The sample group was composed of Portuguese individuals who had worked in France for over 5 months. To find suitable individuals for these characteristics, the main research tool used was LinkedIn and referrals made by other interviewees.

Altogether, 35 people were contacted to participate in this study but only 13 responded. From those 13 answers, 9 were positive and 4 were negative.

The interviews were done in Portuguese and carried out on Zoom and Google Meet, and their scheduling was established according to the researcher and the interviewees' availability. The average duration of the interviews performed was 31 minutes, with the shortest interview lasting 15 minutes and the longest 45 minutes.

5.3 French Organizational Cultural Standards from the Portuguese Perspective

At first glance, France and Portugal can be seen as very similar countries. They are both located in Europe, they have Latin backgrounds, and they have a strong historical past. However, when analyzed in more depth and based on people's experiences, there are a few topics where the countries differ from one another.

On top of the organizational cultural standards that were obtained by interviewing Portuguese individuals who have worked in France, the interviewees mentioned an overall positive experience in the country and good feedback regarding French people, who "*are colder than the Portuguese, but more open in terms of mentality*", as mentioned by one of the individuals interviewed.

Based on the transcripts obtained from the interviews and respective analysis, the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective were extracted:

1. Flexible Schedule and Work Model
2. Good Interpersonal Relationships

3. Importance of Work-life Balance

4. High Level of Bureaucracy

These are standards that were mentioned by the majority of the interviewees as critical points when comparing the French and the Portuguese organizational cultures and, therefore, can provide a better understanding of the overall Portuguese experience working in France, one that may vary from individual to individual.

In order to obtain the four organizational cultural standards mentioned before, and following the methodology presented in the previous chapter, the perceptions, patterns, and behaviors were identified. Starting with the perceptions, these are presented in the citations extracted from the narrative texts obtained during the interviews. The patterns correspond to the subtitles shown in each subchapter for the correspondent organizational cultural standard, such as Control and Punctuality, and Coffee Breaks for the *Flexible Schedule and Work Model* cultural standard. Lastly, each subchapter corresponds to the behaviors, which represent the French Organizational Cultural Standards from the Portuguese Perspective.

5.3.1 Flexible Schedule and Work Model

Nowadays, people give extreme importance to their well-being in and outside of work. Therefore, to be able to have a flexible schedule or to work remotely are very important factors to employees.

Based on the narrative interviews conducted, the sample group verified that this was one of the key subjects to be approached when comparing working in Portugal and France, and, within this subject, the topic mentioned the most among the interviewees was Control and Punctuality (78%).

Control and Punctuality

The majority of the interviewees considered that there is a high level of flexibility in France when it comes to work schedules and models. They shared that, in addition to the fact that, by law, they work less hours than they would in Portugal, there is not much control of when employees arrive at the office/start working, as mentioned by interviewee number two, who

said that *“it is not common to define a concrete time when we start and finish working”*, or if they work from home or at the office.

One of the interviewees referred that *“In France, I do home office, but since we are responsible for our own work, if I believe that there is a need for me to go to the office, I will go. If not, I work from home. The companies do not care if I work 7h or a bit more, if I am working from home or at the office. What they care about is the results and having a positive evaluation.”*.

On top of that, another interviewee mentioned that *“the company where I worked at opened at 7h30, but people could arrive between then and 9h”*. While interviewee number one said that *“In France, I arrived at the office and there was no control of the punctuality. With a normal schedule from 9h to 17h, people only began to arrive after 10h and, at lunch time, there was always the flexibility to have a 2h break between 12h and 14h in a calmer workday.”*.

Coffee Breaks

Another topic that was mentioned by the interviewees was the high number of coffee breaks that employees take during the day. *“In France, they really love to take breaks and drink coffee, which was something that I thought was already a bit “too much” in Portugal and found strange in the beginning, when I arrived in France. Every day, when they get to the office, they have a coffee. During the morning or close to lunch time, they drink another one. After lunch, they have another, and, during the afternoon, they drink another one.”*, as mentioned by one of the interviewees.

Two other interviewees also highlighted this topic as a very characteristic trait of the French organizational culture and provided specific examples based on their experience. *“When my colleagues arrived at the office, they took a break to drink coffee right away and, after lunch, around 14h, they did the same, which meant they would only start working at 14h30”*, said one of the interviewees, while the other pointed out that *“There is a freedom to take a break to drink coffee every 30 minutes and we tend to invite each other to go together.”*.

5.3.2 Good Interpersonal Relationships

The way people interact with one another in a company and the underlying dynamics that are common in the workplace are factors that impact the way employees view their experience there.

Overall, the interviewees consider that French people are quite nice and approachable, and such can be verified by the fact that they tend to be open during breaks and talk about their weekends on Monday, their after-work plans, the speech that a politician did the day before, etc., as mentioned by two of the interviewees.

Hierarchy and Communication

The topic of hierarchy and communication was one where different opinions were verified among the interviewees. While some defended that the corporate culture in France takes a vertical approach to hierarchies, with several levels of roles well established within the companies (33%), others mentioned that they experienced a high level of freedom to communicate with their superiors (44%).

On one hand, with the more vertical corporate culture perspective, an interviewee mentioned that *“in France, everything is very hierarchical and they value the discussion in each susceptible level a lot, meaning that, for me to speak with my N+3, it is something that would never happen, unless it was an extremely formal meeting, with everything pre-validated, including my speech, which had to be approved by my N+1 and N+2”*. Moreover, the interviewees also expressed a big distance between the different corporate levels but one mentioned that *“they prefer to shorten this distance with people who know how to speak French. For example, if a director needs to speak with an analyst about the resolution of a technical problem, the Director will prefer to speak with one who speaks French, rather than the one who speaks English, which can create an unevenness of opportunities and spotlight”*.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the interviewees who expressed an easy communication between them and their superiors, interviewee number four emphasized that *“the hierarchy was horizontal, meaning that there was no barrier between me and my boss, or even his boss. There was an openness for me to intervene, give ideas, comment on something that was not right, propose a solution and implement it”*. Another interviewee even provided a specific example related to being able to discuss the benefits package freely, saying that *“While in Portugal we tend to be apprehensive and ashamed of discussing salaries with our boss, in France, in my company, we even have a mandatory meeting at the end of each year to analyze annual results and, at the beginning of the following year, we have another meeting to negotiate new salaries”*.

Despite their conflicting opinions, all interviewees who mentioned the hierarchy and communication topic pointed out that, at the end of the day, the communication between corporate levels can be done effectively, especially if everyone involved can speak French.

Team Spirit

Some of the interviewees also approached the theme of Team Spirit and the colleagues' behaviors in the company. For example, interviewee number three pointed out that *“you can see that people care more about helping you and trying to make you grow in your career”*. He even added that *“everyone works as a team because there is an underlying idea of no one being jeopardized. If I have a doubt in a more specific area, there is always a colleague willing to help and vice-versa”*. However, from the opposite perspective, one of the interviewees, during the feedback phase of this research, pointed out that sometimes the work can be affected because of the fact that the French can be individualists.

Regarding the behavior of colleagues while working in France, *“they are very accessible, the work environment is very calm”* and *“I do not think they are closed people at all. In fact, they are quite open and nice”*, as mentioned by two interviewees.

5.3.3 Importance of Work-life Balance

Overall, there is a common understanding amongst the interviewees that French people value the separation between their work and outside of work lives a lot. This line is very well defined and, as such, the topic was mentioned by 56% of the individuals who were interviewed.

Slow Culture

When it comes to the way French people live their lives by placing boundaries between the personal and the professional aspects, that culture can be summarized in *“they work to live and do not live to work”*, as mentioned by one of the interviewees. He also added that *“for example, when you reach the end of the day and there is a very serious problem, in Portugal, the employees would stay at the office doing extra hours because of it, but, in France, when it reaches the time they are supposed to leave at, they think that “tomorrow is another day” and still leave”*.

On top of that, the underlying culture in France can be slightly more carefree regarding work. *“While Portuguese people tend to stress about it, the French just work slower”*, said one of the interviewees. However, interviewee number five also pointed out that *“they do not deal well with the last-minute scenario and like to be prepared”*.

After-work Gatherings

It is very common to frequently have plans for after-work or weekend activities in France. Interviewee number eight provided a comparison between Portugal and France in that aspect, saying that *“I know that my friends in Portugal do not go out for dinner every week. In France, we do that, and sometimes more than once a week. And even in terms of social life and sports, they are way more active in France”*.

Besides the weekend visits to museums and other plans to deepen their cultural knowledge, the French *“are very used to going to a park at the end of the day to meet friends or go to restaurants, bars, etc. The cultural and social life offer in France is not even comparable to the one in Lisbon”*.

5.3.4 High Level of Bureaucracy

France is usually seen as a very bureaucratic country and the same opinion was shared throughout the interviews conducted.

Even though the interviewees mainly associated this concept to their daily lives outside of the workplace, some of them also mentioned it regarding their experiences at work. An example of this was interviewee number one, who pointed out that *“for the French, things must be very well officialized. If it is not written in paper, it is because it did not happen. Therefore, if you want someone to work extra hours, you must make it official and then pay them those correspondent hours”*.

Speed of Processes

As mentioned before, the topic of bureaucracy was one that was mainly approached by the interviewees based on their overall day-to-day lives and not only from the professional perspective. Even though one of the interviewees pointed out that *“with bureaucracy in the workplace comes a lot of layers of approval”*, the focus of the bureaucracy topic remains on the overall experience in France.

When it comes to the speed of the processes in the country, the interviewees verified that it is quite slow and one of the individuals who were interviewed explained how she experienced this firsthand. She mentioned that *“when I arrived in France, I came to find out that I did not have social security and had to start a dossier with all the documents necessary to request it. I managed to send this dossier right away, because I had already requested my birth certificate translated to French in advance, and then asked for a social security number. In the meantime, I got sick twice and because it took an enormous amount of time for the social security number to arrive, on top of the fact that my Carte Vitale took 3 months to arrive as well, I had to pay everything from my own pocket”*.

Relationship with Technology

The topic of Relationship with Technology was one that was mostly mentioned when related to the societal perspective of the interviewees' lives in France, in specific, the fact that they experienced a high level of dependency on mail and paper to complete certain processes.

Interviewee number nine believes that *“the French system is a bit old fashioned, because everything is done in paper, everything is delivered by hand or in a mailbox, nothing can be done online, which I found a bit weird, especially in times of Covid”*. And this idea was reinforced by another interviewee, who mentioned that *“they still love paper. In the beginning, when I started working, I had to go to the post office every Saturday morning. A lot of insurance documents, the things I had to take care of with the company in the beginning, and so on, were things that they always requested a letter for. This letter would be sent home, then I had to fill it, and nothing was done via online forms, for example”*.

5.4 Feedback

In order to obtain the interviewees' feedback and comments on the findings of this research, an email was sent to all of them with the preliminary version of the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective.

From the 9 interviewees that were contacted to provide feedback, only 5 of them responded. Overall, the feedback was positive, and they agreed with the cultural standards identified. Interviewees number eight and nine mentioned they had nothing to add, but, regarding the explanation of each cultural standard, some of the other interviewees provided comments.

One of the interviewees pointed out that, when it comes to the cultural standard of High Level of Bureaucracy, he agrees that it exists but added that, from the workplace perspective and based on his experience, the companies have a good relationship with technology. *“Yes, they have a lot of processes and procedures, but they do not rely a lot on paper in the workplace”*. He also mentioned that, regarding the topic of Importance of Work-Life Balance, again, he agrees with it but thinks that *“they are slower when fixing problems, but that does not mean that they are not stressed”*.

Lastly, for the cultural standard of Good Interpersonal Relationships, one of the interviewees wanted to add that, based on her experience, “*even though the French are accessible, they are individualists and perceive themselves as the best, which can hinder the work itself*”.

The feedback and comments acquired were taken into consideration to reach the final version of the cultural standards.

5.5 Comparison of Results with the Cultural Dimensions of Hofstede

As it was discussed on the Literature Review chapter of this dissertation, Hofstede identified six cultural dimensions that allowed him to recognize cultural differences. Since both the cultural dimensions and the cultural standards approaches have the same goal, with a difference that the cultural standards provide a comparison of solely two cultures, they can be compared to one another. Therefore, following the analysis that was already done in chapter 2 of the French versus the Portuguese scores for each Hofstede’s cultural dimension, a new comparison between those same cultural dimensions and cultural standards will be conducted.

Starting with the first cultural dimension, power distance, France and Portugal have similar scores, with France having a slightly higher one, meaning that they both have high power distance levels. From the present research and based on the cultural standards of *Good Interpersonal Relationships*, in specific, the Hierarchy and Communication topic, the cultural dimension at hand is in line with some of the interviewees, who mentioned that there is a well-established hierarchy with a vertical approach in the French corporate culture. However, as mentioned in the explanation of that topic, there were conflicting opinions among the interviewees, as some of them believe that there is a horizontal hierarchy in France and an openness to communicate with superiors, especially if every person involved speaks French.

As for the second cultural dimension, individualism, France has a much higher score than Portugal, meaning that, in France, people tend to not have a lot of commitment to in-groups and tend to place boundaries between their personal and professional lives. This is partially corroborated by the findings of this research in the cultural standard of *Importance of Work-life Balance*, in the sense that, when it comes to their work-life balance, French people have this separation very well established. On the other hand, when looking at the cultural standard of *Good Interpersonal Relationships*, with the exception of one interviewee who mentioned that the French can be quite individualistic people, most interviewees agree that there is a sense of a team spirit working towards the same goals within a company.

Regarding the cultural dimension of masculinity, both France and Portugal are more feminine countries, with France having a lower level for prioritizing quality of life. The cultural standard of *Importance of Work-life Balance* shows that the French do not prioritize work at the expense of their personal lives, and such can be seen in the common after-work gatherings or the fact that they tend not to work extra hours, unless they are paid, but the Portuguese believe that this is more common in France than in Portugal, contradicting the specific scores of the countries for this dimension.

The cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance is one where both France and Portugal have high scores, meaning that there is a need for rules and stability in both countries, but that it is higher in Portugal. The cultural standard of *High Level of Bureaucracy* is one that can be associated with the cultural dimension at hand and, once again, the Portuguese believe that both countries are bureaucratic, partially corroborating the uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension, but they agree that the French system can be quite complex and slow, as there are many layers of approval and the use of paper documents to deal with personal matters, for example.

Long-term orientation is a cultural dimension where France and Portugal are placed in different groups, with France being seen as a more flexible country that also plans for its future, unlike Portugal that tends to be more normative and focus on fast results rather than long-term ones. This is a cultural dimension that cannot be directly associated to any of the cultural standards identified in this research.

Finally, the sixth cultural dimension, indulgence, is where France has a higher score than Portugal and is viewed as a country where people do not enjoy their lives that much and are less relaxed. On the other hand, Portugal is seen as a more pessimist country where people's desires are restrained. Once again, looking at the cultural standard of *Importance of Work-life Balance*, there is a partial conflict between the cultural dimension and the findings, since the French tend to have a clearer division of their personal and professional lives, when compared to the Portuguese, however, as mentioned on the feedback section, the fact that they work slower is not equivalent to not being stressed.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation was developed with the aim of better understanding the organizational cultural differences between the French and the Portuguese or, in other terms, to identify the French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective. By doing so, it would be possible to provide insights on how Portuguese individuals have experienced the corporate culture in France and understand, based on their input, how much these two cultures differ from one another.

In order to reach the objective set out for this dissertation, the cultural standards method was adopted, and narrative interviews were conducted with a group of 9 people. These were Portuguese individuals who lived in France for over 5 months and worked in both France and Portugal in different regions and fields. During their interviews, they shared their experiences and behaviors throughout their time working in France. Afterwards, the transcripts of those interviews were analyzed to pinpoint the critical incidents mentioned, the results were shared with the interviewees to obtain their feedback, and the final version of the cultural standards was determined.

From the research conducted and, as mentioned previously, resorting to the cultural standards method, four French organizational cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective were identified:

1. Flexible Schedule and Work Model
2. Good Interpersonal Relationships
3. Importance of Work-life Balance
4. High Level of Bureaucracy

The first cultural standard of Flexible Schedule and Word Model demonstrates that the Portuguese find that there is less control in France when it comes to punctuality, following the established schedules (9am-5pm) and even where they work from (office vs. home). On top of that, the Portuguese also believe that it is very frequent and there is an underlying culture of having several coffee breaks during the workday.

Regarding the cultural standard of Good Interpersonal Relationships, overall, there is a common opinion that the French are quite nice and approachable, and there is team spirit, even though they can be individualists. On the other hand, there were different opinions when it comes to the companies' hierarchy and internal communication, with insights on how the hierarchies are vertical with levels well defined, and with others on how there is a freedom to openly communicate with superiors. All in all, the communication within a company is effective from both perspectives.

The Importance of Work-life Balance shows that there is a well-established division of the personal and professional lives of employees in France with a high importance given to it. Moreover, it is common to have after-work and weekend plans that might involve going out to restaurants, doing sports, or participating in cultural events.

Lastly, the fourth cultural standard of High Level of Bureaucracy indicates that there is a need for everything to be officialized in the workplace, alongside many steps and guidelines to be followed. In the day-to-day personal life in France, the processes are quite slow and there is a lot of dependency on paper and mail to complete those same processes, which is something that is not as frequent in the corporate perspective.

Following the finding of the French organizational cultural standards, a comparison between them and Hofstede's cultural dimensions was performed. The cultural dimensions of *Power Distance*, *Individualism*, and *Indulgence* were partially confirmed by the findings of this research. *Masculinity* was overall corroborated, but not to the point where the cultural standards obtained show that in France the work-life balance is more valued than in Portugal. A similar situation occurred for *Uncertainty Avoidance*, as it was mostly confirmed, with the exception that the cultural standards show that France is a more bureaucratic country than Portugal. Lastly, the cultural dimension of *Long-term Orientation* was neither supported or contradicted.

Today's world is marked by globalization and a constant movement of people. This research aimed to help better understand the differences between the French and Portuguese organizational cultures so that it would provide insights into what to expect when moving from one working culture to another.

The individuals who were interviewed had different experiences while in France, not only due to the separate regions of the country where they were living in, but also due to the several companies they worked at, whether these were national or international, small or large. All these factors influenced their perception of the country and what it is like to work in it.

All in all, the conclusions drawn from their experiences were interesting and relevant, despite the fact that it was a small group of interviewees. For future research, it would be interesting to analyze the experiences of a larger sample group with more varied ages, or even do a similar study in a reverse scenario, in order to obtain the Portuguese organizational cultural standards from the French perspective, and to complement the present research.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Scores of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions per Country/Region

The following appendix presents a table with the scores attributed to several countries/regions for each cultural dimension, as presented by Hofstede et al. (2010).

	Scores per Cultural Dimension					
Regions/Countries	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	IVR
Malaysia	104	26	50	36	41	57
Slovakia	104	52	110	51	77	28
Guatemala	95	6	37	101	-	-
Panama	95	11	44	86	-	-
Philippines	94	32	64	44	27	42
Russia	93	39	36	95	81	20
Romania	90	30	42	90	52	20
Serbia	86	25	43	92	52	28
Suriname	85	47	37	92	-	-
Mexico	81	30	69	82	24	97
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	16	100
Arab Countries	80	38	53	68	23	34
Bangladesh	80	20	55	60	47	20
China	80	20	66	30	87	24
Ecuador	78	8	63	67	-	-
Indonesia	78	14	46	48	62	38
India	77	48	56	40	51	26
Africa West	77	20	46	54	9	78
Singapore	74	20	48	8	72	46
Croatia	73	33	40	80	58	33
Slovenia	71	27	19	88	49	48
Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	69	16
Morocco	70	46	53	68	14	25
Switzerland French	70	64	58	70	-	-

Vietnam	70	20	40	30	57	35
Brazil	69	38	49	76	44	59
France	68	71	43	86	63	48
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	61	17
Poland	68	60	64	93	38	29
Belgium French	67	72	60	93	-	-
Colombia	67	13	64	80	13	83
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	20	89
Turkey	66	37	45	85	46	49
Africa East	64	27	41	52	32	40
Peru	64	16	42	87	25	46
Thailand	64	20	34	64	32	45
Chile	63	23	28	86	31	68
Portugal	63	27	31	104	28	33
Belgium NI	61	78	43	97	-	-
Uruguay	61	36	38	100	26	53
Greece	60	35	57	112	45	50
South Korea	60	18	39	85	100	29
Iran	58	41	43	59	14	40
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	93	49
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	70	29
Spain	57	51	42	86	48	44
Malta	56	59	47	96	47	66
Pakistan	55	14	50	70	50	0
Canada Quebec	54	73	45	60	-	-
Japan	54	46	95	92	88	42
Italy	50	76	70	75	61	30
Argentina	49	46	56	86	20	62
South Africa (wte)	49	65	63	49	-	-
Trinidad	47	16	58	55	13	80
Hungary	46	80	88	82	58	31
Jamaica	45	39	68	13	-	-

Latvia	44	70	9	63	69	13
Lithuania	42	60	19	65	82	16
Estonia	40	60	30	60	82	16
Luxembourg	40	60	50	70	64	56
United States	40	91	62	46	26	68
Canada Total	39	80	52	48	36	68
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67	68
Australia	38	90	61	51	21	71
Costa Rica	35	15	21	86	-	-
Germany	35	67	66	65	83	40
Great Britain	35	89	66	35	51	69
Finland	33	63	26	59	38	57
Norway	31	69	8	50	35	55
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53	78
Ireland	28	70	68	35	24	65
Switzerland Ge	26	69	72	56	-	-
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	33	75
Denmark	18	74	16	23	35	70
Israel	13	54	47	81	38	-
Austria	11	55	79	70	60	63
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	74	66
Belgium	-	-	-	-	82	57
Ukraine	-	-	-	-	86	14
Belarus	-	-	-	-	81	15
Germany East	-	-	-	-	78	34
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	75	20
Moldova	-	-	-	-	71	19
Bosnia	-	-	-	-	70	44
Kyrgyz Rep	-	-	-	-	66	39
Macedonia	-	-	-	-	62	35
Albania	-	-	-	-	61	15
Armenia	-	-	-	-	61	-

Azerbaijan	-	-	-	-	61	22
Georgia	-	-	-	-	38	32
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-	36	52
Tanzania	-	-	-	-	34	38
South Africa	-	-	-	-	34	63
Zambia	-	-	-	-	30	42
Iceland	-	-	-	-	28	67
Burkina Faso	-	-	-	-	27	18
Algeria	-	-	-	-	26	32
Iraq	-	-	-	-	25	17
Uganda	-	-	-	-	24	52
Mali	-	-	-	-	20	43
Rwanda	-	-	-	-	18	37
Jordan	-	-	-	-	16	43
Zimbabwe	-	-	-	-	15	28
Dominican Rep	-	-	-	-	13	54
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	13	84
Egypt	-	-	-	-	7	4
Ghana	-	-	-	-	4	72
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	-	0	90
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-	-	46
Andorra	-	-	-	-	-	65
Cyprus	-	-	-	-	-	70