Cultural awareness

Fontys University of Applied Sciences

Anna Kadurina

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Defining culture

Culture is an essential part of human society. It enables people to develop social norms, beliefs, practices and along with that values that bind them together as a community. There are many definitions of culture. Culture influences a wide range of human behavior including how people think, behave, solve problems, and make decisions.
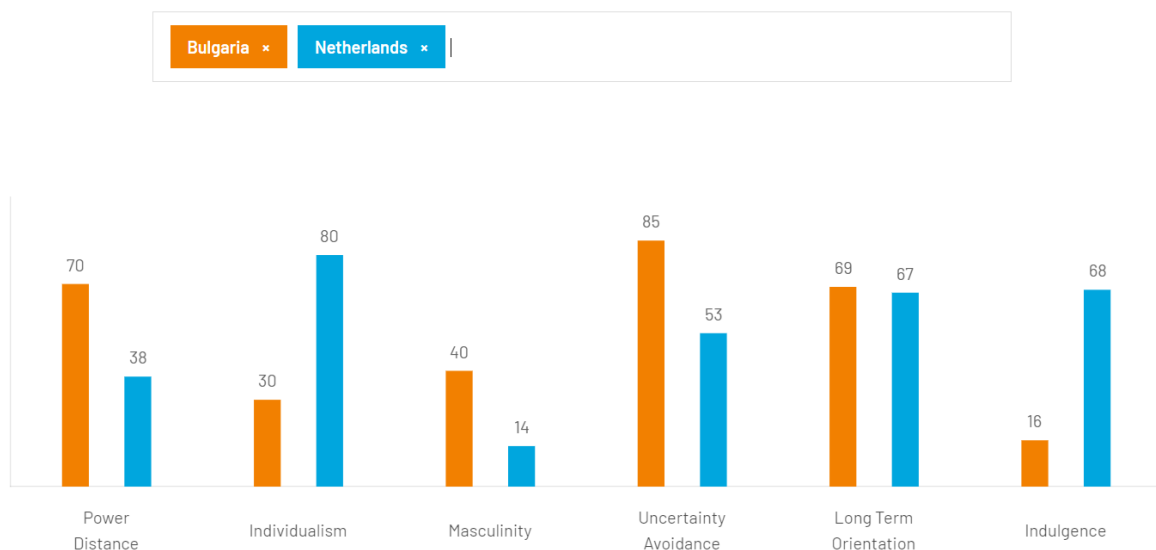
Cultural aspects to consider

When interacting with individuals from different cultures, it is important to be aware of cultural differences regarding the communication. Cultural aspects to consider include difference in social norms, variation in beliefs and values, diverse communication styles, contrasting views on the importance of punctuality.

Culture clustering

Culture clustering is an approach to identify shared characteristics between different cultures. It means grouping societies based on similar traits such as language, region, and values.

Cultural Misunderstandings

Cultural misunderstandings happen when people from different cultures fail to understand each other's perspectives. An example is when people with a direct communication style culture communicate with people from an indirect communication style culture. The difference in those styles can lead not only to misunderstandings but also hurting of feelings. Another example is when individuals from different cultures have opposite views on the importance of time and punctuality. For instance, someone from a culture where being on time is highly valued might feel disrespected if someone is frequently late. In contrast, a person from a culture with more relaxed view of punctuality might not understand why being late is such a problem. As a Bulgarian I can give an example, that we as a culture are very open and direct people, always voicing our opinions and discussing our points of views. In my experience, this can be considered rude or disrespectful to people from cultures where this is considered unacceptable or even forbidden in some situations. Another example is the Individualism in each culture based on the Hofstede cultural dimensions. We can clearly see that, individuals from Bulgaria do not prioritize their personal needs and goals over the collective interests. On the other hand, The Netherlands places emphasis on the individual freedom and personal achievements.

Bulgaria ×   Netherlands ×

Dimension	Bulgaria	Netherlands
Power Distance	70	38
Individualism	30	80
Masculinity	40	14
Uncertainty Avoidance	85	53
Long Term Orientation	69	67
Indulgence	16	68

Understanding your own culture

Before trying to communicate and interact effectively with people from different cultures, it is important to first identify your own background. It is essential to understand how our values and belief shape the perception of the world. This self-awareness can help us recognize biases when interacting with people from other cultures.

Future interactions with people from different cultures

In the future, I plan to apply all my new knowledge from this semester and be careful to not offend people from other cultures. It is important to identify the culture of the person you are communicating with and have the general knowledge of what is acceptable and what not.

Cultural differences in the group project

In the group project, I encountered people from my culture, as well as from different cultures. The important thing to keep in mind is to respect each other, value the different opinions and respect the culture from one another and try to learn from this experience to improve our communication.