Q.) Explain one cultural dimension with brief reference to one relevant study.

Geert Hofstede studied certain trends in his data by asking employees across 40 countries, distributing questionnaires. Studying cultures could be looked with an etic or an emic approach. He found the cultural dimensions that are general factors underlying cross-cultural differences in values and behaviours, and they have been identified based on massive cross-national surveys. They are: individualism versus collectivism, the power distance index, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance index, long-term versus short-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint. The dimension that I will be discussing is indulgence versus restraint. The indulgence cultural dimension explains the extent to which individuals try to control their desires and impulses based on the way they were raised. Societies which have weaker controls over their desires are considered the indulgent countries, and they tend to allow free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun (Hofstede, 2010). On the other hand, restrained societies have a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict norms and rules. The Indulgence versus Restraint dimension was first conceptualized when Minkov (Minkov, 2010) isolated and correlated three key items from the World Values Survey. The level of this cultural dimension is related to: happiness and pleasure in life, importance of leisure and friendship, and life control. Minkov identified two other values found on the WVS: Placing high importance on having friends and placing relatively low importance on choosing thrift as an important value to teach children. They can be differentiated respectively as indulgent society (a perception of personal life control, high importance of leisure and having friends, freedom of speech is viewed as important, less moral discipline, positive attitude) vs restrained society (a perception of helplessness, low importance of leisure and having friends, freedom of speech is not a primary concern, moral discipline, cynicism).

The study that I have chosen is by Elena Chudnovskaya and Laura L.S. O’Hara on intercultural experiences of eight Danish expatriates in Russia published on August 30, 2022. The aim was study how 8 Danish business managers’ experiences in Russia as they perceived and responded to the cross-cultural communication differences between themselves and their Russian counterparts. The procedure conducted by the first author was semi-structured qualitative interviews. This allowed her to collect retrospective interpretations by those who had experienced the phenomenon of our interest. All the interviews were conducted using Skype. Although participants completed IRB consent forms in both Danish and English, the interviews themselves were conducted in English. Interviews ranged from 45-90 minutes.  From this formative analysis, the first author identified five “second order themes,” each of which described a feature of the Danish expatriate managers’ experiences in Russia. Participants were eight Danish expatriates within Russian organizations for several years. Chudnovskaya’s social network allowed her to select those participants who would help her achieve the objectives of her research. In linking the results to the aim, 1) smiling in certain contexts is viewed with suspicion in highly restrained cultures; 2) maintenance of order is prioritized in highly restrained cultures; and 3) that highly restrained and highly indulgent countries view the importance of leisure quite differently. The findings also revealed that Russian organizations maintain order through a complex system of procedures and copious amounts of paperwork. Finally evaluating, participants sometimes observed “coldness” and “seriousness” from their Russian business partners, participants also experienced great hospitality and generosity from their Russian counterparts—even during the initial stages of business.

Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms. This cultural dimension expresses the differences between the gratifications’ perspective versus control of essential human needs related to obtaining pleasure from life. Understanding cultural differences and being able to adjust appropriately to such differences was a key factor in the Danes’ interactions with their Russian colleagues, which, in turn, resulted in their success. Both authors performed confirmatory coding of the second-order themes to ascertain whether they had identified all examples of these themes and whether they agreed on interpretations of these themes. Finally, this study revealed that Danish expatriate managers and their Russian associates have varying attitudes toward work and leisure. Specifically, the representatives of restrained societies such as Russia tend to concentrate on work and value their leisure time less than do their counterparts from more indulgent cultures such as Denmark. This finding implies that expatriate managers from indulgent societies should consider professional development, rather than leisure activities, as a more effective motivational strategy for their employees, given that job security is one of the strongest motivators for Russian employees (Bollinger, 1994). Hofstede’s work carries great potential as a frame for conceptualizing and articulating cultural characteristics (Rapp, Bernardi, & Bosco, 2011; Søndergaard, 2008), as well as providing practical insights relating to cross-cultural training in myriad industries (Coene & Jacobs, 2017). Also, The Indulgence and Restraint Cultural Dimension: A Cross-Cultural Study of Mongolia and the United States (Enkh-Amgalan, 2016).