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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem and Research Questions

Employee appreciation is a cornerstone of organizational success and plays a critical role in fostering employee motivation, well-being, and engagement (Einwiller et al., 2021; Pfister et al., 2020). In today's globalized and increasingly remote work environment, where organizational teams often work across multiple countries and cultures, understanding how appreciation is perceived and valued in different cultural contexts has become essential. While employee recognition has been studied in broader contexts, there is limited research comparing how recognition practices differ across cultures. The importance of employee appreciation is further underscored by its impact on organizational outcomes. Studies have shown that appreciation fosters job satisfaction, reduces turnover, and improves overall well-being (Stocker et al., 2014; Pfister et al., 2020). It is also important to be appreciated by supervisors, not just peers (Stocker et al., 2019). The question remains as to how cultural differences affect the significance of appreciation, as well as the actual receipt of appreciation across cultures. This study aims to address this gap by examining cultural differences in employee appreciation between Germany and the United States of America. Although both are Western countries, there are many differences between these countries, such as the way they deal with uncertainty avoidance or organizational hierarchies (Hofstede et al., 2010; Meyer, 2014). These countries often work together and are known for their strong economies (Jonas, 2018). This makes it important to understand the differences in their approach to work to ensure smooth transitions in teamwork. To explore the cultural differences between the U.S. and Germany, this study uses a quantitative research design. The surveys examine the types of appreciation expected and received, as well as the impact of appreciation on job satisfaction, furthermore, looking into whether recognition comes from supervisors or colleagues. By integrating these findings with theoretical insights, this research aims to provide valuable insights for multinational organizations seeking to implement effective and culturally sensitive appreciation programs.

The goal of this paper is to provide insight into bridging the cultural gap between the U.S. and Germany when it comes to employee appreciation and to ensure that everyone receives the right recognition based on their needs to ensure greater well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational success.

1.2 Research Aim

This thesis aims to explore employee appreciation in a cross-cultural context, focusing on how appreciation is perceived in terms of its importance, how often it is actually experienced, and how often it is given. The study also examines differences in appreciation received from colleagues versus supervisors. In addition, it considers how appreciation relates to job satisfaction and organizational identification. The comparison centers on German and U.S.-American employees, two culturally distinct groups within Western work environments. While appreciation has been widely studied, there is limited research on how cultural factors influence its perception and experience. This study aims to address that gap. The results are intended to help international organizations adapt their appreciation practices in culturally sensitive ways that support both employee well-being and organizational success.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis begins with an introduction to the topic, explaining the research problem, research questions, aim, and structure of the thesis in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 then outlines the relevant literature and studies on the topic, presenting previous research on appreciation, including theories of motivation and recognition, as well as explaining the cross-cultural importance and differences between the U.S. and Germany, including their differences in legislation and the impact this has on the research. The thesis continues with Chapter 3, which explains the research design. This includes the methodological approach, research questions, survey structure, sample characteristics, and the statistical procedures that were implemented to answer the research questions. In Chapter 4, the results of the survey and statistical analyses are presented and analyzed in accordance with the research questions. Next, Chapter 5 interprets the findings, connects them to the previous literature and theories, discusses their relevance, and outlines both theoretical and practical implications. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarizing key insights, discussing limitations, and suggesting avenues for future research.

2. Literature review and theoretical background

2.1 Appreciation

Appreciating each other is an important factor in helping each other feel validated and seen. It plays an important role in our daily lives and should not only be reserved for family and friends but should also happen in the workplace. Appreciating employees is an important part of organizational culture because it promotes shared values, strengthens relationships, and fosters psychological safety in the workplace (Pfister et al., 2020). Compliments, recognition, and praise for employees are all driving factors in employee well-being and satisfaction, resulting in a positive and supportive workplace (Stocker et al., 2010). This minimizes turnover rates, which ensures the progress of the company's short and long-term goals. It's also important to consider the different sources of employee appreciation, distinguishing between peers and supervisors. To create a healthy organizational culture, it must include appreciation (Einwiller et al., 2021; Ruppel et al., 2022). When embedding a culture of appreciation in the workplace, it is important to include everyone. Not only should supervisors appreciate the employees who report to them, but employees should appreciate each other as well as their superiors, including the aforementioned supervisors, direct uplines, or managers. This promotes appreciation among co-workers and takes the pressure off of the supervisor as the sole provider of appreciation (Stocker et al., 2014, p. 90).

Furthermore, there is a direct link between recognition, feelings of success, and job satisfaction, which leads to other positive outcomes at work. On the other hand, a lack of appreciation makes people feel that their success is not seen and leads to resentment, which reduces job satisfaction and has a negative impact on the organization (Pfister et al., 2020, p. 469). Although appreciation has many benefits, it is important that it is given correctly, otherwise it can have negative consequences, such as the appreciation feeling insincere, which ends with the recipient feeling manipulated (Grandey et al., 2005, p. 52). With the rise of digital peer recognition tools and public feedback platforms in today's workplace, it is crucial to distinguish between authentic expressions of appreciation and performative gestures that may seem insincere or strategic. Appreciation needs to be extended regularly to foster a supportive work environment, such as through compliments, listening, communicating, and acting in an appreciative manner. To ensure this, appreciation should be approached strategically, considering employees' wishes, values and expectations regarding appreciation (Stranzl & Ruppel, 2024, p. 18).

Another important factor in recognition is to consider the cultural differences within an organization. Culture is a phenomenon learned from our social environment, starting from the way one was raised, one adapts to the rules of society. Different cultures may have different values and practices (Hofstede G., Hofstede G.J., Minkov, 2010, p. 5). It is important to treat employees according to their culture. This means that not all employees can be treated in the same way, as what is considered friendly in one culture may be considered rude in another. Larger international companies need to take this into account when working on multinational projects around the world (Meyer, 2014).

Appreciation is a necessary component in satisfying various aspects of human motivation in order to feel fulfilled in life (Maslow, 1943). The concept of esteem was studied by Maslow, who states that receiving esteem is necessary to satisfy one's self-esteem, thus placing it in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The self-esteem category is the fourth of five levels in the hierarchy of needs, placing it near the top when depicted as a pyramid. The pyramid begins with psychological needs, safety, love and belongingness, followed by esteem needs. Self-esteem needs consist of self-confidence, achievement, respect for others, and the need to be a unique individual – this is where recognition is needed. Finally, the hierarchy ends with self-actualization. In the fourth level, Maslow divides esteem needs into two subsets: the need for strength, achievement, and self-confidence, and the need for reputation and prestige. Receiving recognition falls into the second category-the need for reputation and prestige. Recognition can help people feel seen, confident, strong, and worthy, as well as useful. Satisfying the need for esteem is necessary for taking further steps, such as self-actualization, to live a fulfilled life. On the other hand, not fulfilling esteem needs has negative consequences, such as making one feel inferior, weak, and helpless. This hinders one's ability to achieve self-actualization (Maslow, 1943, p. 382-384).

Applying these needs to the workplace, receiving recognition at work will help employees feel more respected and useful, which can lead to higher productivity and increase overall well-being at work by creating a supportive environment (Einwiller et al., 2021). It will also help employees feel a sense of belonging within the organization, as well as increase their confidence and motivation, helping them to progress towards self-actualization by making them feel valued and recognized. On the other hand, not receiving recognition at work can lead to feelings of inferiority and helplessness, resulting in slacking off on projects, not contributing new ideas, or not engaging with colleagues, which can lead to negative outcomes for the organization, such

as high turnover rates and an unpleasant environment, which also decreases employee motivation (Semmer et al., 2014).

A theory that focuses on the aspect of esteem with a direct link to job satisfaction is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, 1966). According to this theory, the individual needs that must be met to achieve job satisfaction are divided into motivation and hygiene. Motivational factors include aspects that focus on the work itself, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and growth. These were identified as main contributors to higher job satisfaction and motivate employees at work – but do not prevent job dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors, on the other hand, are said to have the opposite effect – that is, they can prevent job dissatisfaction but not increase job satisfaction. Hygiene factors consist of aspects surrounding the working conditions such as salary, job security, company policies, interpersonal relationships, supervision, status, and job benefits (Herzberg, 1966; Alfayad & Arif, 2017, p.152). Applying Herzberg's two-factor theory, appreciation can be found with recognition as a motivational factor that leads to job satisfaction, making it a necessary component to increase job satisfaction. For the sake of transparency, it is important to note that Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory has been considered controversial and has been criticized for being oversimplified and not universally applicable (Siemens, 2005).

Another theory that focuses on human motivation and needs is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Deci and Ryan (1987). This theory focuses on the three basic human needs that lead to motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It argues that when these three needs are met, individuals experience greater motivation, well-being, and performance. Autonomy is about self-regulation and self-organized behavior, being able to freely control and choose one's actions, such as how one wants to work and express oneself. This can be observed in relation to the environment, for example, a controlling environment will hinder one's autonomy. On the other hand, the freedom to exercise autonomy, for example by contributing one's own ideas, will lead to satisfaction. In the workplace, autonomy could be seen as setting one's own timeline for a project, contributing one's own ideas and insights. Next, competence focuses on feeling capable, confident, effective, and valued. This includes not only feeling competent, but also having those skills valued. This builds self-confidence and leads to success in the social environment. An example of this in the workplace is being complimented and appreciated by supervisors and coworkers (Stocker et al., 2019). Not feeling competent in the workplace can lead to feeling discouraged and demotivated (Semmer et al., 2014). Finally, the relatedness

factor focuses on feelings of connection and belonging. This includes feeling engaged, valued, and supported by one's social environment. An example of this in the workplace is successful teamwork, team bonding exercises, or being celebrated for one's accomplishments (Deci & Ryan, 2012). In this theory, esteem can be found in the reinforcement of one's competence as well as in relatedness by feeling a sense of belonging when complimented and appreciated by colleagues. Thus, this theory also proves the importance of appreciation in increasing motivation and human satisfaction (Stocker et al., 2014).

Human motivation can further be explained by the Social Exchange Theory, published by Blau in 1964, which argues that human behavior is driven by reciprocity. According to this theory, individuals expect to be reciprocated when they do something for others, and they are motivated to reciprocate when they receive a favor. Social exchange theory emphasizes the importance of balanced exchanges in building trust and gratitude. When individuals feel that their efforts are reciprocated, they are more likely to continue positive exchanges. However, if they perceive an imbalance, such as not receiving adequate reward, they may feel taken advantage of and terminate the relationship because the other party has not fulfilled his or her obligation in the social exchange (Blau, 1964).

This principle of mutual support can be applied to appreciation in the workplace, both in peer relationships and in supervisor-employee interactions. When employees, whether peers or supervisors, value each other equally, it fosters trust within the organization. This mutual appreciation helps individuals feel valued, which in turn increases their well-being and motivation at work. It also strengthens team bonds and contributes to a positive social environment, which ultimately benefits the organization as a whole (Beck, 2016; Stocker et al., 2014).

Organizational Support Theory (OST), developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), can be used to examine and understand the influence that organizations have on employee appreciation. It explains how employees form beliefs about their organization's value of their contributions and concern for their well-being. These beliefs are referred to as perceived organizational support (POS). POS is described as "employees developing global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 500). POS is based on the reciprocity norm, meaning that when employees perceive high support, they feel obligated to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, such as higher commitment and better performance. Through POS, employees see a moral obligation to increase their work efforts in exchange for rewards and favorable treatment from

the organization. POS enables organizations to fulfill their employees' socioemotional needs, such as respect and caring, which are closely tied to appreciation (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 506). Appreciation can be demonstrated in POS through verbal praise, thank-you messages, and symbolic rewards. This appreciation makes employees feel recognized beyond formal compensation or job duties. Enhancing POS through appreciation practices can contribute to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 506). POS strengthens employees' emotional attachment and commitment to the organization. Employees who feel appreciated are more likely to identify with organizational values, exceed job expectations, and exhibit higher motivation and engagement (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 506).

Eisenberger et al. (1986) examined POS through a study that measured employees' perceptions of organizational support using surveys. The researchers examined the outcomes, such as job satisfaction, performance, and commitment. They also tested how fair treatment, recognition, and rewards affected POS by conducting four experiments involving hundreds of employees from various companies. The study's aim was to understand how employees perceive organizational support, such as whether they feel their organization values their work and cares about their well-being. They developed a POS survey and scale, which showed high reliability to measure the influence of this perception on employee attitudes and behaviors (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 503).

Key findings showed that employees who perceived fair treatment and recognition for their efforts felt more supported. Indicating that fair treatment and recognition increase POS. Additionally, POS predicts job satisfaction and performance. Employees with high POS were more satisfied and committed to their jobs and more likely to perform well. Another finding was that POS works through reciprocity. Employees who feel appreciated want to give back to the company by working harder and being loyal (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 506). This study showed that emotional and relational support is just as important as monetary compensation. The study helped shift organizational psychology toward understanding the psychological contract and how employees interpret and respond emotionally to their company's behavior. According to Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), appreciation serves as an important signal that the organization values and supports its employees. This reinforces emotional bonds and promotes reciprocal engagement.

Recent findings suggest that POS improves not only job satisfaction and commitment but also employee well-being, creativity, and resilience in the face of stress. Interestingly, POS has increased in the U.S. over the past decades (Eisenberger et al., 2020, p. 101). It shows stronger positive outcomes in Eastern cultures than in Western cultures. It is important to note that, in Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) OST, organizations are viewed as living beings with purpose and intention by their employees. This builds on previous theory that humans personify powerful entities based on organizations having responsibility for their agents' actions and the ability to exert power over employees through said agents (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 500; Levinson, 1969). This personification of organizations plays a vital role in POS because it enables POS to fulfill employees' socioeconomic needs, such as approval, esteem, and emotional support, by humanizing the organization and fulfilling employees' needs on a personal level (Eisenberger et al., 2020, p. 102).

In terms of the cultural context, Eisenberger et al. (2020) argue that, although employment in the U.S. has become less stable and job tenure has declined, most U.S. jobs remain long-term and full-time, and economic insecurity has risen. This makes organizational relationships important and shows the need for social exchange and POS relationships in today's workplace (Eisenberger et al., 2020, p. 117). Eisenberger et al. (2019) found that positive organizational sentiment (POS) among U.S. employees had increased by 15% over the last twenty-five years, shifting from neutral to slightly positive. This means that, although the results improved, they are still lukewarm, and there is plenty of room for improvement in terms of POS. It is important to note that it is unclear whether POS has truly improved or if employees have adapted to receiving little organizational support by expecting less and reporting higher levels as a result (Eisenberger et al., 2020, p. 118). Eisenberger et al. (2020) explain that POS and OST were developed in a Western cultural context, which must be considered when analyzing. Western culture can be characterized as leaning toward horizontal individualism, fostering independence, competition, and low obedience to authority. Conversely, many Asian nations, as well as Western nations with a Catholic religious tradition, lean more collectivist and foster traditional power relationships. This can result in collectivist cultures harboring higher POS due to their respect for authorities, including organizations. It is also important to note that the way organizations demonstrate support can differ in various cultural contexts (Eisenberger et al., 2020, p. 118). Collectivism is a cultural orientation in which individuals see themselves as primarily part of a larger group, such as a family, community, or organization. In this orientation, individuals prioritize group goals, harmony, and loyalty over their own interests

(Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 91). For example, collectivist cultures prefer team recognition, whereas individualistic cultures prefer to be singled out for recognition. However, this would be considered rude in a collectivist culture (Eisenberger et al., 2020, p. 118).

In terms of job satisfaction, the Affective Events Theory (AET) by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) can explain key elements. AET explains how daily workplace events trigger emotions and influence employees' behavior, motivation, and job satisfaction. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) addressed the misconception that job satisfaction is often confused with emotional reactions at work. While many job satisfaction measures ask people how much they like their job, which includes evaluative judgment, Weiss and Cropanzano argue that this does not necessarily include emotional experience. This means that job satisfaction is not the same as an emotional reaction to the job (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 11). AET also emphasizes the importance of time, arguing that emotional patterns and fluctuations shape how employees feel about their job in the long term. Furthermore, AET acknowledges that distinct emotions, such as anger, joy, and pride, have different behavioral consequences, underscoring the multifaceted nature of workplace emotions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 12).

Interestingly, Weiss and Cropanzano tie AET into other theories of human well-being, such as Herzberg's two-factor theory (1966) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943). Herzberg (1966) was among the first to show that workplace satisfaction is shaped by specific events. Rather than viewing satisfaction and dissatisfaction as opposites on a single scale, he argued that they are distinct concepts. As previously mentioned, dissatisfaction tends to come from hygiene factors, such as salary or working conditions, while real satisfaction is driven by motivators, such as growth, achievement, and especially recognition. These motivators align closely with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, particularly the higher-level needs, including esteem and self-actualization. Herzberg's approach, which involved asking employees to describe instances when they felt particularly positive or negative about their job, revealed the significant role of emotional responses. Some participants described feeling elated after being recognized, while others shared their frustration when management ignored or dismissed them. Even when people talked about longer-term issues, there were still emotional turning points at the core. This is closely connected to AET, which focuses on how emotional workplace events shape our feelings and behaviors over time. Herzberg acknowledged that job attitudes vary depending on what happens at work and when. This is often ignored in traditional models. Although he later shifted toward describing environmental conditions that influence these events, his early work

paved the way for viewing appreciation as not just a nice-to-have but a central aspect of how people experience their job (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 15).

AET also distinguishes between moods and emotions, and argues that emotions are more intense, conscious reactions to events that have stronger behavioral consequences than background mood states. Depending on whether the emotional response aligns with the demands of the job, emotions can either support or interfere with job performance. For instance, frustration may lead to withdrawal or conflict, whereas excitement may boost motivation and sales effort. However, positive and negative emotions both use cognitive resources, making emotionally charged states more likely to cause disruptions than calm ones. This explains why negative emotional episodes often hurt performance more than positive one's help: they signal problems demanding attention, activate coping responses, and disrupt current tasks (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, pp. 54–55). Although emotions are sometimes considered messy or dysfunctional, the authors contend that they are functional because they redirect attention and behavior toward problem-solving. In terms of appreciation, recognition is not just about feeling good in the moment. Rather, it is about generating positive affective events that can shape attention, motivation, and behavior in lasting ways. AET challenges the notion that job satisfaction alone explains how people feel and act at work. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) assert that satisfaction and affect are distinct concepts, with emotional experiences often playing a more powerful role in shaping behavior. They emphasize that emotions and moods fluctuate over time, influencing both long-term attitudes, such as satisfaction, and short-term behaviors. For instance, being ignored in a meeting might not alter someone's overall job satisfaction score, but it could lead to withdrawal, lower motivation, or conflict that day. AET encourages researchers to examine these discrete events instead of relying on static, one-time evaluations. By doing so, AET helps explain why recognition and appreciation matter so much. These are affective moments that can spark emotional reactions, influence behavior, and ultimately shape how employees experience their jobs over time (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 65). Weiss and Cropanzano (1996, p. 15). state that their ideas were influenced by Herzberg's earlier work, especially his view that emotional reactions to specific work events are central to understanding motivation and satisfaction. In more recent findings, AET continues to show the relevance of the framework for understanding the emotional and cognitive mechanisms shaping employee experiences in modern workplaces. A study by Wegge et al. (2006) of over 2,000 call center representatives in the UK supported the key assumptions of AET, confirming that specific work conditions, such as autonomy and support, trigger emotional reactions that influence job

satisfaction and behavior. The authors emphasize that recent approaches to emotionally healthy organizations include proactive strategies such as emotional modeling, role design, and affect-based training interventions. These interventions reflect the growing understanding that workplace events generate not only rational evaluations but also affect-driven responses that have short- and long-term consequences. AET particularly provides a valuable lens through which to analyze how seemingly minor events, such as praise or supervisor feedback, can trigger emotions that shape commitment, motivation, and performance. The study Wegge et al. (2006, p. 251) concludes that AET is supported by empirical data and provides a basis for future work in job design, personality research, and employee well-being strategies. This underscores the continued utility of AET in linking workplace events to attitudes and outcomes in diverse organizational settings.

In contrast to AET, which focuses on how workplace events trigger emotional reactions that shape attitudes and behavior (Wegge et al., 2006), Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of emotional labor, highlighting how employees are trained to manage and display specific emotions as part of their job. In her study, *The Managed Heart*, she examined service workers, such as flight attendants and bill collectors, who were expected to act “nicer than natural” or “nastier than natural,” depending on organizational goals. These emotional displays are governed by “feeling rules” that dictate which emotions are appropriate in each workplace situation. While emotional work in private life may serve as a symbolic gift exchange within mutual relationships, emotional work in the workplace becomes commodified and sold for a wage (Hochschild, 1983). To meet these demands, employees often engage in surface acting, modifying their outward expressions, or deep acting, altering their inner feelings, even when they don’t align with the organizational script. Over time, this can lead to emotional dissonance, a disconnect between felt and displayed emotion, and ultimately, psychological strain. Hochschild (2012) argues that, though often invisible, emotional labor carries long-term costs. Employees may become estranged from their emotional expressions and even their authentic selves. For instance, their smile may no longer feel like their own but rather like the employer’s property (Hochschild, 2012, p. 22). Appreciation can also be subject to commodification. Workers may express gratitude or enthusiasm not because they feel valued, but because it is demanded by their role. This turns recognition into another scripted behavior. This critique is expanded upon in Hochschild’s later works. In *The Time Bind* (1997), she revealed that many working parents avoided using family-friendly policies, preferring the structure of the workplace to the unpredictability of home life. This inversion suggests that emotional comfort

has shifted from the private to the professional realm, further blurring the boundaries between the two. In *The Commercialization of Intimate Life* (2003), Hochschild warns that neoliberal capitalism is increasingly colonizing our emotional worlds. The “commodity frontier,” as Hochschild calls it, now extends deep into the realm of care, affection, and appreciation. Emotional expressions, once rooted in genuine connection, are repackaged as marketable services, from outsourced empathy to paid emotional support. In this context, appreciation becomes more than just positive workplace behavior; it risks becoming part of the same emotional script that workers are trained to follow (Brook et al., 2013, p. 277). When gratitude is embedded in corporate communication strategies, it may feel hollow, performative, or even coercive. As Hochschild (2012) recounts, statements such as “smile like you really mean it” capture the tension between authenticity and performance (Hochschild, 2012, p. 4). Scholars continue to build on her work, exploring how market logic shapes emotion and recognition (Brook et al., 2013, p. 281). From this perspective, appreciation is not inherently empowering; it can also be used as a means of control, particularly when it is instrumentalized, expected, or separated from genuine emotion. Ultimately, emotional labor demonstrates that even the most human of expressions, such as appreciation, can be shaped and commodified by the demands of paid work.

Unlike Hochschild’s critical view of emotional labor and scripted displays, the concept of psychological safety offers a more optimistic approach to fostering genuine appreciation. Coined by Amy Edmondson in 1999, psychological safety is defined as a shared belief that a team or workplace is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. In such an environment, employees can speak up, admit mistakes, and offer feedback without fear of embarrassment, punishment, or exclusion. This type of environment is especially relevant for appreciation, which inherently requires vulnerability. Expressing thanks, complimenting someone’s work, and giving recognition all involve emotional openness. Without a sense of safety, these behaviors may feel risky or manipulative. Edmondson’s research shows that psychological safety fosters learning behaviors, team collaboration, and overall performance precisely because it mitigates interpersonal fear. In safe environments, appreciation becomes a natural part of everyday interactions, rather than being forced or strategic. Employees are more likely to give and receive recognition freely because they feel secure doing so, not out of obligation. This is in stark contrast to environments governed by emotional labor, where appreciation may be expected yet feel emotionally hollow. Later research by Edmondson and Lei (2014) further underscores the significance of psychological safety in today’s collaborative work culture. As modern organi-

zations increasingly rely on interdisciplinary teamwork across product development, health-care, and research settings, psychological safety has emerged as a key factor in enabling open communication, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014, pp. 24–26). Psychological safety reduces the emotional costs of speaking up and fosters a climate of inclusion and trust. Psychological safety creates conditions under which genuine appreciation can flourish, free from performance pressure or fear of judgment. While emotional labor reminds us of the risks of forced positivity, psychological safety highlights how appreciation can be genuine, reciprocal, and grounded in mutual respect. Together, these perspectives illustrate the emotional boundaries within which appreciation occurs, either as a tool of control or as a reflection of true belonging. Building on Edmondson’s foundational work, further research has explored psychological safety at the individual level. This research emphasizes that psychological safety fosters not just compliance with expected behaviors but also proactive engagement and creativity. Studies show that when employees feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to engage in their roles, share knowledge, learn from failure, and contribute creative ideas (Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Gong et al., 2012). For instance, Kark and Carmeli (2009) discovered that psychological safety enhances feelings of vitality, fostering individual involvement in creative work. Similarly, Gong et al. (2012) demonstrated that proactive employees tend to engage in information exchange, which enhances psychological safety and ultimately creative performance, though this is mediated by trust rather than safety directly. Psychological safety is also central to employees’ voice behavior, that is, their willingness to speak up with ideas, concerns, or feedback. Studies by Detert and Burris (2007) and Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2009) show that managerial openness and ethical leadership increase psychological safety, facilitating upward communication. These studies suggest that appreciation and other interpersonal expressions can only flourish when individuals feel safe taking the interpersonal risk of speaking up. Liang et al. (2012) distinguish between two types of voice behavior: promotive (suggesting improvements) and prohibitive (warning about risks). Both types are significantly supported by psychological safety, especially when paired with a felt obligation to improve one’s organization. Detert and Edmondson (2011) found that implicit voice theories (IVTs), internalized beliefs about when it is safe to speak up, play a critical role alongside psychological safety. Even in relatively supportive environments, employees may remain silent due to a learned fear of hierarchical punishment. This highlights the need for alignment between personal beliefs and contextual cues for appreciation and open communication to truly thrive. Taken together, this body of research reinforces the idea that authentic appreciation is most likely to emerge in environments where psychological safety is high,

leadership is open, and employees are encouraged to participate meaningfully, not just perform. Without such safety, appreciation risks becoming superficial or strategic. With it, appreciation can be genuine, mutual, and transformative. Beyond individual experiences, psychological safety has also been studied at the organizational level, where it is considered a collective environment that influences learning, innovation, and performance outcomes. In this context, it is usually measured by aggregating responses from multiple employees across departments or firms, which provides insight into broader cultural patterns within organizations (Edmondson & Lei, 2014, p. 27). One prominent stream of research links psychological safety to organizational performance. For example, Baer and Frese (2003) discovered that psychological safety and an environment that encourages initiative strengthened process innovation. This, in turn, predicted better performance in mid-sized German companies. Similarly, Collins and Smith (2006) demonstrated that commitment-based human resource (HR) practices foster a climate of trust and cooperation that facilitates knowledge exchange and ultimately improves firm performance. While this study measured a related construct, the social climate of trust, it closely mirrors the interpersonal trust and respect embedded in psychological safety (Edmondson & Lei, 2014, p. 28). A second stream of research focuses on organizational learning. Carmeli et al. (2009) found that high-quality relationships, defined by mutuality, positive regard, and emotional carrying capacity, foster psychological safety. This enables learning from failure. Their findings suggest that learning is most effective in organizations that support openness, reflection, and trust. Similarly, Cataldo et al. (2009) studied a financial services firm experiencing cultural change. They demonstrated that employee perceptions of psychological safety were essential for navigating organizational identity and career development transitions. Carmeli (2007) introduced the concepts of internal (within teams) and external (across networks) social capital as key antecedents of psychological safety. This reinforces the idea that strong relational networks promote safer climates for interpersonal risk-taking and experimentation. Together, these findings highlight that psychological safety at the organizational level fosters adaptability, innovation, and learning, particularly in dynamic industries where flexibility, process improvement, and open communication are vital for success. Furthermore, these findings highlight the importance of leadership, human resources (HR) practices, and relational infrastructure in creating environments where employees feel comfortable speaking up, sharing knowledge, and reflecting on failures. In practice, the concept of psychological safety highlights how collaborative work environments can be fostered through the intentional efforts of both managers and employees. Although modern organizations depend on teamwork, innovation, and open communication, employees often hesitate to speak up, espe-

cially when doing so might reveal their ignorance, challenge norms, or create interpersonal tension (Edmondson & Lei, 2014, p. 39). These interpersonal risks pose a significant obstacle to organizational learning and improvement. Managers play a central role in shaping team climates. Research has shown that psychological safety does not automatically emerge, even in organizations with strong cultures. Instead, leadership behaviors at the local level, such as encouraging questions, admitting mistakes, and responding supportively to input, are critical to cultivating safety (Edmondson, 1999). Without this foundation, appreciation may be absent or superficial; employees may refrain from recognizing others out of fear that their sincerity will be misinterpreted or that standing out will invite scrutiny. Employees also contribute to this climate by engaging in second-order learning behaviors, such as speaking up, offering feedback, and raising concerns, as described by Tucker & Edmondson (2003). These behaviors are interpersonally risky but essential for team learning. In psychologically safe environments, appreciation becomes more than a scripted norm; it is a genuine, voluntary expression that builds trust and reinforces collaboration. However, psychological safety is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Excessive safety can reduce focus, lower performance standards, and dilute critical feedback (Edmondson & Lei, 2014, p. 40). Effective workplaces strike a balance by supporting emotional openness while maintaining clear goals and high expectations. In summary, appreciation flourishes when psychological safety is present. However, this requires striking a deliberate balance between supportive communication and constructive challenge. Both managers and team members must actively maintain this environment by making safety, respect, and authenticity part of the organizational culture rather than just performance metrics (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

These theories of promoting people's sense of belonging and value, along with the importance of emotional well-being can help us understand what motivates them to crave recognition. In the following, we will take a look at studies on employee appreciation. Stocker et al. (2019) define appreciation as "communicating that you value someone else" (Stocker et al., 2019, p. 333). This can be further broken down in terms of employee appreciation. Brun & Dugas, 2008, explain that recognition can be "expressed formally or informally, individually or collectively, privately or publicly, and monetarily or non-monetarily. It also involves recognizing the needs of others as well as their work performance, commitment, and results. This celebration and appreciation of the person is mainly symbolic, but can also be emotional, practical, or financial (Brun & Dugas, 2008, p. 727). Recognition can be divided into three categories: formal, informal, and everyday. Formal recognition is the public, planned recognition such as a year-

end reward, informal recognition can be spontaneous such as a pizza party to celebrate an achievement, and lastly, day-to-day recognition is compliments such as “good job” in the everyday work environment (Nelson, 2012). In addition, employee appreciation has a strong positive effect on organizational commitment (Einwiller et al., 2021). Appreciation in the workplace improves job quality and satisfaction (Sirgy et al., 2001). Given all these factors related to employee appreciation, there is still little research on how they differ across cultures.

2.2 USA and Germany

This thesis explores how national context shapes workplace appreciation practices in two of the world’s most influential economic powers: Germany and the U.S. According to data about the largest economies by GDP in 2023 published by Laenderdaten.info (2024), the U.S. is the largest economy worldwide, with a GDP of €25,636.5 billion and a GDP per capita of €76,546. It is followed by China, which has a GDP of €16,456.8 billion and a GDP per capita of €11,666. Germany is the largest economy in the EU and third globally, making it a central player in European as well as global markets. Germany is reported to have a GDP of €4,185.4 billion and a GDP per capita of €50,257 (Laenderdaten.info, 2024).

Table 1: Largest Economies by GDP in 2023

Largest economies by GDP in 2023			
<i>Rank</i>	Country/Region	GDP (€ billions)	GDP per capita (€)
1	USA	25,636.5	76,546
2	China	16,456.8	11,666
3	Germany	4,185.4	50,257

Die 50 größten Volkswirtschaften der Welt [The 50 largest economies in the world]. (2024). Laenderdaten.info, available at: <https://www.laenderdaten.info/groesste-volkswirtschaften.php> (accessed 12 March 2025).

Due to their economic size and global involvement, both nations significantly influence labor practices, workplace culture, and multinational standards. Germany’s industrial structure is characterized by strong labor, industry, and the government. The country’s financial system relies more on debt financing than on equity, enabling firms to focus more broadly on the interests of multiple stakeholders (Acs et al., 2021, p. 1647). There are hundreds of large

German multinational enterprises (MNEs) that operate globally. Their headquarters are primarily located in the German states of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Bavaria, and Baden-Württemberg. According to OECD BEPS recommendations, enterprises with a consolidated turnover of over 750 million euros are required to submit country-by-country reports (CBCRs). These reports reveal the scale and structure of German business activities abroad and demonstrate Germany's commitment to global transparency and fair taxation, thereby reinforcing its systemic economic influence. According to the data from 2021, Germany has 60.027 MNEs worldwide, with 5.070 of these in the U.S. Through these, Germany employs a total of 720.000 people in the U.S. The German multinational enterprises generated a turnover of €623 billion in the U.S. (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2025). On the other hand, the U.S. has a significant presence in Germany through its many multinational enterprises (MNEs) and employees. In fact, U.S.-based MNEs are the largest foreign investors in Germany (Singe & Croucher, 2005, p. 2). Singe and Croucher point out the different business logic under which U.S. companies operate compared to their German counterparts. U.S. MNEs favor company-level flexibility, direct communication with employees, and individualized HR strategies. Although U.S. companies claim to comply with the German system of works councils, case studies have shown that these councils are often circumvented or weakened (Singe & Croucher, 2005, p. 8). This is interesting in terms of appreciation practices because it highlights the differences between U.S. and German corporations. It is important to find a middle ground and ensure mutual compliance to facilitate smooth multinational teamwork across cultures.

The global economy is subject to constant influences, including globalization, digitalization, armed conflicts, and trade wars (Acs et al., 2021, p. 1630; Ezell, 2021; Fajgelbaum & Khandelwal, 2022, p. 206; Mbah & Wasum, 2022, p. 145). In terms of digitalization, the U.S. benefits from a strong institutional framework that supports startups and venture capital. In contrast, Germany operates within broader EU digitalization policies that tend to be less supportive of entrepreneurial innovation. Consequently, the U.S. has solidified its position in the digital platform economy (DPE), where platforms connect companies and consumers, thereby strengthening the overall economy. In the context of digitalization and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), it's important to note that the U.S. and China are competing head-on-head for global leadership, while Germany lags behind. This digital divide could significantly impact the future economic prospects of these countries (Acs et al., 2021). The state of digitalization in the U.S. and Germany is highly relevant to appreciation practices because digital platforms offer innovative, flexible forms of employee recognition. For

instance, employees can submit internal feedback anonymously through an online system, which may result in recognition that better aligns with their needs, values, and preferences. Digitalization also enables greater customization of recognition through personalized messages, customizable rewards, and AI-supported feedback systems that adapt to employee behavior and performance patterns. These practices can make appreciation feel more personal and meaningful by enhancing its perceived authenticity and relevance. By modernizing appreciation practices, digitalization creates opportunities for organizations and national economies. These include improved employee engagement, stronger organizational identification, higher retention rates, and the ability to recognize remote or hybrid workers more effectively. On a broader scale, embracing digital appreciation tools can signal a progressive workplace culture, attract digital-native talent, and foster innovation, factors that are critical for international competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy.

In this context, it is important to note that recent global events, particularly the Russia-Ukraine war, have significantly affected the economies of both the U.S. and Germany. This conflict has led to rising inflation, primarily due to increased oil and gas prices. In the U.S., these developments have triggered stock market volatility and prompted the country to take a leading role in imposing financial sanctions on Russia. Consequently, the U.S. has attracted widespread media attention and public discourse regarding its economic stance and involvement in the conflict. Like many EU countries, Germany experienced a severe energy crisis due to its dependence on Russian oil and gas. Additionally, Germany was impacted by supply chain disruptions, particularly involving wheat, minerals, and metals, as both Ukraine and Russia are major exporters of these raw materials. These developments have sparked political and economic debates about reducing reliance on Russian imports and increasing domestic production capacities. The conflict has also contributed to decreased household consumption and heightened economic uncertainty throughout the region (Mbah & Wasum, 2022, pp. 148). Additionally, the U.S. economy has been affected by the ongoing trade war with China. The imposition of tariffs has triggered sharp market reactions and disrupted global supply chains. These developments have led to reduced investment and uncertainty, which may hinder innovation and long-term competitiveness and ultimately have negative effects on economic growth. The trade conflict has also contributed to declines in real wages in certain regions of the U.S. and reduced household spending (Fajgelbaum & Khandelwal, 2022). These global crises affect the global economy, which in turn affects the internal dynamics of companies, the workplace, and the well-being of employees. Indicators of economic instability, such as

inflation, wage pressure, and reduced consumer spending, cause employees to experience stress, insecurity, and decreased motivation. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), recognition and appreciation are especially important during times of economic instability because they fulfill the need for esteem and belonging. Therefore, appreciation can act as a meaningful way to provide stability, reinforce employee value, and maintain engagement. In both the U.S. and Germany, organizations can address these challenges by implementing structured appreciation practices to foster internal unity and reduce turnover. Even when financial resources are limited, regular recognition is important for boosting morale, motivation, productivity, and employee well-being.

2.3 Cultural Differences

Culture has been defined in many ways and categories, such as anthropology, sociology and political science and can also be found as societal, national or gender cultures (Cobley, 2008, p. 5; Hofstede, 2011, p. 3).

Hofstede's definition is "Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 3). This definition was based on a previous explanation of culture by Kluckhohn, 1951: "Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values" (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 86). Thus, Hofstede also draws great importance from values, systems and symbols when explaining cultural differences. Values are learned early on in childhood and can be used to differentiate, for example between good versus evil or beautiful versus ugly (Hofstede, 2001, p. 6). The two definitions Hofstede uses to define values are: "A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of actions" (Kluckhohn, 1951/1967, p. 395) and "To say that a person 'has a value' is to say that he has an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (Rokeach, 1972, pp. 159-160).

Depending on where you are in the world or how you were raised will affect your values, the way you behave and react to others. To better understand these differences, Hofstede et al,

2010, have broken them down into different cultural dimensions such as Power Distance, Collectivism vs. Individualism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Hofstede uses Dimensions to measure these differences, and focuses on finding the general scores each country achieves in each category, as opposed to looking strictly for direct comparisons such as similarities and differences, as he says when you look for a difference or similarity you will find the outcome you were expecting thus creating biased results (Hofstede, 2001, p. 27). First, Power Distance is defined as “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). Applied to the workplace, this can be seen as the power differential between superiors and subordinates within an organization. The U.S. scored 40 and Germany scored 35 on the Power Distance Index (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 59). Which is a close comparison, however Meyer argues that Americans are seen as more hierarchical and deferential to their bosses, while Germans are not afraid to speak up and challenge their bosses (Meyer, 2014, p. 157). The next dimension of Collectivism vs. Individualism refers to the difference between living in a collectivist society, which focuses on the well-being and power of a group, and individualism, which focuses on one’s own well-being and success. In 2014, the U.S. scored 91 points on this index, ranking first, while Germany scored 67 points (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 95). It is important to note here that according to updated research, these scores are no longer accurate, with Germany ranking higher in Individualism than the U.S. (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022, p. 13). Applying this to the workplace, individualism means putting one’s self-interest first, which should align with employers. Whereas in a collectivist society, work is about working together in a group, which also means that relatives are often hired, or children follow in their parents’ footsteps (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 120). The Masculinity vs. Femininity dimension is based on gender roles and implies a more assertive approach with “masculinity” while “femininity” is interpreted as being modest and humble. On the index, Germany falls to 66 points, and the U.S. falls to 62 points, placing them very close to each other (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 141). These dimensions can often lead to misunderstandings, as being assertive in a country with a higher Femininity Index score can be seen as bossy and braggadocious, while being humble can be seen as weak and soft in a more masculine culture. This cause problems in the workplace if bosses or colleagues are seen as either too assertive or too “weak” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 166). Uncertainty avoidance refers to the tolerance of the unpredictable and ambiguous – ways of dealing with uncertainty. Germany scores 65 and the U.S. scores 46 on the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 194). In the workplace, cultures with higher uncertainty avoidance tend to look for long-term employees – high turnover means

uncertainty. Installments that take uncertainty avoidance into account, such as the implementation of rules, lead to a feeling of comfort and should be applied in the workplace according to the correct level of uncertainty avoidance. This means that in a country with high uncertainty avoidance, rules are a positive structural security and should be strengthened, while in a country with low uncertainty avoidance, they can be seen as too strict, controlling and unnecessary (Hofstede et al., 2010, 209). For Germans, job uncertainty has a negative impact on their job performance (Roll et al., 2015).

Although Hofstede's model is one of the most widely used frameworks for cross-cultural research, it has also been the subject of debate (McSweeney, 2002). McSweeney points out that Hofstede works in terms of "national culture," for example grouping England, Scotland and Wales as having the same national culture under Great Britain, instead of mentioning the differences between countries and even within countries or states (McSweeney, 2002, p. 92). McSweeney goes on to point out a further issue of Hofstede's study being that it was only conducted within IBM employees, and thus more representative of organizational culture than national culture. Hofstede also initially lumped IBM as one "IBM culture" instead of viewing the organization as having multiple different organizational cultures depending on where it is located (McSweeney, 2002, p. 95). Similarly, Hofstede lumps occupational cultures as one culture within all nations, failing to regard the different influences national cultures, work ethics and laws, along with different studies and educations completed to work in this field have on the person working this occupation, for example an accountant in Germany does not necessarily subscribe to the same occupational culture as an accountant in Singapore (McSweeney, 2002, p. 99).

In response to critiques of Hofstede's national culture model, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study provides a more recent, extensive, and empirical perspective on cross-cultural differences. Spanning over a decade, the study involved 17,000 managers from 951 organizations across 62 societies. It significantly expanded our understanding of culture by measuring practices and values across nine dimensions (House et al., 2004, pp. 3–6). These dimensions include Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism, In-group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Performance Orientation, and Humane Orientation. This framework provides more nuanced insights into cultural norms, particularly as they relate to leadership expectations and organizational behavior. For instance, GLOBE findings suggest that societies with high Uncertainty Avoidance, such as Germany and Scandinavian countries, tend to prefer formal

procedures, written contracts, and structured decision-making, contrasting with the more informal approaches found in Latin American and Eastern European countries (House et al., 2004, pp. 5–6). Importantly, the GLOBE study captures national-level cultural traits and identifies culturally endorsed leadership behaviors. The study shows that traits such as team orientation and visionary communication are widely valued across cultures. In contrast, autonomous or self-protective leadership styles are more culturally variable (House et al., 2004, pp. 5–6). For example, autonomous leadership, which is valued in some Germanic and Eastern European countries, was considered ineffective in Anglo and Latin American societies. While Hofstede’s model emphasized national averages based on a single corporate sample (IBM), GLOBE’s broader organizational scope, which considers both values and practices, provides a more detailed and dynamic view of cultural complexity. This is particularly useful for understanding leadership, collaboration, and workplace expectations in a globalized economy. GLOBE also reinforces the idea that although globalization increases intercultural contact, it does not eliminate cultural differences. Instead, it demands deeper cultural literacy and sensitivity (House et al., 2004, p. 4).

Importantly, in the GLOBE study, Germany was not considered a single culture. Instead, it was divided into two subcultures: Germany East (the former GDR) and Germany West (the former FRG). This reflects the fact that these regions developed under different political systems for over 40 years and still exhibit cultural differences today (House et al., 2004, p. 185). For this reason, Germany is often analyzed as two separate entities, which allows for a more accurate comparison with other countries. The study also shows that the concept of “leadership” is not viewed the same way in every culture. In the U.S., for example, leadership is generally viewed positively, whereas in parts of Europe, especially Germany, it is associated with more negative connotations. As Moscovici explains, the term “leader” in Germany can trigger memories of Hitler and the abuse of power, causing people to be cautious or critical of leadership (House et al., 2004, p. 55). In modern German workplaces, the word *Führer* is rarely used. Instead, terms such as *Führungskraft*, *Führungsperson*, or *Manager* are preferred. Interestingly, this strong association does not seem to exist in Austria, where *Führer* is a more neutral term (House et al., 2004, p. 146). According to the GLOBE framework, Germany is part of the “Germanic Europe” cluster, along with Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. These countries are grouped together mainly because of their shared cultural traits, despite their language similarities. This group is characterized by values such as order, directness, honesty, and loyalty. These cultural traits have remained relatively stable over time, even in East Germany during the communist

period, and they helped the two German regions reintegrate after reunification (House et al., 2004, p. 185). To enable meaningful cross-cultural comparisons, the GLOBE project grouped the 61 participating countries into ten distinct societal clusters based primarily on linguistic, religious, historical, and geographical similarities. Although no single clustering system can claim universal validity, the GLOBE classification aimed to reflect deep-rooted cultural patterns relevant to leadership and organizational behavior (House et al., 2004, p. 183). Within the European continent, GLOBE identified five regional clusters: Anglo Europe, Latin Europe, Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe, and Eastern Europe. Germany (East and West) was placed in the Germanic Europe cluster alongside Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. By contrast, the United States was categorized as part of the Anglo cluster, alongside other English-speaking societies, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and South Africa's white population. The formation of the Anglo cluster reflects centuries of shared historical development, including common ethnic-linguistic roots in Germanic migrations to Britain during the post-Roman era and the subsequent global diffusion of Anglo-Saxon culture through colonization and migration. These societies share similar cultural features, including language, institutional structures, and organizational norms (House et al., 2004, pp. 183–184). This classification is particularly relevant to this thesis because it situates the U.S. and Germany in different national contexts and distinct cultural clusters. This reinforces the expectation of systematic cultural variation in workplace values, such as leadership, hierarchy, and appreciation. The first dimension, Performance Orientation, refers to the extent to which a society encourages and rewards innovation, high standards, and performance improvement. Within the GLOBE framework, this dimension is measured on two axes: cultural practices (as is) and values (should be), at both the societal and organizational levels. The study also examined Performance Orientation as an endorsed leadership trait (House et al., 2004, pp. 246–251, 269). Empirical findings reveal that, although all three societies demonstrate a strong orientation toward performance values, they differ in the extent to which these values are enacted in practice. On the Performance Orientation practices scale, the U.S. scored 4.49, indicating a relatively high level of performance-based norms in everyday societal functioning. In contrast, Germany West scored 4.25 and Germany East scored even lower at 4.09. This suggests that, although there is an aspiration toward high performance, it may be less institutionalized, particularly in the former GDR. Interestingly, when asked about their ideal societal values regarding Performance Orientation, respondents from all three countries expressed similarly strong support: USA (6.14), Germany East (6.09), and Germany West (6.01). These scores (on a 7-point, reverse-coded scale) suggest that individuals in all three

contexts highly value striving for goals, achieving personal success, and continuously improving. This orientation is further reinforced in the leadership dimension, where all three cultures rated Performance Orientation as a highly desirable leadership trait. The scores were 6.33 for Germany East, 6.11 for Germany West, and 6.46 for the U.S. (House et al., 2004, p. 269). These scores suggest a broad consensus that effective leaders should set ambitious goals and motivate others through high performance standards, despite differences in societal implementation. Overall, these findings demonstrate a convergence in performance-related values, but a divergence in practices, which may be influenced by differing institutional legacies, such as the East German experience under socialism, and organizational structures. The distinction between “as is” and “should be” is important when assessing a culture’s potential for change and improvement within organizations operating across these contexts. Next, Future Orientation refers to the degree to which a society encourages and rewards behaviors such as delayed gratification, future planning, and investment in long-term success. According to House et al. (2004), this dimension is conceptually linked to uncertainty tolerance and strategic adaptability, making it highly relevant to organizational behavior and leadership style. Societies high in Future Orientation tend to be economically successful, value long-term planning, and foster intrinsic motivation. In contrast, societies scoring low show a greater emphasis on immediate rewards, rigid management practices, and a short-term focus (House et al., 2004, p. 302). The GLOBE study distinguishes between two aspects of Future Orientation: practices (as is) and values (should be). Practices refer to the extent to which long-term orientation is observable in everyday organizational and societal behavior. Values, on the other hand, represent the ideal or desired level of long-term strategic thinking (House et al., 2004, p. 301). Importantly, GLOBE’s measures are reverse scored, meaning higher numerical scores indicate less emphasis on long-term planning and future-oriented behavior. In terms of societal practices, the U.S. and West Germany score moderately at 4.15 and 4.27, respectively, while East Germany scores lower at 3.95, indicating slightly stronger future-oriented behavior in practice in the East German sample (House et al., 2004, p. 304). All three societies fall into the middle range, suggesting that, although planning for the future is present, it is not a dominant characteristic of everyday cultural or organizational behavior. However, the values data reveal a different picture. Here, all three societies express a strong desire to increase future-oriented behavior. The U.S. reports the highest ideal value (5.31), followed by East Germany (5.23) and West Germany (4.85) (House et al., 2004, p. 306). Given the reverse scoring, these high values suggest that participants in all three societies want their culture to be more future-focused, emphasizing strategic planning, foresight, and delayed gratification. Interestingly, these results

support prior literature linking Future Orientation to cultural values and economic performance. However, they also highlight important nuances. For example, although Hofstede's framework places Germany between France and the United Kingdom in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance, GLOBE criticizes Hofstede's measure for lacking face validity and for possibly conflating Uncertainty Avoidance with general stress levels (House et al., 2004, p. 290). GLOBE's more behaviorally grounded approach offers a more nuanced understanding of how long-term thinking is practiced and valued across societies. In summary, although Germany and the U.S. do not differ drastically in their current Future Orientation practices, the U.S. sample expresses the strongest aspiration to become more long-term and goal oriented. This aligns with broader U.S. cultural narratives of vision-driven leadership and individual goal setting and may reflect the entrepreneurial ethos shaping both workplace culture and leadership expectations. Another dimension, Future Orientation is a cultural value that is also reflected in leadership expectations. The GLOBE study's Charismatic I scale: Visionary" captures how strongly a society values leaders who are future-focused, imaginative, goal-driven, and capable of motivating others (House et al., 2004, p. 325). The U.S. scored highest on this dimension (6.28), surpassing West Germany (5.99) and East Germany (5.86). This indicates a stronger societal preference for visionary leadership. This aligns with the U.S.'s greater emphasis on long-term planning and transformational leadership, as seen in its high Future Orientation values score. While both German samples also value visionary leadership, their slightly lower scores suggest a more restrained or pragmatic leadership ideal, consistent with their moderately lower Future Orientation values scores. This cultural difference likely shapes how appreciation is expressed: in the U.S., through inspirational and forward-looking leadership, and in Germany, through structured, performance-based recognition. For the next dimension, the GLOBE study defines Gender Egalitarianism as the extent to which a society minimizes gender role differences and promotes equality. According to the data, societal practices reveal that gender inequality remains prevalent in all three regions studied: Germany West (3.10), Germany East (3.06), and the U.S. (3.34) on a seven-point scale, where higher values represent greater equality (House et al., 2004, p. 365). These scores suggest that men are still more likely to receive professional development opportunities than women. However, societal values point to a stronger desire for change. Germany East (4.90), Germany West (4.89), and the U.S. (5.06) all demonstrate moderate support for equal treatment (House et al., 2004, p. 366). Although the U.S. scores slightly higher, the difference is not substantial, indicating shared aspirations toward more egalitarian norms. Earlier studies also highlight the persistence of masculine-coded leadership stereotypes. Schein (2001) found that traits associated with effective managers, such as

assertiveness and self-confidence, were still predominantly viewed as male in countries like Germany and the U.S. However, Fagenson (1990) challenges the gendered labeling of these traits, suggesting they are more accurately tied to organizational power than to gender. These findings are important for employee appreciation practices because when leadership and competence are subtly gendered, the way appreciation is recognized and communicated may reinforce existing disparities despite societies increasingly valuing gender equity. In the GLOBE study, following Gender Egalitarianism is Assertiveness, which is conceptualized as the degree to which individuals in a society are (or should be) assertive, dominant, and confrontational in social relationships. This is distinct from Hofstede's broader masculinity index, which includes Assertiveness alongside unrelated traits, such as materialism and ambition (House et al., 2004, pp. 406–407). Unlike Hofstede's scale, GLOBE clearly distinguishes Assertiveness from Gender Egalitarianism and Performance Orientation, recognizing that these constructs may vary independently across cultures. Empirical results show similar levels of assertive behavior in practice across the U.S. and Germany. Germany East scored 4.73, Germany West scored 4.55, and the U.S. scored 4.55 on a seven-point scale. Lower values indicate higher Assertiveness (House et al., 2004, p. 410). These results suggest that all three regions moderately value assertive behavior in everyday interactions. However, the desired value of Assertiveness (should be) differs more substantially: Germany East and Germany West express a preference for higher Assertiveness with scores of 3.23 and 3.09, respectively, while the U.S. scores 4.32, indicating a stronger cultural desire for non-assertiveness or interpersonal tact (House et al., 2004, p. 411). This discrepancy implies that, although assertive behavior is practiced to a similar extent, American respondents are more ambivalent about whether such behavior is ideal or appropriate. These findings reflect deeper cultural attitudes toward communication and workplace interaction. For example, German culture, particularly in the east, may associate assertiveness with clarity and directness. In contrast, American respondents, despite acting assertively, may place greater value on diplomacy or politeness. This distinction is relevant in the context of employee appreciation because direct praise or feedback may be more normative in Germany than in the U.S., where more indirect or carefully worded forms of recognition are preferred. Regarding collectivism, the GLOBE study distinguishes between two types: Institutional Collectivism reflects societal structures and norms that support collective behavior. In-group Collectivism reflects personal pride, loyalty, and interdependence within close social units, such as family. Both dimensions were assessed using practices (as is) and values (should be) measures with reverse-scored items, where lower values indicate stronger collectivist tendencies (House et al., 2004, p. 463). In

terms of practices, the U.S. ($M = 4.20$) scores higher than Germany West ($M = 3.79$) and Germany East ($M = 3.56$). This suggests that Americans perceive their institutions as somewhat more collectivist in practice, contrary to common expectations based on Hofstede's strong individualism rating for the U.S. (House et al., 2004, p. 468). However, when looking at values, Germany shows a greater normative preference for collectivism. Germany West scored 4.82 and Germany East scored 4.68, compared to the U.S. at 4.17 (House et al., 2004, p. 470). These results suggest that, although the U.S. exhibits more collectivist institutional practices, Germans more strongly aspire to collective societal ideals. Results for In-group Collectivism practices are more balanced: Germany East (4.52) and the U.S. (4.25) reported similar levels, while Germany West reported a slightly lower score of 4.02 (House et al., 2004, p. 469). These moderate scores suggest that neither country has particularly strong, family-centered, collectivist norms. However, the U.S. scores highest in values at 5.77, followed by Germany East (5.22) and Germany West (5.18) (House et al., 2004, p. 471). This finding challenges the assumption that the U.S. is purely individualistic, revealing that Americans place a high value on strong family ties and loyalty, even if this is not consistently expressed in institutional norms. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the U.S. and Germany exhibit different collectivist tendencies depending on the context. Americans may value close family bonds (In-group Collectivism), whereas Germans emphasize broader societal cohesion (Institutional Collectivism), though they practice it to a lesser extent. These nuances are especially relevant in the context of employee appreciation, as preferences for recognition may be shaped by whether loyalty and social cohesion are directed toward either the team or personal relationships (i.e., family-like loyalty versus institutional norms). Consistent with Hofstede's original definition, the GLOBE study defines Power Distance as the degree to which members of a society accept and anticipate unequal distributions of power. GLOBE distinguishes between societal practices (as is) and societal values (should be) to capture both perceived reality and normative expectations (House et al., 2004, pp. 537–538). Regarding actual power dynamics, East Germany (5.54) and West Germany (5.25) score notably higher than the U.S. (4.88) on a seven-point scale. Lower numbers indicate stronger endorsement of hierarchical control (due to reverse scoring). These results suggest that East and West Germans perceive a higher degree of deference to authority and concentration of power in practice than Americans do (House et al., 2004, p. 539). The persistence of traditional authority structures in East Germany may contribute to this elevated score. In contrast, the values scores show a widespread rejection of high Power Distance across all three regions. Germany West (2.54) and Germany East (2.69) report slightly lower values than the U.S. (2.85). This indicates a stronger normative preference

for egalitarian power distribution and questioning of authority despite the higher hierarchical practices reported in Germany (House et al., 2004, p. 540). These low values suggest a general cultural aspiration toward flat hierarchies and shared influence. In summary, the data reveal a significant discrepancy between practices and values, particularly in Germany, where hierarchical practices endure despite a widespread preference for equality. This has important implications for internal communication and employee recognition. While American workplaces may more readily foster informal, peer-level appreciation, German organizations may experience tension between formal structures and egalitarian values, which could affect how appreciation is expressed and received. Furthermore, the GLOBE study defines Humane Orientation to the extent to which a society encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others. This cultural dimension was measured at the societal and organizational levels with separate scales for actual practices (as is) and normative values (should be) (House et al., 2004, pp. 571–574). Societal practices reflect how people in society behave, while values indicate how people believe they should behave. For instance, participants rated the extent to which individuals in their society are (or should be) concerned about and sensitive toward others. Empirical results show that the U.S. scores notably higher than Germany on Humane Orientation practices (U.S.: 4.17; Germany East: 3.40; Germany West: 3.18). This suggests that Americans perceive their society as being more caring and supportive in daily life. However, value scores are similar across all three societies (U.S.: 5.53; East Germany: 5.44; West Germany: 5.46), indicating a shared belief that individuals should be humane and concerned for others, even if behaviors differ.

These results are consistent with broader welfare state models. Germany and Austria follow a conservative model, in which social rights are linked to status and occupation. In contrast, the U.S. follows a liberal model with more limited, means-tested benefits (House et al., 2004, p. 567). These structural differences may partially explain the lower perceived levels of humane practices in German society, despite similar normative ideals. In the GLOBE framework, Uncertainty Avoidance reflects the extent to which members of a society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on social norms, rules, and formal procedures (House et al., 2004, pp. 619–623). This dimension is also measured through both societal practices (as is) and societal values (should be). Empirical results indicate that both East and West Germany score notably higher than the U.S. on Uncertainty Avoidance practices (Germany West: 5.22, Germany East: 5.16, and the U.S.: 4.15). These results suggest that Germans have a stronger preference for detailed rules, order, and consistency in everyday life, often at the expense of experimentation

or flexibility. In terms of normative values, West Germany scores lower (3.32) than East Germany (3.94) and the U.S. (4.00). This suggests that West Germans are less likely to support rigid structures and rules in theory, even though their societal practices are highly structured. In contrast, U.S. respondents express a higher preference for Uncertainty Avoidance in theory, though their practices reflect greater tolerance for ambiguity and flexibility. These findings align with broader institutional contexts. German systems often emphasize thorough planning and regulation (e.g., vocational training tracks and legal formalism), while U.S. systems tend to favor adaptability and decentralized decision-making.

Beyond quantitatively comparing individual GLOBE dimensions, it is important to recognize that cultural values are deeply embedded in broader societal systems and influence organizational practices in nuanced ways. Empirical findings suggest that industry-specific work practices often reflect national cultural logics. For example, German manufacturing firms tend to be shaped by sociotechnical principles that emphasize team autonomy and vocational expertise. In contrast, U.S. firms often operate according to scientific management principles, which are characterized by standardization and task specialization (House et al., 2004, p. 657). Furthermore, the GLOBE project's CLT (Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theory) profiles offer insight into shared leadership ideals across cultural clusters. In the Germanic Europe cluster, which includes Germany, participative and charismatic/value-based leadership are highly valued, and self-protective behaviors are perceived negatively (House et al., 2004, p. 694). Similarly, the Anglo cluster, including the U.S., strongly endorses charismatic leadership, accompanied by participative and human-oriented leadership ideals. However, the Anglo cluster places comparatively less emphasis on team orientation, possibly due to its stronger individualistic orientation (House et al., 2004, pp. 690–692). These culturally embedded leadership ideals demonstrate how societal culture shapes concrete expectations for workplace behavior, leadership communication, and recognition practices, as well as abstract values. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the interaction between national culture, industry norms, and leadership expectations for any cross-cultural analysis of workplace appreciation and internal communication. Taken together, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project is one of the most comprehensive cross-cultural research endeavors to date. It offers valuable insights into how cultural values and practices shape leadership expectations, workplace norms, and organizational effectiveness across societies. Contributions from over 170 scholars and more than 17,000 managerial respondents from 62 countries established a theoretically rigorous and psychometrically robust framework

for measuring cultural dimensions at the societal and organizational levels (House et al., 2004, pp. 723–726). Dual measurement of cultural practices (as is) and values (should be) provides a more nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics and potential for change. Furthermore, the project’s methodological innovations, such as controlling for response bias and distinguishing subcultures, underscore the validity of using middle managers as reliable cultural informants. GLOBE confirms and challenges existing cultural models, expanding the field of cross-cultural management and laying the groundwork for future investigations into how cultural context informs organizational communication and appreciation practices.

For the purposes of this study, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, as well as the GLOBE study provide a useful basis for examining differences in employee recognition between Germany and the U.S. Considering all these factors, it is possible to draw connections and differences between the American and German cultures, but there is no previous research on how they differ in terms of employee appreciation.

2.4 Legal Frameworks and Differences between the U.S. and Germany

In addition to cultural factors, legal frameworks play a central role in shaping workplace dynamics and expectations. Labor laws influence how secure employees feel in their positions, how flexible employers can be and how work relationships evolve. The differences in these structures are particularly evident when comparing the German and U.S. systems, which follow very different employment models.

In Germany, a key element in their labor law is internal monitoring, through the so called “Betriebsrat,” the internal workers council, which is elected by the employees (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, 1972). Labor inspection in Germany is not carried out by the Federal State but by the 16 individual states of the Federal Republic of Germany. These inspections are executed by the state ministries of social affairs through regional and district offices. These labor inspections focus on health and safety, covering workplace regulations, working hour limits, maternity and youth employment protection and even aspects of environmental protection in some states. These labor inspectors can enter workplaces, demand documents, inspect substances, and issue binding notices, as well as shut down parts of an establishment and ban materials in extreme cases (Weiss, 2006, p. 276). It is important to note that the previously mentioned works councils play a significant role in co-operating with the labor inspectors to ensure the workers’ safety and fairness of the inspection. The works council can share internal information and must approve certain decisions, such as

safety exceptions. This is crucial for making the inspections effective. Furthermore, a hearing of the works council is required in case of the dismissal of an employee, the works council has the power to object the dismissal. The works council has the ability to collaborate with the employer to ensure fairness in cases of dismissal and, in certain circumstances, to negotiate a social compensation plan. This idea was introduced in 1972 with the Works Council Constitution Act (Eger, 2003, p. 388; Weiss, 2006, p. 276). Another obligation according to the Works Council Constitution Act is that the works council and employer should discuss issues and disagreements in a meeting at least once a month, ensuring the parties work together instead of against each other for everyone's benefit (Falta & Dueblin, 2017, p. 219). It is crucial to highlight that these works councils and the benefits they bring for the employees are only mandatory in larger companies, leaving small or medium sized companies with no works council thus resulting in poor enforcement of health and safety measurements. Of course, just the existence of a works council does not ensure this to be satisfactorily fulfilled either, since in some cases the works council will try to avoid working with the employers or labor inspectors in order to avoid paying the high price adequate safety measures can bring for the company, and the works council would rather save that money to protect the employees' jobs. To counter this issue, insurance institutions started offering training programs for employers of companies with no works council, to promote self-managed risk prevention. However, it is still unclear whether this approach will improve real enforcement (Weiss, 2006, p. 276). Another interesting fact to be considered is that self-employment by one-person companies has increased in Germany, so much making it a mass phenomenon. Along with this follows higher rates of false self-employment and undeclared employment, which make it hard to monitor how many people are working while avoiding taxes and social security contributions, creating notable issues for the German labor market (Weiss, 2006, p. 280).

In order to better understand the impact of legal frameworks on the experience of employees, it is also necessary to examine the employment context in the U.S., where workplace regulation and enforcement differ significantly. By contrast, the U.S. takes a fundamentally different approach to labor regulation and employment relationships than Germany's internally monitored system with strong employee representation. The U.S. labor market works with the common law doctrine of "employment at-will," meaning employers can dismiss employees at any time and for any reason, given it is legal. Hence the U.S. has lower legal job security in comparison to Germany. Neither does the U.S. have any internal employee representation structures comparable to the works councils in Germany. Instead, the labor rights enforcement

in the U.S. is solely external, such as anti-discrimination laws which prohibit discrimination of employees for their sex, race, national origin, or religion (Eger, 2003, p. 395). The closest equivalent U.S. employees have to Germany's works councils are labor unions. A labor union is an organization of workers formed to protect and promote the interests of its members by collectively bargaining with their employer. While both structures aim to represent employee interests, they differ significantly in their legal basis, function, and scope of influence. A labor union is formed voluntarily by interested parties. In 2024, 11.1% of workers in the U.S. were represented by a union. This figure includes both union members and non-members who are covered by union contracts. The number for public-sector workers in unions in 2024 was 32.2%, thus being more than five times higher than that of the union members of private-sector workers which was 5.9% (BLS, 2025). Despite rising public support for unions, union membership in the U.S. has declined significantly over the past two decades. This decline is partly attributed to increasing anti-union measures, such as the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* (2018), which prohibits public-sector unions from collecting agency fees from non-union members (Milkman & van der Naald, 2023, p. 6). While employees at major companies such as Amazon, Starbucks, and Apple have voted in favor of unionization, they have often struggled to reach collective bargaining agreements with their employers. At the same time, there has been a notable rise in unionization efforts among academic workers, particularly in the education and healthcare sectors (Milkman & van der Naald, 2023). In summary, U.S. labor unions primarily focus on collective bargaining and negotiating wages and working conditions externally, acting as intermediaries between employees and employers. In contrast, German works councils are internal and legally mandated bodies with rights of co-determination and consultation, giving them a structurally integrated role in company decision-making. While German employee representation is built into the legal framework, especially in companies above a certain size, union representation in the U.S. is voluntary, less widespread, and often more adversarial in nature. Additionally, the U.S. labor market is characterized by high turnover and short tenures, with companies frequently relying on hiring and firing instead of long-term staff retention or internal training. German companies, by contrast, are more likely to invest in long-term employment relationships, emphasizing vocational training, firm-specific skills, and workforce stability. A comparison of U.S. and German labor laws reveals further significant discrepancies, particularly with regard to family policies, parental leave, and medical leave. In Germany, family leave policies are characterized by their comprehensive scope, extended duration, and substantial compensation, which surpass those observed in the United States. The U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) mandates that employers with a workforce of

more than 50 employees provide eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave. However, only approximately 45% of mothers qualify for FMLA coverage, and the fact that the leave is unpaid makes it financially inaccessible for many workers (Grunow & Aisenbrey, 2015, p. 6). In contrast, German labor law provides paid parental leave, available to both mothers and fathers, with job protection for up to three years per child. A substantial proportion of families, exceeding 90%, are eligible for this benefit, and the state facilitates income replacement through the “Elterngeld” system (Wrohlich et al., 2012, p. 5). Moreover, German legislation facilitates part-time parental leave and confers a legal entitlement to public childcare services. These provisions are indicative of a more extensive legal and cultural commitment to work–family balance and long-term employment stability. Concurrently, the absence of paid federal parental leave in the U.S. has been demonstrated to increase economic insecurity and discourage many employees from taking time off for caregiving. Consequently, U.S. employees must rely on employer-specific benefits or state-level programs. To summarize, in Germany, employers are legally required to accommodate parental leave and reintegration. In the U.S., however, leave offerings largely depend on employer discretion or state-level legislation. These structural differences result in higher long-term workforce retention among parents in Germany. In contrast, many caregivers, particularly mothers, leave the labor force in the U.S. due to a lack of adequate support (Grunow & Aisenbrey, 2015, p. 7). In summary, the legal frameworks in Germany and the U.S. reflect not only broader differences in labor market structures but also help explain how and why appreciation is practiced and perceived differently in the workplace. Germany’s strong employee protections, co-determination rights through works councils, and generous family leave policies foster an environment in which appreciation is grounded in long-term stability, mutual respect, and institutional support. In contrast, the U.S. labor system is characterized by higher turnover, weaker internal representation, and fewer legal entitlements, often resulting in more individualized, performance-based appreciation practices. Understanding these legal foundations is essential for interpreting how employees in each country experience recognition, whether it is consistently embedded in workplace culture or delivered irregularly at the discretion of managers.

Germany’s legal framework incorporates appreciation into collective labor agreements and institutional practices. In contrast, the U.S. employs employer-driven programs to recognize employees, which must navigate a complex legal landscape. Implementing effective and compliant recognition initiatives in the U.S. requires careful consideration of various federal and state laws. The following section explores the key legal guidelines that shape employee

recognition practices in the U.S. and Germany and highlights the importance of aligning appreciation efforts with legal requirements. With the rise of employee appreciation, there has been legal advice published for employee recognition programs in the U.S. While there has not been any directly published for Germany, appreciation guidelines need to be in accordance with German labor laws such as the General Act on Equal Treatment (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz – AGG) and Works Constitution Act (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz – BetrVG).

To ensure compliance with federal and state laws in the U.S., it is important that employee appreciation follows guidelines and laws such as Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance (EEO), Fair Labor Standards Act Compliance (FLSA) and Compliance with Applicable State Law, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as well as protecting privacy and data of the employees. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws are designed to prevent discrimination in the workplace. Employers with federal contracts must comply with these laws, and their compliance is monitored and enforced by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), a division of the U.S. Department of Labor. Additionally, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is an independent federal agency that promotes equal employment opportunities by enforcing civil rights laws and providing education and technical assistance (U.S. Department of Labor, 2025). The EEOC enforces federal anti-discrimination laws that protect job applicants and employees from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions), transgender status, sexual orientation, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and genetic information. These protections apply to most employers with at least 15 employees (or 20 employees in age discrimination cases), as well as most labor unions and employment agencies. The laws cover all aspects of employment, including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages, and benefits (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2025; U.S. Department of Labor, 2025). In terms of employee appreciation, this means that recognition practices must be inclusive and accessible for all demographic groups, ensuring that no group is disadvantaged or excluded. For example, a company is not supposed to offer an appreciation program that unintentionally favors one gender, age group, or cultural background over others. For example, recognition events should not be scheduled during religious holidays observed by minority employees, or have awards rely on subjective manager nominations that disproportionately benefit one demographic group, as these practices could be considered discriminatory under EEO law (Bhatt, 2024). Similarly, offering performance bonuses or awards only to full-time employees while excluding part-time workers with disabilities can raise

concerns under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2025). In addition to avoiding discrimination, employers must also ensure that their recognition programs do not unintentionally discourage employees from reporting workplace incidents. Recognition programs focusing on workplace safety must comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. Incentives based on low injury or incident rates may discourage employees from reporting accidents and could be perceived as retaliatory. OSHA recommends structuring safety-related recognition programs around positive behaviors, such as using protective equipment or attending safety training, rather than outcome-based metrics (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2018). Although OSHA does not prohibit safety incentive programs, it emphasizes that they must not discourage employees from reporting workplace injuries or illnesses. According to OSHA, programs that deny bonuses or recognition to employees who report accidents may be deemed retaliatory and thus violate federal safety reporting requirements. For example, withholding a reward solely because an employee submitted an injury report could constitute an adverse action. Conversely, programs that incentivize specific safety behaviors, such as wearing required protective gear or following established safety protocols, are generally considered compliant. However, the distinction between acceptable and problematic programs is not always clear. OSHA's final rule on recordkeeping and reporting has faced legal scrutiny and uncertainty regarding enforcement (Delta, 2017, p. 4; OSHA, 2018). In addition to safety and reporting considerations, employers must account for legal requirements related to compensation when designing appreciation programs. According to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), certain forms of recognition, such as gift cards, merchandise, bonuses, or performance-based prizes, may legally qualify as compensable income. Organizations risk violating federal wage and hour laws if such awards are not properly accounted for when calculating overtime pay (U.S. Department of Labor, 2025). As mentioned earlier, a company's appreciation practices must comply with federal, state, and local laws, particularly those related to labor, taxes, and employment discrimination. To avoid legal risk, these practices must be clearly defined, consistently applied, and well documented (Delta, 2017, p. 3). Employers are typically obligated to compensate non-exempt employees for time spent participating in work-related recognition activities outside their standard working hours. Additionally, when recognition programs offer financial incentives, such as bonuses or cash-equivalent rewards, these should be included in an employee's earnings when calculating overtime pay under federal labor regulations (Bhatt, 2024). If an appreciation award, such as cash, a gift card, or a prize, is linked to job performance, its value must be included in the employee's regular rate of pay when calculating overtime. Not doing this can

result in FLSA violations and legal liability (Delta, 2017, p. 4). In terms of tax write-offs, only certain awards, specifically those given for length of service or safety achievements, can be excluded from taxable income, provided they consist of tangible personal property, for example a trophy or a plaque, are part of a qualified written plan, and do not exceed \$400 per employee annually (or \$1,600 under stricter plan conditions). In contrast, cash, gift cards, travel, and event tickets are generally considered taxable income, unless they qualify for specific IRS exceptions (Delta, 2017, p. 2). Employers must ensure that their programs comply with the laws of each state in which they operate. This includes taking privacy and data protection rules into account. Employee appreciation programs often require the use of personal information, such as data on employee performance or attendance. Employers must transparently explain how this data will be used within the recognition framework and obtain employee consent prior to use, where applicable. Additionally, companies should establish robust data protection protocols to safeguard the confidentiality and integrity of employee information and prevent unauthorized access or misuse (Bhatt, 2024). Employee data and privacy protection within federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Labor, are governed by the Code of Fair Information Practice established under the Privacy Act of 1974. To comply with the Privacy Act of 1974, the U.S. Department of Labor established its Privacy Program. The Privacy Act of 1974 created the “Code of Fair Information Practice,” which regulates how federal agencies collect, maintain, and share personal information. The program complies with guidelines such as OMB Circulars A-130 and A-108, the E-Government Act of 2002, and other federal privacy policies. The program’s primary objective is to safeguard individuals’ privacy while supporting the department’s operational requirements (U.S. Department of Labor, 2025). Finally, in addition to their legal obligations regarding non-discrimination, safety, and compensation, employers must protect their employees from retaliation when they engage with or speak out about recognition programs. Employees participating in these programs or raising concerns about fairness, inclusion, or potential compliance violations should be able to do so without fear of retaliation. Clear anti-retaliation policies and safe reporting mechanisms are essential for maintaining trust and ensuring legal compliance (Bhatt, 2024). In summary, employee recognition practices in the U.S. must align with a multifaceted legal framework. This framework includes protections against discrimination and retaliation; compliance with wage and hour laws; data privacy standards; and clear safety reporting protocols. These regulations aim to ensure that appreciation programs are inclusive, equitable, and legally sound.

However, in the German context, a different set of labor protections and cultural expectations shape how appreciation is structured in the workplace, particularly through mechanisms such as co-determination rights, data protection and collective labor representation, which must be considered when executing appreciation practices. Germany has its own set of labor laws which can be applied to correctly and legally implementing appreciation practices. First off, there is the “Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (AGG),” meaning General Act on Equal Treatment which serves for non-discrimination purposes. According to §1 of the Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (AGG), this act aims to prevent or eliminate discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual identity. This legislation ensures that all employees are treated equally with respect to working conditions, including access to rewards and recognition. Accordingly, appreciation programs must be designed and implemented in a manner that neither privileges nor excludes employees based on these protected characteristics. Failure to comply with the AGG may result in legal consequences for employers, including compensation claims. Therefore, organizations must critically evaluate whether their appreciation initiatives such as employee-of-the-month awards, performance bonuses, or public acknowledgments systematically favor certain groups or overlook others. Transparent and inclusive criteria are essential to ensure that recognition is equitable and legally compliant. According to §13 Beschwerderecht of the Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (AGG), employees have the right to file a discrimination complaint with the appropriate office within their workplace if they believe they have experienced discrimination by their employer, supervisors, colleagues, or third parties based on any of the grounds listed in Section 1. The complaint must be investigated, and the employee who submitted it must be informed of the outcome (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, 2006). The General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG) in Germany and the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation in the U.S. serve similar functions. Both legal frameworks are designed to prohibit workplace discrimination based on protected personal characteristics. Although the AGG guarantees that recognition practices in Germany are free from discrimination, it is not the only law that governs their implementation. An important difference between the German and U.S. labor systems is the role of employee participation. The German Works Constitution Act “Betriebsverfassungsgesetz” (BetrVG) establishes the legal foundation for co-determination, meaning the employees and management work together, granting works councils (Betriebsräte) the right to participate in decisions affecting the workforce (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, 1972). This includes designing and implementing employee appreciation programs. According to §87(1) BetrVG, these programs may fall under several

areas of mandatory co-determination. Notably, No. 10 addresses questions of company wage structuring “betriebliche Lohngestaltung,” including the introduction and modification of bonus systems and other financial incentives. If appreciation involves performance-based pay, such as rewards for achieving targets or exceeding expectations, §87(1), No. 11 which governs “performance-related compensation” becomes relevant. Furthermore, §87(1) No. 12, which covers employee suggestion systems “betriebliches Vorschlagswesen,” may apply when appreciation is tied to innovation or process improvement. When recognition takes the form of company-sponsored events, internal platforms, or symbolic awards, §87(1) No. 8, which governs the design and management of social facilities, may also apply. These legal requirements ensure that works councils must be included and give approval before employers can implement or revise appreciation programs, this embeds employee representation directly into the development of workplace recognition strategies (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, 1972). In contrast, the U.S. does not have these internal works councils, so such oversight mechanisms are largely absent unless introduced voluntarily or negotiated through a labor union. Given this, the U.S. employees have lower involvement in the internal working of their workplace and thus lower influence on the appreciation practices. Another important German labor law is the Transparency in Wage Structures Act, or the Entgelttransparenzgesetz (EntgTranspG). The law aims to reduce gender-based pay inequality by promoting transparency in how salaries and bonuses are determined, thereby encouraging equal pay for equal work. According to §§10–12 of the EntgTranspG, employees in companies with over 200 employees can request information on how their pay compares to that of colleagues of the opposite sex in comparable roles. This includes base pay and bonuses, and it applies to private sector companies with over 200 employees for individual claims. Larger organizations with over 500 employees must also conduct internal reviews of pay structures (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, 2017). This is relevant for appreciation practices because, if they involve financial bonuses, rewards, or salary-based recognition, they must be transparent and equal for each gender. This means that employers must ensure that appreciation criteria are objective and gender neutral. There is no federal law in the U.S. equivalent to the EntgTranspG. However, similar to the U.S., Germany also has laws regarding privacy and data protection for the employees. Germany companies must act in accordance with the Federal Data Protection Act “Bundesdatenschutzgesetz” (BDSG) specifically for Germany (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2017). However, Germany also falls under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Parliament (European Union, 2016). While both laws deal with data protection, GDPR is the umbrella law, an EU-wide regulation which

applies to all EU countries. The GDPR established uniform data protection laws across the EU. It has a broad focus and covers all sectors, both public and private. It also requires a lawful basis for processing data, such as a contract. It also points out the importance of data protection in an ever-changing world of technology and globalization (European Union, 2016). Meanwhile, the Federal Data Protection Act “Bundesdatenschutzgesetz” (BDSG) focuses on the Republic of Germany for the protection of data and privacy of the German people. This paragraph states that processing data for employment purposes is permitted without consent in cases where it is necessary to establish, manage, or terminate an employment relationship, or to fulfill rights or duties under laws, collective agreements, or company agreements. In extreme cases, data may be used to detect criminal offenses if there is documented suspicion and if processing the data is necessary and the employee’s interest in protecting their data does not outweigh the purpose. Otherwise, data processing must involve the employee’s written or electronic consent and be truly voluntary. Special categories of employee data, such as demographic, health, religious, or ethnic information, may only be processed if required by labor or social law, and if there is no overriding interest in excluding processing. Employers must ensure compliance with the principles of lawfulness, transparency, data minimization, and accuracy (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2017). This is particularly relevant for employee appreciation programs involving performance evaluations, attendance tracking, or peer feedback because these programs often require the processing of personal data. Employers must ensure that such data is used transparently and only to the extent necessary for implementing recognition systems. Employees’ explicit consent may be required if appreciation measures involve special categories of personal data or go beyond standard employment processes. Thus, §26 BDSG establishes a legal framework that balances recognition initiatives with robust data protection, ensuring that appreciation practices respect employee rights and privacy.

In summary, although both Germany and the U.S. legally support the fair and respectful treatment of employees, their approaches to regulating appreciation practices differ. U.S. laws such as the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines, and the Code of Fair Information Practice establish important legal parameters regarding recognition, emphasizing non-discrimination, safe participation, wage compliance, and privacy within federal structures. By contrast, German regulation is more centralized and codified. It provides comprehensive employee protection through the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG), the Works Constitution Act (BetrVG), the Transparency in Wage Structures Act (EntgTranspG), and the

Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG). Both systems emphasize anti-discrimination and employee data privacy. However, Germany additionally mandates co-determination through works councils and gender pay transparency. This approach embeds employee appreciation more directly into labor law. This shows how legal systems can actively shape the ways organizations design and implement appreciation practices, not just enforce fairness.

As mentioned earlier, employee appreciation is incredibly important for organizations (Einwiller et al., 2021; Ruppel et al., 2022,). Not only for employees, but also for supervisors (Stocker et al., 2019). Employee appreciation needs to be implemented to achieve job satisfaction (Pfister et al., 2020). However, there is little research on how this differs across cultures. In terms of the cultural dimensions, it is clear that Germany and the U.S. perceive behaviors and actions differently from each other and therefore culture needs to be considered when executing employee appreciation (Hofstede et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 2014). Especially in the age of globalization and cross-cultural work, it is important to treat employees and colleagues according to their culture.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Questions and Hypothesis

The research questions and hypotheses of the present study were developed based on theoretical frameworks, prior empirical findings, and identified gaps in the literature. Employee appreciation has been recognized as a critical motivator of engagement and well-being (Brun & Dugas, 2008; Stocker et al., 2014); however, its definition and measurement vary across contexts. Cross-cultural perspectives on appreciation, how it is defined, experienced, and enacted have not been sufficiently examined (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021). This study addresses this gap by systematically comparing how employees in Germany and the U.S. perceive appreciation. Appreciation is closely tied to broader theories of motivation and organizational behavior. For instance, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) highlights the significance of relatedness, whereas Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 2001) proposes that employees interpret appreciation as a sign of being valued, thereby influencing their attitudes and commitment. Furthermore, Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Wegge et al., 2006) proposes that workplace recognition serves as an emotional event with long-term effects on satisfaction and performance. However, these theories have rarely been tested in intercultural frameworks, particularly regarding which appreciation factors matter most and how cultural influences shape these preferences. The literature has also highlighted the evolving role of socio-emotional recognition in today's workplaces. Beyond traditional performance-based rewards, employees increasingly seek appreciation for their interpersonal contributions, personality traits, and values, such as collaboration and loyalty (Einwiller & Boenigk, 2022; Stocker et al., 2014). However, it remains unclear whether these preferences are universally held or vary across national and cultural lines. This gap motivated the formulation of the first research question:

RQ1: What factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. consider most important for receiving appreciation?

The aim is to capture employees' expectations and preferences regarding recognition. This builds on studies that have begun to differentiate types of appreciation (Brun & Dugas, 2008; Stocker et al., 2014) while exploring cultural differences in these expectations (Hofstede et al., 2010; House et al., 2004). Understanding what employees value is only part of the equation. It is equally crucial to examine what employees truly experience. Previous studies have demonstrated that discrepancies between expected and received appreciation can result in decreased

motivation and job satisfaction (Stocker et al., 2022). However, the manifestation of such discrepancies across cultures remains largely unknown. This leads to the following research question:

RQ2: What factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. receive appreciation for?

RQ3: In which areas do expectations and experiences differ between Germany and the U.S.?

These questions address the expectation-reality gap in appreciation, an area that has been identified as under-explored in psychological and intercultural management literature (Wegge et al., 2006; Meyer, 2014). The questions also build on the notion that culture influences not only what is appreciated but also whether appreciation is perceived as sufficient or authentic. Previous research has tended to treat appreciation as a uniform construct without considering different sources of recognition, especially supervisors versus colleagues. Organizational Support Theory suggests that appreciation from supervisors is more strongly tied to perceptions of organizational care. However, recent work in team dynamics and peer recognition indicates that colleague appreciation significantly influences morale as well (Einwiller & Boenigk, 2022; Detert & Burris, 2007). This insight gives rise to RQ4:

RQ4: How does employee appreciation in Germany and the U.S. differ depending on the source of appreciation?

Finally, although theoretical models predict that appreciation enhances job satisfaction and organizational identification, few studies have tested these assumptions cross-culturally. Due to the differences in organizational culture, communication style, and workplace norms between the U.S. and Germany (Hofstede et al., 2010; House et al., 2004), it is possible that the role of appreciation may vary depending on the cultural context. This leads to the fifth research question:

RQ5: How does the relationship between appreciation, job satisfaction, and organizational identification differ between Germany and the U.S.?

Additionally, this study proposes an overarching hypothesis derived from existing theoretical and empirical literature:

H1: Higher levels of appreciation are positively associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational identification.

This hypothesis is based on Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which links interpersonal recognition to intrinsic motivation, and Organizational Support Theory. The latter suggests that perceived appreciation strengthens employees' emotional connection to the organization. While prior empirical findings (e.g., Stocker et al., 2014; Brun & Dugas, 2008) have supported this relationship in single-country contexts, comparative cross-cultural validation remains scarce. In sum, the study's research questions, and hypothesis are informed by foundational psychological theories and current debates in cross-cultural organizational research. By combining these frameworks with novel, comparative insights, the study aims to advance our understanding of appreciation as a relational, motivational, and culturally embedded construct.

3.2 Materials and Survey

The purpose of this study is to examine the cultural differences between Germany and the U.S. with respect to employee recognition practices. Two sets of quantitative data, one from each country, will be compared. The German data were collected in a previous study by Ruppel et al., 2024. The German data was collected via an online survey conducted by the panel provider GapFish among 486 German employees in December 2023. The items for this survey were developed based on previous studies (Jacobshagen et al., 2008; Rafferty and Griffin, 2004; Sirgy et al., 2001; Weiss & Zacher, 2022; White & Bragg, 2012). For the U.S. data, an English counterpart of the German survey was created and distributed to 500 U.S. employees in January 2025 via the panel provider Prolific. The use of GapFish and Prolific ensures a diverse sample of employees from both countries, allowing for meaningful cross-cultural comparisons.

In both cases, the survey included questions about the types of recognition expected and received in the workplace, as well as questions about the recognition received from supervisors or coworkers, job satisfaction, and demographic questions. The data sets from the different countries will then be compared using IBM SPSS (version 27) by comparing means with repeated measure multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was chosen because it allows for the simultaneous analysis of multiple dependent variables and tests whether the means differ significantly between groups. This study aims to examine cultural differences between Germany and the U.S. regarding various aspects of employee appreciation. Since there are multiple dependent variables (e.g., perceptions of appreciation from managers and peers), MANOVA is more appropriate than a simple ANOVA because it accounts for interactions between dependent variables and reduces the risk of

misinterpretation. The results of the surveys from Germany and the U.S. will be compared to answer the research questions. First, the survey begins with general questions such as agreement to rights and whether the participant is employed or not. Participants who were not currently employed or who worked for a smaller company with fewer than 50 employees were excluded. The requirement for companies with more than 50 employees was applied in both surveys because organizations of this size or larger are more likely to have established internal communication structures (Einwiller and Boenigk, 2012). Next, the survey measured how important it was for participants to receive recognition for various things. The survey asked participants how important it was for them to receive recognition for the following things at work. Participants were then asked to indicate, on a scale from “not important” to “very important,” how important it is to receive recognition for each of the following categories: professional expertise, work experience, honesty, punctuality, reliability, personality, social skills, flexibility, good mood, willingness to listen, individual achievement. Participants were also given the opportunity to add their own suggestions. The results will be analyzed between the countries to answer RQ1:

RQ1: What factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. consider most important for receiving appreciation?

Next, participants were asked to indicate how much appreciation they really receive for the same categories as before. This makes it possible to compare the importance of appreciation with the importance of receiving appreciation, and to determine where employees are satisfied and have their needs met, as well as where more appreciation should be given. A comparison of the results from the German and U.S. data sets will be used to answer RQ2 and RQ3:

RQ2: For what factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. actually receive appreciation?

RQ3: In which factors do expectations and experiences differ in Germany and the U.S.?

After that, respondents were asked to answer questions about whether they receive recognition from their manager. This consisted of the following questions I feel that my supervisor values me. My supervisor praises me when I do a good job. My manager highlights when I have done a good job. My manager shows me visible appreciation.

The same questions were then asked with the word “supervisor” substituted for “colleague. Comparing the results of receiving appreciation from supervisors vs. colleagues and comparing both countries will be used to answer RQ4:

RQ4: How does employee appreciation in Germany and the U.S. differ depending on the source of appreciation?

The survey also asked participants about their job satisfaction, with questions asking participants to indicate how much they enjoy their work, whether they enjoy it, are excited about it, and are satisfied with it. Related to this, the previous question about how much appreciation employees receive will be used to answer RQ5 and test H1:

RQ5: How does the relation between appreciation, job satisfaction, organizational identification differ in Germany and the U.S.?

H1: More appreciation leads to more job satisfaction and more organizational identification.

Finally, the survey includes questions on participants’ socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, highest level of education, net annual income, working hours, and the type of organization and industry in which they work. This is intended to provide a better and clearer understanding of possible reasons for differences in the results. This additional data will help contextualize the findings and ensure a more nuanced interpretation of the results. By identifying specific differences in employee appreciation based on socio-demographic factors, the study can provide targeted recommendations for improving appreciation practices across different sectors along with the culture contexts.

The items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not important at all/never received) to 7 (very important/very frequently received). Social psychologist Rensis Likert first introduced the scale in 1932 as a psychometric tool for quantitatively measuring attitudes, opinions, and perceptions (Likert, 1932). Participants rate their level of agreement or evaluation on a scale, typically ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” In this study, it was used to allow for more nuanced and balanced responses. A 7-point scale allows for greater differentiation and precision than a 5-point scale and reduces the risk of forced or imprecise choices because respondents are less likely to feel stuck between options. Psychologically, people can distinguish around seven response categories at a time. Another benefit of a seven-point scale is that it is symmetric, with the neutral point (4) in the middle.

This gives participants balanced options on either side and allows for leveled responses (Likert, 1932, Joshi et al., 2015, p. 397-398). In this thesis, the Likert scale results were added up and averaged to allow for precise statistical analysis. After the standardized Likert scale items for *importance of appreciation* and *received appreciation*, participants were given the option to add up to three open-ended items of their own for each category. These self-generated items were then rated on the same seven-point Likert scale, allowing for individualized responses while maintaining quantitative comparability.

After answering the questions about appreciation, respondents were asked to provide demographic information, such as their gender, highest level of education, and current annual net income range. They were also asked about their working hours, including the number of hours stated in their work contract, their average weekly work hours, and their average weekly hours worked from home. Participants also indicated how many years they had worked for their current employer. They were then asked to identify the type of organization they work for between For-profit company/Public non-profit organization/Private non-profit organization. Furthermore, individuals were asked to describe their current role or employment status: Self-employed/Freelancer/White-collar worker/Blue-collar worker/Other (free text option). They were also asked if they held leadership responsibilities and, if so, how many people reported to them. Then, they selected the industry to which their organization belongs. At the end of the survey, respondents had the opportunity to provide additional comments or feedback about the questionnaire.

3.3 Sample

The final sample consisted of 986 participants, distributed nearly equally between the two target countries. Specifically, $N = 500$ (50.7%) participants were employed in the U.S. and $N = 486$ (49.3%) were employed in Germany. All participants met the inclusion criterion of being currently employed by an organization with at least 50 employees. The survey targeted working adults across various industries, employment types, and hierarchical levels in both countries. The U.S. subsample included respondents from all 50 states and Washington D.C., with at least one participant from every state. This ensured broad national coverage and increased the representativeness of the U.S. sample. The largest shares of respondents came from California ($N = 66$, 13.2%), New York ($N = 46$, 9.2%), Texas ($N = 41$, 8.2%), and Florida ($N = 38$, 7.6%), reflecting the population size and employment density of these states. The remaining participants were distributed relatively evenly across the country, without any significant

regional overrepresentation. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 70 years old. The largest age group was 33-year-olds, who made up 11% ($N = 108$) of the sample. Most respondents were in their mid-20s to mid-30s, though individuals of all working ages were represented, including those in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. This wide distribution adds demographic diversity to the sample, increasing the relevance of the findings across different career stages. In terms of gender, the sample was nearly evenly split: 52% ($N = 510$) identified as female, and 47% ($N = 461$) identified as male. Additionally, 0.7% ($N = 7$) of participants identified as a gender other than male or female, while 0.3% ($N = 3$) chose not to disclose their gender identity. This balanced gender representation contributes to the inclusiveness and generalizability of the results.

Regarding educational background, the majority of participants ($N = 639$, 65.1%) held a degree from a higher education institution, such as a bachelor's, master's, or Ph.D. This includes one participant who manually entered "Master's degree" under the open text field, even though this option was already listed. The U.S. and German surveys differed in their educational categories due to country-specific education systems. Therefore, direct comparison is limited. Among U.S. participants, 9.4% ($N = 47$) reported having an associate's degree, 5.4% ($N = 27$) were high school graduates, and 13.6% ($N = 68$) had attended college without earning a degree. Among German participants, 19.1% ($N = 92$) had a "Hauptschulabschluss" which equals basic secondary school education, 4.2% ($N = 20$) had a "Realschulabschluss" or intermediate secondary school certification, and 17.9% ($N = 86$) held an "Abitur or Fachabitur," equaling high school graduation respectively advanced technical college entrance qualification. One participant selected "Other" but did not provide further detail ($N = 1$), and one U.S. respondent (<1%) indicated leaving school without any recognized certification. Overall, the sample can be considered well-educated, which may contribute to greater engagement with the survey content and appreciation-related concepts. Participants were asked to report their current net income ($N = 981$). Similar to education, income data cannot be directly compared across countries due to different categorization systems. U.S. participants were asked to indicate their annual net income, as is common practice in the U.S. The most frequently selected category was "\$50,000 to \$74,999," chosen by 25% of U.S. participants ($N = 125$). In contrast, German participants reported their monthly net income, with the most frequent response being "4.000 Euro oder mehr" ("€4,000 or more"), selected by 37% of German participants ($N = 178$). Due to differences in currency, reporting periods, and salary structures, the income data was analyzed separately for each country. Participants were also asked to indicate how many hours per week they are contracted to work ($N = 980$). Responses ranged from as few as 2 hours per week to a maximum of 48

hours. The most common contracted working time was 40 hours per week, reported by 41.7% ($N = 409$) of respondents. In total, 83.7% ($N = 820$) of participants reported a standard full-time workload (between 35 and 40 hours per week). The presence of lower working hours indicates that part-time employees were also well represented in the sample. 6 entries were missing for this variable. Next, the participants were asked how many hours they work on average per week. Responses ranged from two to 90 hours, indicating a wide range of work intensity. The most common response was 40 hours per week, reported by 26.1% participants ($N = 256$). The majority of participants, 61.4%, ($N = 602$) reported working a typical full-time schedule of 35 to 40 hours per week. Additionally, 30.5% participants ($N = 299$) reported working fewer than 35 hours per week, indicating that a significant proportion of the sample were part-time employees. At the other end of the spectrum, 8.1% of participants ($N = 79$) said they worked over 40 hours per week, reflecting a smaller group with extended working hours. Overall, this distribution suggests that, while most participants work standard full-time hours, the sample also includes a wide range of part-time and overtime work arrangements. Participants were also asked to indicate how many hours per week they work from home. The answers ranged from 0 to 50 hours, with many intermediate values. Notably, 32.2% of participants ($N = 317$) reported not working from home at all (combining 0, “0.0,” and blank 0 entries). Meanwhile, a wide variety of home office arrangements were present in the rest of the sample, with no single category dominating the responses. The most frequent remote work durations beyond zero were 10 hours ($N = 77$, 7.9%) and 5 hours ($N = 85$, 8.7%), reflecting moderate hybrid arrangements. Full remote workers were also represented: 4.77% participants ($N = 47$) reported working 40 hours or more from home per week. This wide range suggests that the sample reflects diverse work models, from fully on-site to entirely remote setups, offering valuable insight into how appreciation may function across different work environments. Participants were also asked how long they had worked for their current employer ($N = 980$). The responses were distributed broadly across tenure categories. A small portion of the sample had relatively short tenure: 4.0% ($N = 39$) had worked for 1–6 months, and 3.6% ($N = 35$) for 7–11 months. A larger group reported 1–2 years (15.2%, $N = 149$) or 3–5 years (31.6%, $N = 310$). Additionally, 25.9% ($N = 254$) had worked for their employer for 6–10 years, and 19.7% ($N = 193$) for over 10 years. This distribution indicates that both newer employees and those with long-standing work relationships were well represented, offering a balanced view on appreciation across different stages of employment. When comparing the two countries, the distributions were relatively similar. Among U.S. respondents, the most common categories were 3–5 years (33.0%), 6–10 years (22.6%), and over 10 years (17.6%). In contrast, German respondents

showed a slightly higher share in longer tenures, with 29.4% having worked 6–10 years and 21.9% over 10 years, while 30.2% had been employed for 3–5 years. This suggests that while both groups include employees across all stages, the German sample contains slightly more long-term employees than the U.S. group. Participants were also asked about the type of organization they worked for ($N = 980$). The majority, 70% ($N = 686$), reported working for a for-profit company. 19.2% ($N = 188$) were employed in a public non-profit organization, and 9.5% ($N = 93$) in a private non-profit organization. A small portion (1.3%, $N = 13$) selected “Other.” Among these, the majority entered responses that reiterated existing categories or clarified public-sector employment types: federal government ($N = 1$, U.S.), state government ($N = 1$, U.S.), government agency ($N = 1$, U.S.), government ($N = 2$, U.S.), and university ($N = 2$, U.S.). None of the German participants added additional text entries in the “Other” field. Thus, these open responses did not reveal any additional organizational sectors not already covered by the fixed-choice options. The distribution was also comparable across countries: in the U.S. sample, 70.2% ($N = 351$) worked for a for-profit company, 20.4% ($N = 102$) in a public non-profit, and 7.8% ($N = 39$) in a private non-profit. In Germany, 69.8% ($N = 335$) worked in for-profit companies, 17.9% ($N = 86$) in public non-profits, and 11.3% ($N = 54$) in private non-profits. These patterns indicate a high level of private sector employment in both countries, with slightly more U.S. participants in public non-profits and more German participants in private non-profits. Participants were asked to indicate which option best described their current role or employment status ($N = 986$). In the U.S. sample, the majority (76.6%, $N = 383$) identified as white-collar workers. This corresponds to the German category “Angestellte:r / Beamte:r,” including employees and civil servants, which was also the most frequently selected in Germany, with 84.0% ($N = 403$) choosing this option. Self-employment was reported by 4.8% ($N = 24$) of U.S. participants, compared to just 1.0% ($N = 5$) in Germany, where the relevant option was “Freelancer:in.” Blue-collar workers made up 15.0% ($N = 75$) of the U.S. sample, while 13.3% ($N = 64$) of German participants selected “Arbeiter:in,” a comparable classification. Additionally, a small number of German respondents selected “Azubi / Lehrling” (0.8%, $N = 4$) or “Praktikant:in” (0.2%, $N = 1$), describing a trainee or an intern, categories that were not present in the U.S. survey. Finally, 2.1% of the total sample ($N = 21$) selected “Other,” offering responses such as “Pink Collar Worker” ($N = 5$), “Healthcare” ($N = 2$), and “Worker” ($N = 2$). Overall, the data suggest that white-collar employment dominates the sample, which aligns with the office-based professional context in which appreciation may be especially relevant. Participants were also asked whether they held leadership responsibilities in their current role ($N = 967$). Overall, 67.3% ($N = 651$) of the total sample reported having

such responsibilities. This trend was comparable across countries: in the U.S. sample, 65.0% ($N = 325$) reported a leadership role, while in Germany, 69.8% ($N = 326$) did so. In contrast, 32.7% of all participants ($N = 316$) reported not holding any leadership responsibilities, with similar shares in the U.S. (35.0%, $N = 175$) and Germany (30.2%, $N = 141$). These results suggest that the sample includes a substantial number of individuals in managerial or supervisory positions, which may influence how appreciation is given and received in the workplace. Participants who indicated they held leadership responsibilities ($N = 651$) were also asked how many people report to them. The responses ranged widely, from as few as one direct report to over 600. A significant number of leaders (35.0%, $N = 228$) reported managing between 1 and 5 employees. Another substantial group (32.3%, $N = 210$) indicated managing between 6 and 20 individuals. A smaller number reported overseeing larger teams, including 8.4% ($N = 55$) with exactly 50 reports and 3.2% ($N = 21$) with 200 direct reports. The data shows that while most participants in leadership roles oversee small to medium-sized teams, the sample also includes individuals with high-level managerial responsibilities, especially within the German subsample. This wide distribution supports a diverse perspective on appreciation across varying levels of supervisory responsibility. Participants were also asked which industry their current organization belongs to. Of the total sample ($N = 980$), the most frequently selected sector was health and social services (11.6%, $N = 114$), followed by media, information, and communication (13.0%, $N = 127$), and manufacturing (12.1%, $N = 119$). Industry distributions varied somewhat by country: in the German subsample, the manufacturing sector was especially prominent (16.5%, $N = 79$), while in the U.S. sample, health and social services accounted for the highest proportion (18.6%, $N = 93$). Other notable sectors included education (7.2%, $N = 71$), transportation and logistics (5.3%, $N = 52$), and construction (4.0%, $N = 39$). Only a small share of participants were employed in energy supply (1.9%, $N = 19$) or water/waste management (1.0%, $N = 10$). In addition to fixed-choice options, participants could also describe their industry via open-text input. A large number made use of this option ($N = 867$, 87.9%), although many of the responses repeated or only slightly reworded existing categories (e.g., “marketing,” “engineering,” “IT,” “insurance,” “banking”). Some responses clarified or localized their field (e.g., “military,” “legal,” “religious,” or “fast food”) or used vague entries such as “government” or “Justiz” for judiciary. The most commonly mentioned open-coded topics referenced IT/technology-related fields (such as “software development,” “IT,” “tech”), marketing/communications, legal and public sector jobs, and finance/insurance-related entries. Overall, the data reflects a wide spectrum of industries but with a clear tilt toward white-collar sectors such as media, education, health, and finance. This aligns with the dominant employ-

ment status described earlier (white-collar roles) and supports the relevance of examining appreciation in office-based or knowledge-intensive environments.

3.4 Survey Administration and Data Collection

To investigate employee appreciation across cultural contexts, an online survey was administered in both the U.S. and Germany. Data collection followed a quantitative research approach. The U.S. sample was recruited via the online platform Prolific in February 2025. Participants ($N = 500$) were compensated through the platform, and the survey itself was hosted on Qualtrics. For the German ($N = 486$) sample, data was collected earlier via the panel provider GapFish in December 2023. All participants were required to work in organizations with more than 50 employees, based on the assumption that such organizations typically have established structures for internal communication (Einwiller & Boenigk, 2012). In both countries, participation was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were presented with an informed consent form at the beginning of the survey. The survey was distributed in English for the U.S. and in German for Germany, with minor cultural adaptations made to demographic items. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained before participants could begin the survey. After data collection, responses were reviewed for completeness and plausibility. Further details on preliminary data cleaning and exclusion criteria (e.g., bot detection, implausible response times) are described in the next section.

3.5 Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary data cleaning procedures were applied before statistical analysis to ensure data quality. For the U.S. sample, Prolific recruited participants, hosted the survey on Qualtrics, and capped responses at 500. Prolific used prescreening filters to allow only participants who were currently employed, based in the U.S., and working at companies with at least 500 employees to access the survey. Those who did not meet these criteria, such as those who declined consent or failed the country and company size eligibility checks, were automatically screened out. Additionally, attention checks and demographic filter questions were incorporated into the survey to verify participant eligibility further. Cases flagged for incomplete data or “bot-like” behavior (e.g., extremely short response times or patterned answering) were excluded from the final dataset. These steps ensured the validity and reliability of the sample prior to conducting descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

4. Results

4.1 Research Questions

The data was analyzed in SPSS Version 27 (IBM) using repeated measures ANOVA. To answer the research questions the means and standard deviations were compared for the groups USA and Germany. Partial eta squared (η^2) was reported as a measure of effect size and interpreted according to Cohen (1988), η^2 values of around .01 are considered small, .06 medium, and .14 large effects. The analysis revealed multiple statistically significant differences between the two countries, the United States of America and Germany, across various appreciation items.

RQ1: What factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. consider most important for receiving appreciation?

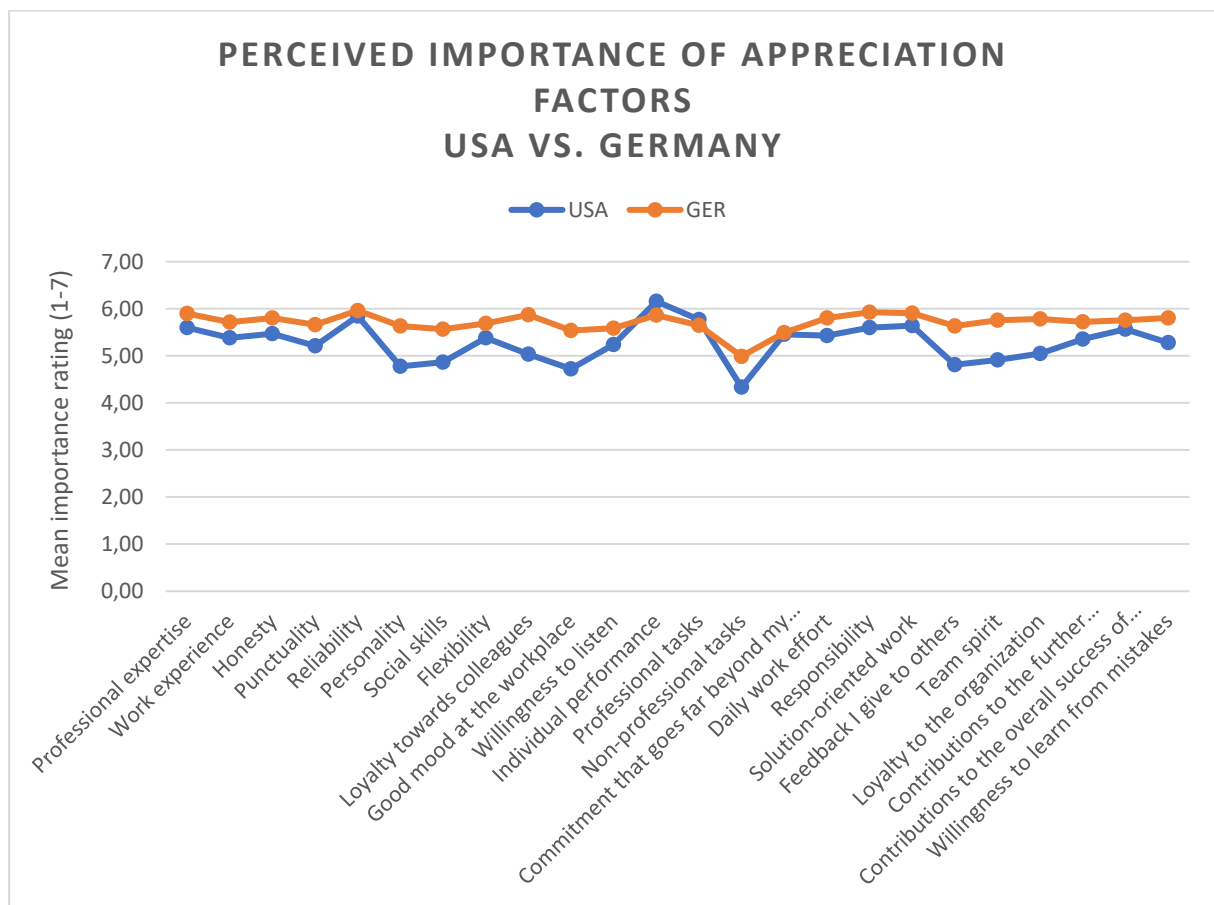
To answer RQ1, the results regarding 24 questions about the importance of receiving appreciation for different factors were analyzed and compared between the two countries. Overall, the results for the U.S. and Germany were found to be in a similar range, with the scores averaging results between $M = 4.33$ and $M = 6.16$, on the scale the highest scorable point was 7 – meaning all results were relatively high and on the upper end of the scale. Germany had higher rates on average for 22 out of the 24 questions. The highest overall score was scored by the U.S.-American employees rating for the importance of receiving appreciation for individual performance ($M = 6.16$, $SD = 1.15$). Germany's highest ranking was for reliability ($M = 5.96$, $SD = 1.21$). The lowest overall ranking can be found for rating for the importance of receiving appreciation for non-professional tasks by U.S.-Americans ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.85$), Germany also showed its lowest score in this category ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.72$). The five biggest and most significant differences where Germany took the lead in importance of appreciation rating are found in the questions regarding personality ($M_{diff} = 0.85$, $p < .001$), team spirit ($M_{diff} = 0.84$, $p < .001$), loyalty towards colleagues ($M_{diff} = 0.84$, $p < .001$), good mood at the workplace ($M_{diff} = 0.82$, $p < .001$) and feedback I give to others ($M_{diff} = 0.82$, $p < .001$). While the only items rated higher by the U.S. employees are the importance of appreciation for individual performance ($M_{diff} = -0.29$, $p < .001$) and professional tasks ($M_{diff} = -0.12$, $p < .014$).

Table 2: Cross-Country Comparison of Appreciation Importance Ratings (USA vs. Germany)

	USA		GERMANY		Δ		
<i>Item Appreciation Importance</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M_{diff}</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>partial η^2</i>
Professional expertise	5.60	1.462	5.90	1.243	0.30	0.001	0.012
Work experience	5.38	1.527	5.72	1.223	0.33	0.000	0.014
Honesty	5.47	1.586	5.80	1.283	0.33	0.000	0.013
Punctuality	5.21	1.721	5.66	1.426	0.45	0.000	0.019
Reliability	5.84	1.430	5.96	1.209	0.12	0.161	0.002
Personality	4.78	1.816	5.63	1.315	0.85	0.000	0.067
Social skills	4.87	1.681	5.56	1.412	0.70	0.000	0.048
Flexibility	5.38	1.539	5.69	1.305	0.30	0.001	0.011
Loyalty towards colleagues	5.03	1.674	5.87	1.241	0.84	0.000	0.074
Good mood at the workplace	4.72	1.870	5.54	1.534	0.82	0.000	0.054
Willingness to listen	5.24	1.610	5.59	1.381	0.34	0.000	0.013
Individual performance	6.16	1.154	5.87	1.227	-0.29	0.000	0.015
Professional tasks	5.77	1.334	5.650	1.382	-0.12	0.144	0.002
Non-professional tasks	4.33	1.854	4.990	1.722	0.66	0.000	0.032
Commitment that goes far beyond my job description	5.46	1.635	5.49	1.499	0.03	0.752	0.000
Daily work effort	5.43	1.530	5.80	1.196	0.37	0.000	0.018

Responsibility	5.60	1.413	5.93	1.172	0.33	0.000	0.015
Solution-oriented work	5.64	1.373	5.91	1.078	0.27	0.001	0.011
Feedback I give to others	4.81	1.732	5.63	1.343	0.82	0.000	0.066
Team spirit	4.91	1.810	5.75	1.301	0.84	0.000	0.067
Loyalty to the organization	5.05	1.851	5.78	1.245	0.73	0.000	0.051
Contributions to the further development of the organization	5.36	1.600	5.72	1.224	0.37	0.000	0.016
Contributions to the overall success of the organization	5.57	1.558	5.76	1.265	0.19	0.033	0.005
Willingness to learn from mistakes	5.28	1.658	5.80	1.198	0.52	0.000	0.031

Figure 1: Perceived Importance of Appreciation Factors by Country (USA vs. Germany)



In addition to responding to these 24 items, participants were given the opportunity to provide additional responses. A total of 284 answers of importance of appreciation were analyzed and categorized. The most common categories the participants provided in importance of appreciation were team spirit, skills and expertise, work ethics, loyalty to the organization, and punctuality and reliability. Other mentions included personality, communication, and innovation. Participants ranked their own answers provided high, averaging between 6 and 7.

RQ2: For what factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. actually receive appreciation?

In order to test RQ2 the 24 items from the previous question about the importance of appreciation were tested in regard to how much appreciation the employees actually receive, and again the Means were analyzed and compared between the two countries. The results for both countries ranged from $M = 3.94$ to $M = 5.74$. Indicating that the results, while overall still ranking moderately high, were lower for the actual receiving of appreciation than for the importance of appreciation. Also, German employees ranked consistently higher in every single one of the 24 questions, meaning they overall receive more appreciation than U.S. employees.

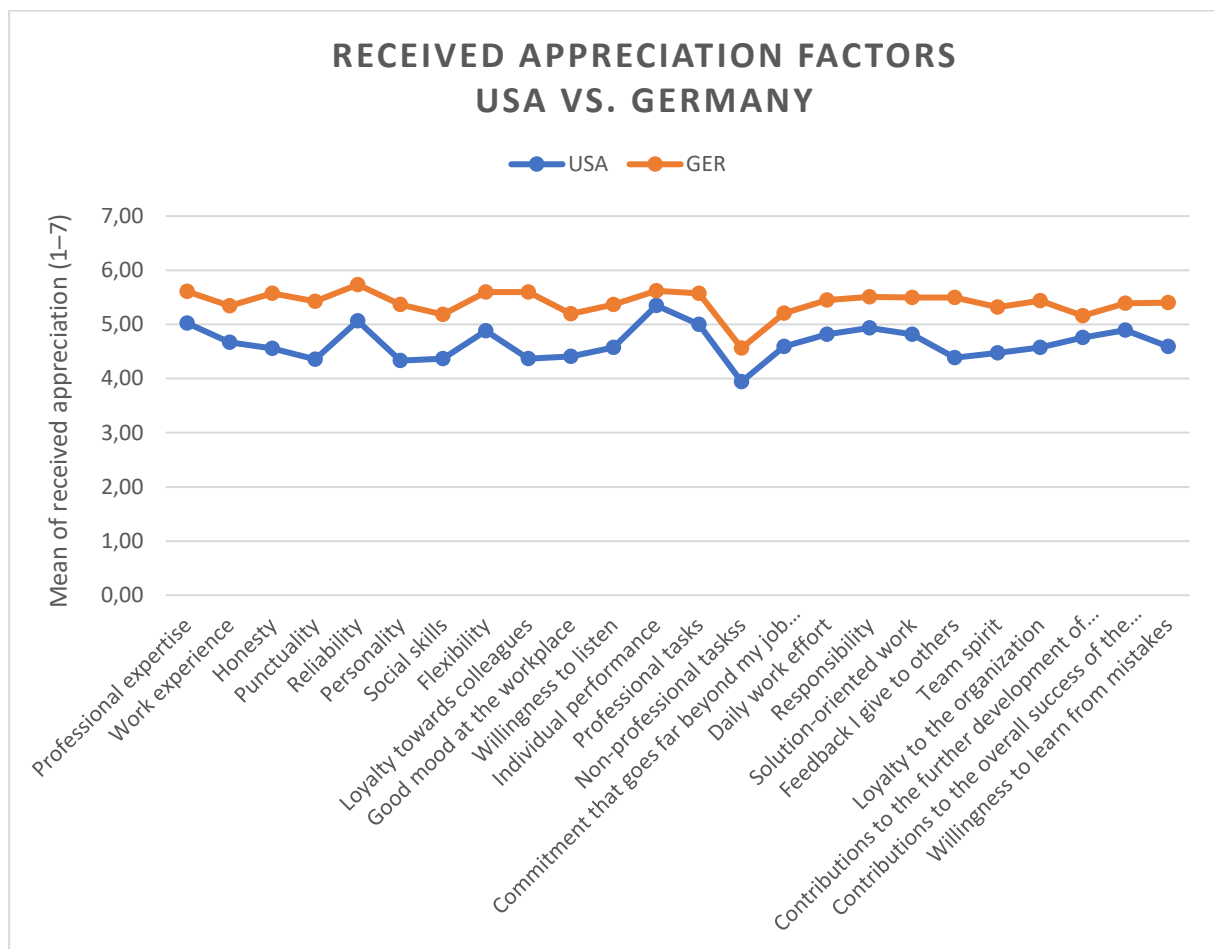
The German employees' results show they receive the most appreciation for reliability ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.5$) and the least for non-professional tasks ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.9$). Meanwhile, U.S. employees responded that they receive the most appreciation for their individual performance ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.6$) and least for non-professional tasks ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 2.07$) as well. The biggest differences are found in the items loyalty towards colleagues ($M_{diff} = 1.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .098$), feedback I give to others ($M_{diff} = 1.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .075$), and punctuality ($M_{diff} = 1.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .069$), with German respondents reporting significantly more appreciation received. The only item showing no significant difference was individual performance ($M_{diff} = 0.27$, $p = .210$, $\eta^2 = .008$), while contributions to the further development of the organization showed only a marginal difference ($M_{diff} = 0.40$, $p = .109$, $\eta^2 = .012$).

Table 3: Cross-Country Comparison of Received Appreciation Ratings (USA vs. Germany)

	USA		GERMANY		Δ		
<i>Item Received Appreciation</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M_{diff}</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>partial η^2</i>
Professional expertise	5.03	1.712	5.61	1.659	0.584	0.015	0.029
Work experience	4.67	1.880	5.34	1.790	0.678	0.010	0.032
Honesty	4.56	2.082	5.57	1.560	1.016	0.000	0.067
Punctuality	4.36	2.137	5.43	1.647	1.067	0.000	0.069
Reliability	5.07	1.786	5.74	1.490	0.669	0.005	0.038
Personality	4.33	2.055	5.37	1.578	1.034	0.000	0.070
Social skills	4.37	1.987	5.18	1.821	0.817	0.003	0.043
Flexibility	4.88	1.759	5.60	1.551	0.714	0.003	0.043
Loyalty towards colleagues	4.37	2.054	5.60	1.528	1.231	0.000	0.098
Good mood at the workplace	4.41	2.056	5.20	1.764	0.787	0.004	0.039
Willingness to listen	4.58	2.040	5.37	1.713	0.793	0.004	0.041
Individual performance	5.35	1.607	5.62	1.416	0.271	0.210	0.008

Professional tasks	5.00	1.720	5.57	1.626	0.575	0.016	0.028
Non-professional tasks	3.94	2.071	4.56	1.903	0.622	0.029	0.023
Commitment that goes far beyond my job description	4.59	1.872	5.21	1.773	0.615	0.018	0.027
Daily work effort	4.82	1.838	5.45	1.605	0.632	0.011	0.031
Responsibility	4.93	1.859	5.51	1.684	0.572	0.024	0.025
Solution-oriented work	4.82	1.852	5.49	1.562	0.678	0.006	0.036
Feedback I give to others	4.38	2.103	5.49	1.677	1.111	0.000	0.075
Team spirit	4.48	2.074	5.32	1.674	0.847	0.002	0.046
Loyalty to the organization	4.58	2.036	5.44	1.689	0.862	0.001	0.048
Contributions to the further development of the organization	4.76	1.810	5.16	1.731	0.403	0.109	0.012
Contributions to the overall success of the organization	4.89	1.791	5.39	1.728	0.499	0.046	0.019
Willingness to learn from mistakes	4.59	2.136	5.40	1.595	0.811	0.003	0.042

Figure 2: Perceived Received Appreciation by Country (USA vs. Germany)



RQ3: In which factors do expectations and experiences differ in Germany and the U.S.?

To answer RQ3, the gaps between received appreciation and perceived importance of appreciation were examined and compared between U.S. and Germany. A one-way MANOVA was conducted with the 24 appreciation items. For each factor, the gap was calculated by subtracting the perceived importance rating from the received appreciation rating, meaning negative values mean underappreciation. This resulted in solely negative results – meaning employees from both countries receive less appreciation than they desire and are therefore underappreciated.

Across all 24 items, U.S. participants constantly reported significantly larger gaps than German participants. A comparison of mean gap scores shows that the U.S. reported a more negative appreciation gap for every appreciation item. This difference was statistically significant for 23 of the 24 items ($p < .05$), with small to moderate effect sizes (partial η^2 ranging from .005 to .037). The only item with no significant difference was personality ($F(1,980) = 1.47, p = .225$,

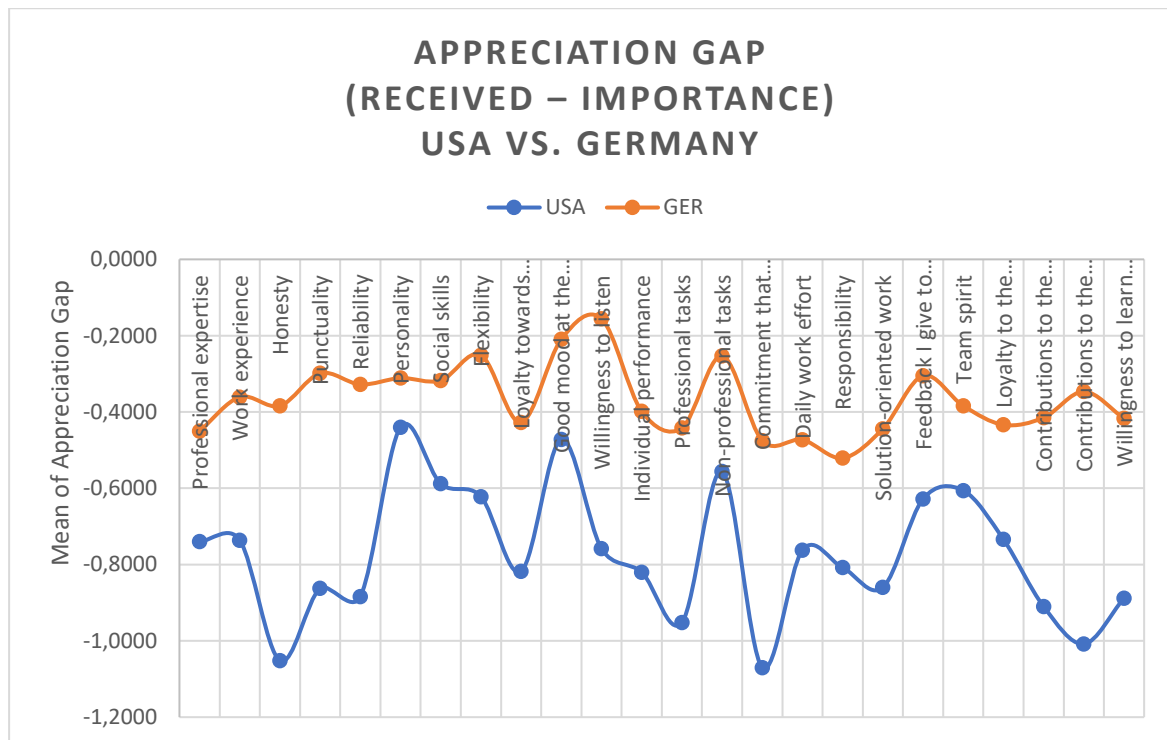
$\eta^2 = .002$). While the most significant differences of gap sizes between countries showed to be honesty ($F(1,980) = 37.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = .037$), contributions to the success of the organization ($F(1,980) = 34.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = .034$), and willingness to listen ($F(1,980) = 28.81, p < .001, \eta^2 = .029$), commitment beyond job description ($F = 24.03, p < .001, \eta^2 = .024$), and contributions to the further development of the organization ($F = 19.53, p < .001, \eta^2 = .020$). This suggests that German employees' perceptions of the importance of appreciation are more closely aligned with what they actually receive than is the case for U.S. employees. For U.S. employees, the largest mismatches between perceived importance and received appreciation were found for commitment beyond job description ($M = -1.07$), honesty ($M = -1.05$), contributions to the overall success of the organization ($M = -1.01$), professional tasks ($M = -0.95$), and contributions to the further development of the organization ($M = -0.91$). In contrast, the biggest gaps for German employees were found in willingness to learn from mistakes ($M = -0.42$), honesty ($M = -0.38$), team spirit ($M = -0.38$), contributions to the overall success of the organization ($M = -0.35$), and feedback given to others ($M = -0.31$). Overall, the findings suggest that while underappreciation is a shared experience, U.S. employees experience it more intensely and more consistently across a range of workplace factors.

Table 4: Gap Between Expected and Received Appreciation (USA vs. Germany)

Item	<i>M</i> USA_Gap	<i>SD</i> USA_Gap	<i>M</i> GER_Gap	<i>SD</i> GER_Gap	Gap_Diff	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	partial η^2
Professional expertise	-0.7400	1.76028	-0.4502	1.42104	-0.28979	8.023	0.005	0.008
Work experience	-0.7360	1.84095	-0.3610	1.50618	-0.37500	12.156	0.001	0.012
Honesty	-1.0520	1.91013	-0.3838	1.46901	-0.66818	37.563	0.000	0.037
Punctuality	-0.8620	1.91894	-0.2988	1.53881	-0.56324	25.635	0.000	0.025
Reliability	-0.8840	1.93236	-0.3278	1.56907	-0.55620	24.415	0.000	0.024
Personality	-0.4400	1.79244	-0.3112	1.51590	-0.12880	1.473	0.225	0.002
Social skills	-0.5880	1.63940	-0.3174	1.43786	-0.27057	7.539	0.006	0.008
Flexibility	-0.6220	1.90430	-0.2510	1.57727	-0.37096	11.010	0.001	0.011
Loyalty towards colleagues	-0.8180	1.86005	-0.4274	1.47323	-0.39061	13.246	0.000	0.013

Good mood at the workplace	-0.4720	1.83847	-0.2095	1.46323	-0.26246	6.099	0.014	0.006
Willingness to listen	-0.7580	1.96039	-0.1556	1.52002	-0.60240	28.813	0.000	0.029
Individual performance	-0.8200	1.70570	-0.3983	1.51604	-0.42166	16.721	0.000	0.017
Professional tasks	-0.9520	1.84947	-0.4419	1.69313	-0.51009	20.280	0.000	0.020
Non-professional tasks	-0.5560	2.03449	-0.2531	1.66480	-0.30289	6.492	0.011	0.007
Commitment that goes far beyond my job description	-1.0700	2.10284	-0.4751	1.66672	-0.59490	24.026	0.000	0.024
Daily work effort	-0.7620	1.91852	-0.4730	1.56770	-0.28897	6.653	0.010	0.007
Responsibility	-0.8080	1.86174	-0.5207	1.56647	-0.28725	6.820	0.009	0.007
Solution-oriented work	-0.8600	1.77502	-0.4440	1.47536	-0.41602	15.892	0.000	0.016
Feedback I give to others	-0.6280	1.69923	-0.3050	1.38312	-0.32302	10.629	0.001	0.011
Team spirit	-0.6060	1.70310	-0.3838	1.49844	-0.22218	4.698	0.030	0.005
Loyalty to the organization	-0.7340	1.86821	-0.4336	1.53975	-0.30039	7.530	0.006	0.008
Contributions to the further development of the organization	-0.9100	1.90714	-0.4149	1.58148	-0.49506	19.532	0.000	0.020
Contributions to the overall success of the organization	-1.0080	1.99497	-0.3465	1.51441	-0.66153	34.072	0.000	0.034
Willingness to learn from mistakes	-0.8880	2.00187	-0.4170	1.31770	-0.47099	18.820	0.000	0.019

Figure 3: Appreciation Gap (Received – Importance) (USA vs. Germany)



RQ4: How does employee appreciation in Germany and the U.S. differ depending on the source of appreciation?

A 2 (source: supervisor vs. colleague) $\times$ 2 (country: U.S. vs. Germany) mixed ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in received appreciation based on the source. There was no significant main effect of source, $F(1, 979) = 0.40, p = .525, \eta^2 = .000$, indicating that overall appreciation levels from supervisors and colleagues were similar. However, a significant interaction between source and country was found, $F(1, 979) = 4.39, p = .036, \eta^2 = .004$, suggesting that the relative importance of source differs between the U.S. and Germany.

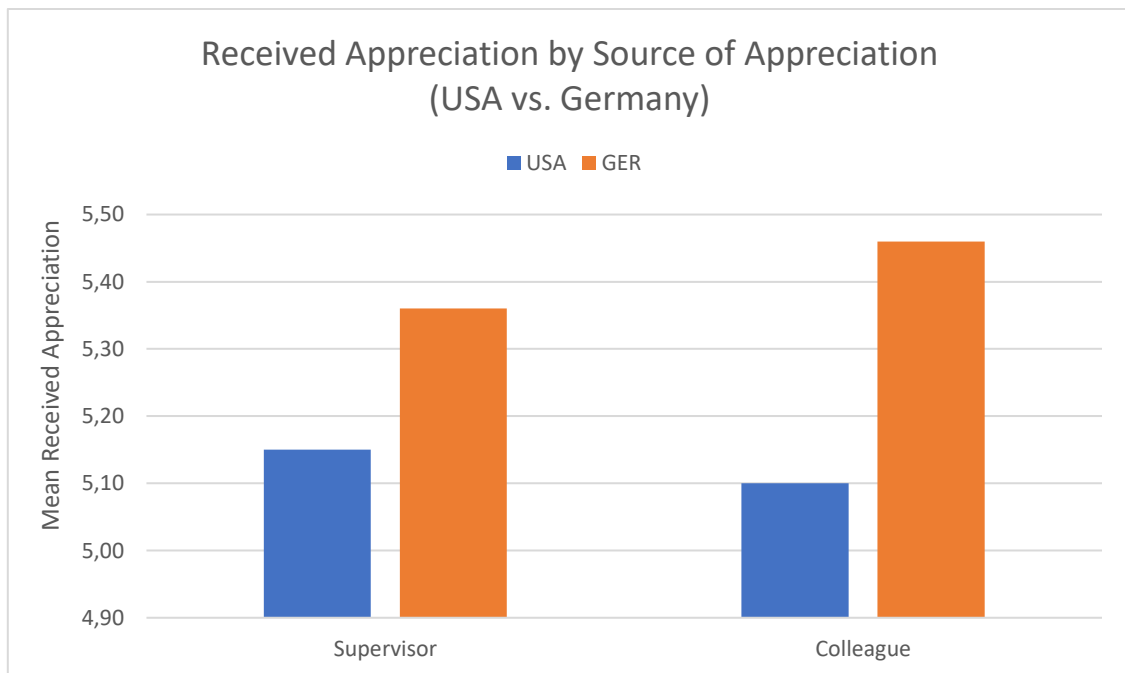
Descriptive statistics indicated that German employees reported receiving more appreciation from both sources than U.S. employees. While U.S. employees reported nearly equal appreciation from supervisors ($M = 5.15$) and colleagues ($M = 5.10$), German employees rated colleague appreciation slightly higher ($M = 5.46$) than supervisor appreciation ($M = 5.36$). This suggests that German employees may value or experience appreciation from colleagues more strongly than U.S. employees.

While U.S. employees receive nearly equal levels of appreciation from both sources, German employees report more appreciation overall, especially from colleagues. Appreciation from colleagues plays a slightly more prominent role in Germany, whereas in the U.S., the source seems to matter less, however supervisor appreciation is preferred but overall levels are lower.

Table 5: Mean Received Appreciation by Source (Supervisor vs. Colleague) (USA vs. Germany)

	Supervisor	Colleague
USA	5.15	5.10
GER	5.36	5.46

Figure 4: Received Appreciation by Source and Country (USA vs. Germany)

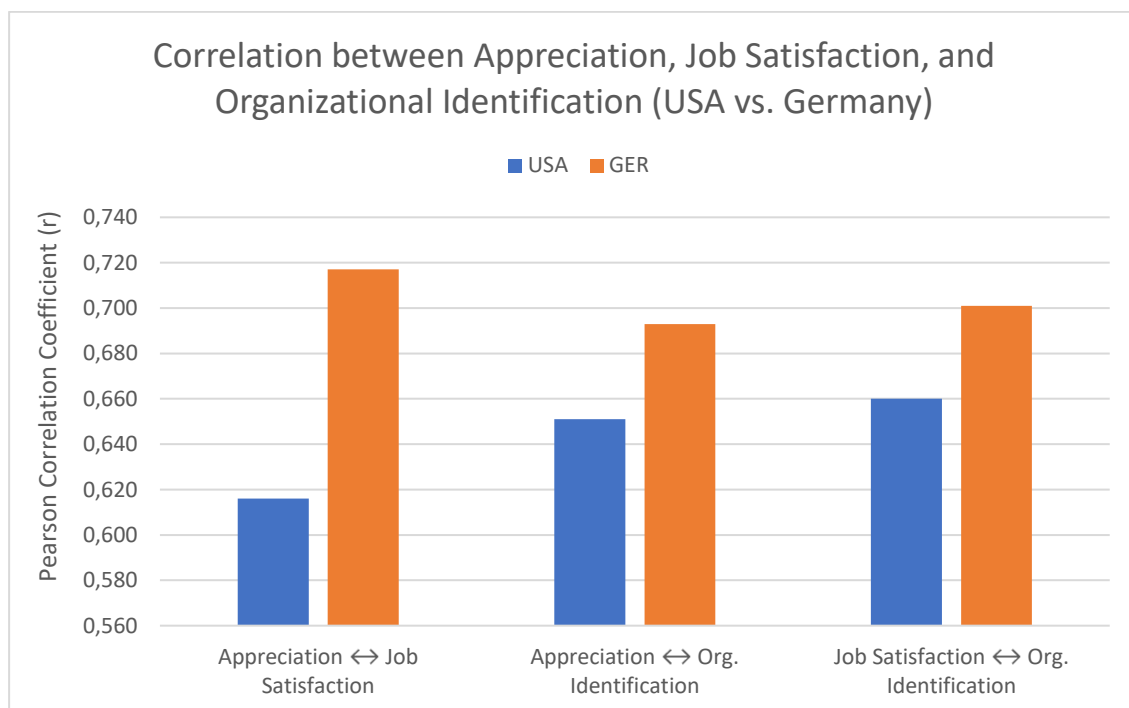


RQ5: How does the relation between appreciation, job satisfaction, organizational identification differ in Germany and the U.S.?

Table 6: Pearson Correlations Between Appreciation, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Identification (USA vs. Germany)

	Appreciation ↔ Job Satisfaction	Appreciation ↔ Org. Identification	Job Satisfaction ↔ Org. Identification
USA	0.616	0.651	0.660
GER	0.717	0.693	0.701

Figure 5: Correlations Between Appreciation, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Identification (USA vs. Germany)



To address RQ5, Pearson correlations were calculated separately for each country to examine the relationship between employee appreciation, job satisfaction, and organizational identification. All correlations were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and positive in both countries, indicating that higher appreciation is associated with greater job satisfaction and stronger identification with the organization. However, the strength of these relationships differed between the U.S. and Germany.

For the German sample, all correlations were stronger than in the U.S. sample. The correlation between appreciation and job satisfaction was $r = .717$ in Germany and $r = .616$ in the U.S. Similarly, the correlation between appreciation and organizational identification was $r = .693$

in Germany and $r = .651$ in the U.S. The strongest relationship was found between appreciation and job satisfaction, which was $r = .717$ in Germany and job satisfaction and organizational identification in the U.S. with $r = .660$. These results suggest that appreciation plays a more central role in shaping job satisfaction and organizational identification in Germany than in the U.S. context.

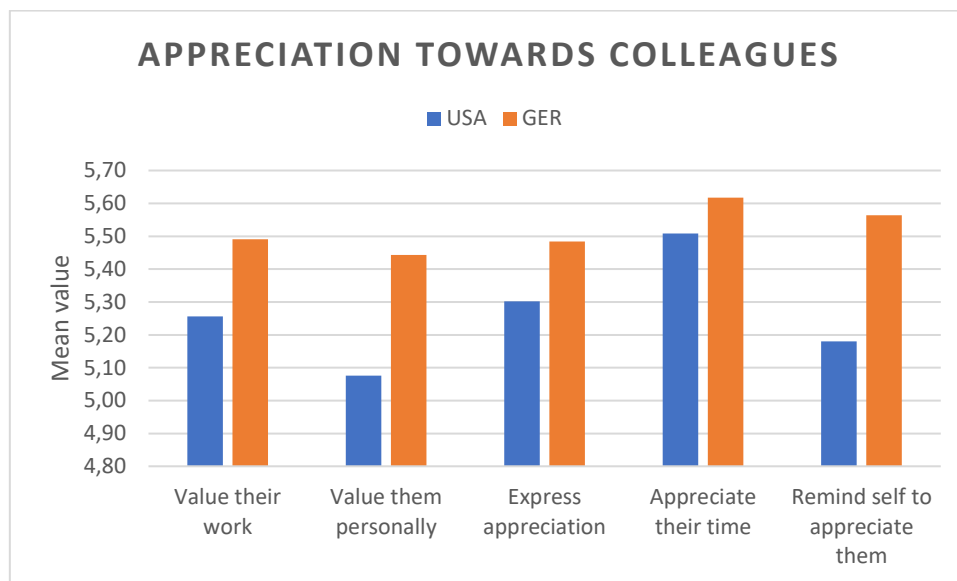
4.2 Further Analysis

For further analysis, the items recording how much the employees themselves show appreciation towards their colleagues were analyzed by comparing means within the two countries. Participants from Germany consistently reported higher levels of appreciation expressed toward colleagues compared to participants from the USA across all five items. The greatest difference was found for the item “*Remind self to appreciate them*,” where German participants reported significantly higher agreement ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.42$) than their American counterparts ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.72$). Other notable gaps include “*Value them personally*,” with means of $M = 5.44$ (GER) vs. $M = 5.08$ (USA), and “*Value their work*,” $M = 5.49$ (GER) vs. $M = 5.26$ (USA). The smallest difference appeared in “*Express appreciation*,” although the German average ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.37$) still surpassed the American mean ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.63$). In sum, the data suggests that German employees report showing appreciation toward colleagues more frequently than U.S. employees across all measured behaviors.

Table 7: Expressed Appreciation Towards Colleagues by Country (USA vs. Germany)

	USA		GER	
<i>Appreciation Towards Colleagues</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Value their work	5.26	1.592	5.49	1.436
Value them personally	5.08	1.741	5.44	1.358
Express appreciation	5.30	1.626	5.48	1.369
Appreciate their time	5.51	1.492	5.62	1.329
Remind self to appreciate them	5.18	1.717	5.56	1.419

Figure 6: Expressed Appreciation Towards Colleagues (USA vs. Germany)

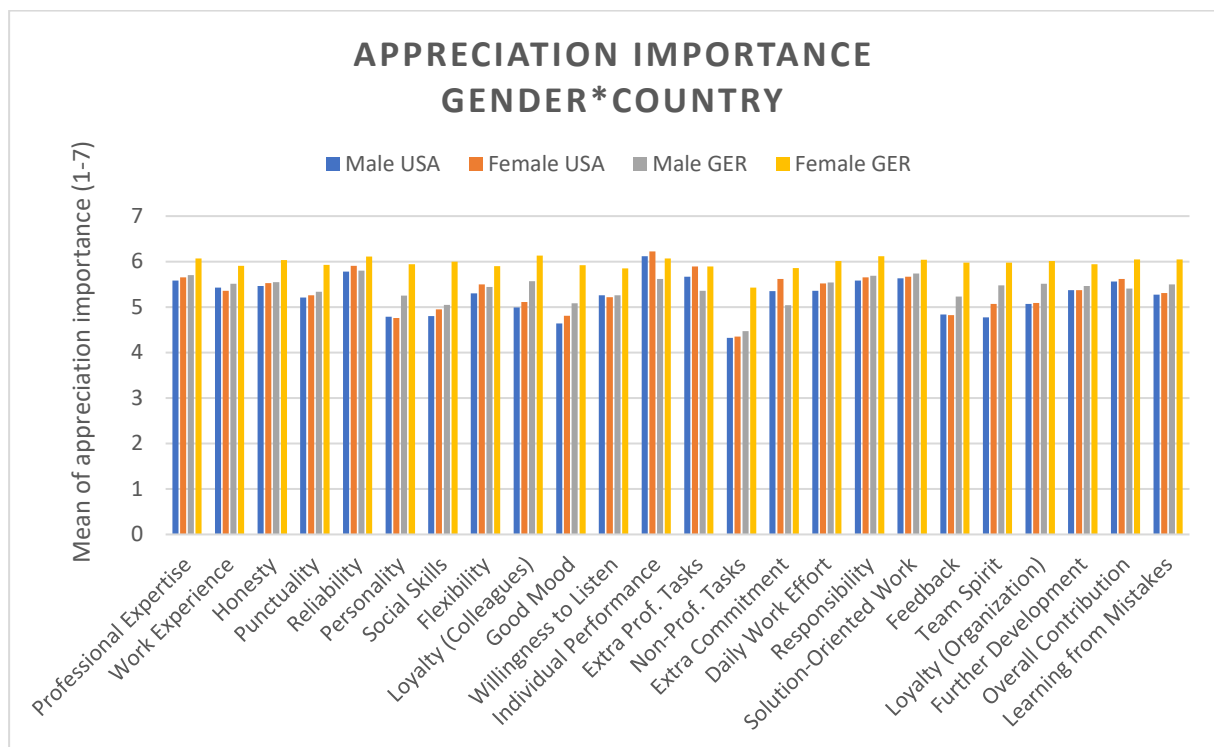


To assess more nuanced patterns of appreciation preferences, a two-way ANOVA was conducted for each item with gender and country (USA vs. Germany) as between-subject factors. The results revealed several significant main effects and interactions, indicating that both gender and national context influence how strongly appreciation is valued at work. Female participants from Germany consistently reported the highest appreciation ratings across most items, especially for interpersonal and socio-emotional aspects such as social skills ($F(3, 973) = 6.418, p < .001$), personality ($F(3, 973) = 6.483, p < .001$), and non-professional tasks ($F(3, 973) = 7.719, p < .001$). In contrast, women from the USA also showed high appreciation for feedback ($F(3, 973) = 5.640, p = .001$) and team spirit ($F(3, 973) = 1.122, p = .339$), though the latter did not reach significance in the interaction. Interestingly, German men rated individual performance as more important than any other group, a deviation from the general trend where German women were typically highest. Additionally, men in the USA tended to assign higher importance to competence- and output-based items than German men, such as professional expertise and work experience. The interaction effects (gender $\times$ country) were statistically significant for several appreciation items, underlining the importance of considering both cultural and gender-specific perspectives. These findings suggest that appreciation is perceived differently not only between genders but also in how gender roles manifest within national contexts.

Table 8: Gender Differences in the Perceived Importance of Appreciation Factors (USA vs. Germany)

Item Appreciation Importance	USA M		GER M		USA SD		GER SD		F	p
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Professional expertise	5.58	5.65	5.7	6.07	1.506	1.396	1.29	1.145	2.365	0.070
Work experience	5.43	5.36	5.51	5.91	1.541	1.48	1.265	1.13	4.016	0.007
Honesty	5.46	5.53	5.55	6.03	1.561	1.583	1.419	1.08	2.935	0.033
Punctuality	5.21	5.26	5.34	5.93	1.703	1.705	1.572	1.236	2.415	0.065
Reliability	5.78	5.91	5.8	6.11	1.415	1.425	1.353	1.046	2.098	0.099
Personality	4.79	4.76	5.25	5.94	1.823	1.811	1.447	1.104	6.483	0.000
Social skills	4.8	4.95	5.05	6	1.686	1.676	1.441	1.222	6.418	0.000
Flexibility	5.3	5.5	5.44	5.9	1.572	1.459	1.357	1.217	1.026	0.380
Loyalty towards colleagues	4.99	5.11	5.57	6.13	1.712	1.609	1.325	1.077	3.474	0.016
Good mood at the workplace	4.64	4.81	5.08	5.92	1.908	1.837	1.708	1.268	3.533	0.014
Willingness to listen	5.26	5.22	5.26	5.85	1.543	1.67	1.469	1.254	3.876	0.009
Individual performance	6.12	6.22	5.62	6.07	1.175	1.065	1.332	1.093	2.166	0.090
Professional tasks	5.67	5.89	5.36	5.89	1.386	1.249	1.385	1.32	2.082	0.101
Non-professional tasks	4.32	4.35	4.47	5.43	1.818	1.881	1.803	1.499	7.719	0.000
Commitment that goes far beyond my job description	5.35	5.62	5.04	5.86	1.595	1.617	1.59	1.309	2.620	0.050
Daily work effort	5.36	5.52	5.54	6.01	1.552	1.492	1.286	1.075	1.355	0.255
Responsibility	5.58	5.65	5.69	6.12	1.374	1.42	1.269	1.05	1.627	0.181
Solution-oriented work	5.63	5.67	5.74	6.04	1.325	1.403	1.143	1.003	1.011	0.387
Feedback I give to others	4.84	4.82	5.23	5.98	1.706	1.744	1.413	1.169	5.640	0.001
Team spirit	4.77	5.07	5.48	5.98	1.851	1.758	1.358	1.201	1.122	0.339
Loyalty to the organization	5.07	5.09	5.51	6.01	1.853	1.796	1.376	1.082	2.612	0.050
Contributions to the further development of the organization	5.37	5.37	5.46	5.94	1.574	1.601	1.253	1.159	2.698	0.045
Contributions to the overall success of the organization	5.56	5.62	5.41	6.05	1.523	1.534	1.32	1.135	3.956	0.008
Willingness to learn from mistakes	5.27	5.31	5.5	6.05	1.703	1.6	1.316	1.04	2.478	0.060

Figure 7: Importance of Appreciation Factors by Gender and Country (USA vs. Germany)

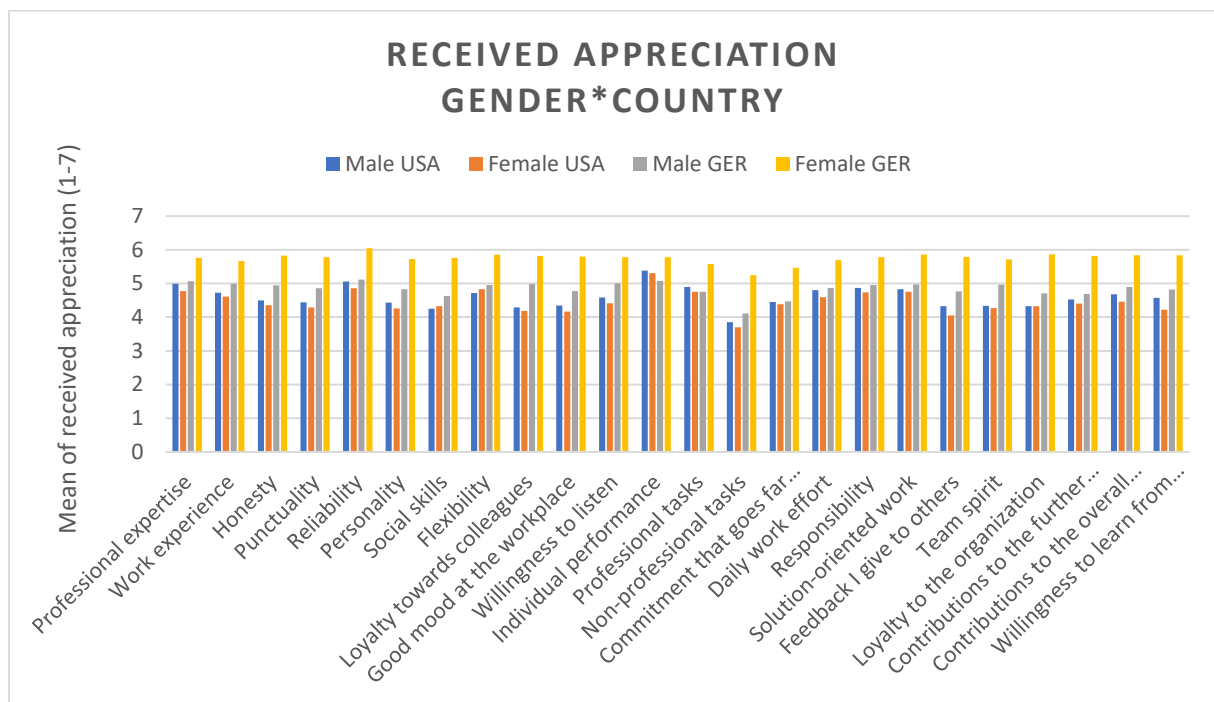


For further analysis, received appreciation was examined by gender and country, using descriptive statistics. The results reveal consistent and meaningful patterns in how different groups perceive the recognition they actually receive in the workplace. Overall, German women (Female GER) reported the highest levels of received appreciation across nearly all items. For example, they received more appreciation than all other groups for personality ($M = 5.72$), social skills ($M = 5.76$), flexibility ($M = 5.86$), and non-professional tasks ($M = 5.25$). In contrast, American women (Female USA) tended to report lower levels of received appreciation than their German counterparts, though still often slightly more than men from both countries. Men in the USA (Male USA) typically reported the lowest levels of received appreciation, especially for social and interpersonal aspects such as feedback to others ($M = 4.33$) or loyalty to the organization ($M = 4.33$). American men also rated appreciation for non-professional tasks ($M = 3.85$) particularly low. Interestingly, German men (Male GER) often rated received appreciation higher than American men but still lower than women overall. The only exception where a male group reported the highest appreciation was individual performance, where Female GER ($M = 5.78$) and Male USA ($M = 5.38$) both showed elevated scores. In general, the results suggest that women, especially in Germany, feel more recognized for their contributions at work, while men, particularly from the U.S., report lower levels of received appreciation. This pattern reflects broader cultural and gender-related dynamics in workplace recognition.

Table 9: Received Appreciation by Gender and Country (USA vs. Germany)

<i>Item Received Appreciation</i>	USA M		GER M		USA SD		GER SD		F	p
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Professional expertise	4.990	4.770	5.070	5.760	1.813	1.862	1.577	1.327	6.113	0.000
Work experience	4.730	4.610	4.990	5.670	1.916	1.959	1.670	1.405	4.416	0.004
Honesty	4.500	4.360	4.940	5.830	1.984	2.106	1.618	1.277	8.272	0.000
Punctuality	4.440	4.290	4.860	5.780	2.065	2.179	1.745	1.367	7.307	0.000
Reliability	5.060	4.860	5.120	6.050	1.801	1.923	1.638	1.127	9.612	0.000
Personality	4.430	4.260	4.830	5.720	2.023	2.066	1.679	1.337	7.158	0.000
Social skills	4.250	4.330	4.630	5.760	2.029	2.029	1.696	1.313	6.909	0.000
Flexibility	4.720	4.830	4.950	5.860	1.868	1.856	1.669	1.229	6.393	0.000
Loyalty towards colleagues	4.290	4.180	4.980	5.820	2.082	2.110	1.657	1.269	5.733	0.001
Good mood at the workplace	4.350	4.170	4.770	5.800	2.070	2.079	1.720	1.336	8.904	0.000
Willingness to listen	4.580	4.410	5.000	5.780	2.006	2.102	1.648	1.370	6.168	0.000
Individual performance	5.380	5.310	5.080	5.780	1.554	1.698	1.646	1.282	5.024	0.002
Professional tasks	4.900	4.750	4.750	5.580	1.770	1.968	1.749	1.593	6.674	0.000
Non-professional tasks	3.850	3.700	4.110	5.250	2.084	2.151	1.865	1.746	8.891	0.000
Commitment that goes far beyond my job description	4.450	4.380	4.470	5.470	1.927	2.106	1.766	1.545	6.829	0.000
Daily work effort	4.800	4.590	4.870	5.700	1.837	1.968	1.680	1.320	7.941	0.000
Responsibility	4.870	4.740	4.950	5.780	1.854	1.932	1.687	1.325	6.474	0.000
Solution-oriented work	4.830	4.750	4.970	5.860	1.878	1.975	1.702	1.213	6.719	0.000
Feedback I give to others	4.330	4.050	4.760	5.790	2.053	2.122	1.661	1.372	10.726	0.000
Team spirit	4.340	4.270	4.960	5.710	2.104	2.145	1.680	1.345	3.995	0.008
Loyalty to the organization	4.330	4.330	4.710	5.870	2.136	2.132	1.753	1.229	7.927	0.000
Contributions to the further development of the organization	4.530	4.400	4.690	5.820	2.020	2.134	1.740	1.344	9.856	0.000
Contributions to the overall success of the organization	4.680	4.460	4.900	5.840	1.963	2.126	1.718	1.312	8.267	0.000
Willingness to learn from mistakes	4.570	4.220	4.820	5.840	2.140	2.196	1.640	1.308	11.144	0.000

Figure 8: Received Appreciation by Gender and Country (USA vs. Germany)

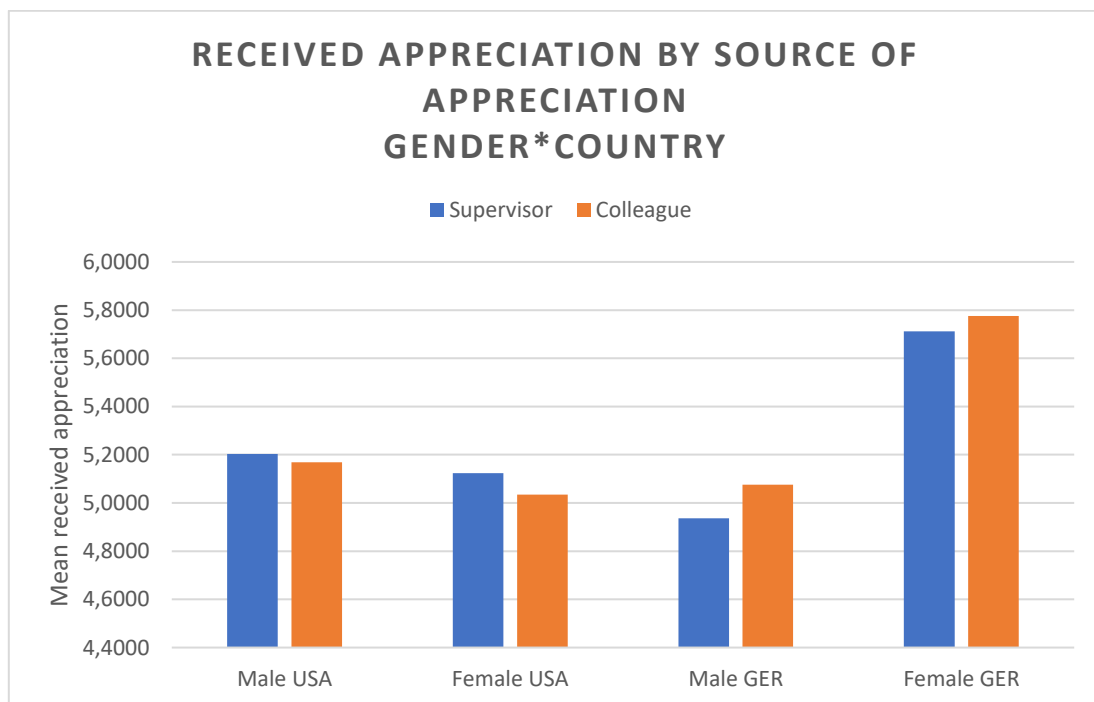


To examine how employees perceive the appreciation they receive at work, mean scores and standard deviations were analyzed separately for supervisors and colleagues, broken down by gender and country. Results show that German females reported receiving the highest appreciation from supervisors ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.24$), followed closely by U.S. females ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.68$). Among male participants, U.S. males reported receiving more appreciation ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.52$) than German males ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.47$). Overall, women rated supervisor appreciation more highly than men, and German women rated it the highest among all groups. German men, by contrast, reported the lowest level of supervisor appreciation. Similarly, German females also reported the highest appreciation from colleagues ($M = 5.78$, $SD = 1.10$), followed by German males ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.21$). The lowest ratings came from U.S. females ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.63$), despite their relatively high ratings for supervisors. U.S. males rated colleague appreciation slightly higher ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.42$). Taken together, the results suggest that German employees, especially women, feel significantly more appreciated by both supervisors and colleagues, whereas U.S. men and women report slightly lower levels of appreciation overall.

Table 10: Mean Received Appreciation by Source and Gender (USA vs. Germany)

	Male USA	Female USA	Male GER	Female GER
Supervisor	5.2026	5.1240	4.9366	5.7124
Colleague	5.1683	5.0348	5.0763	5.7754

Figure 9: Received Appreciation by Source of Appreciation, Gender and Country (USA vs. Germany)



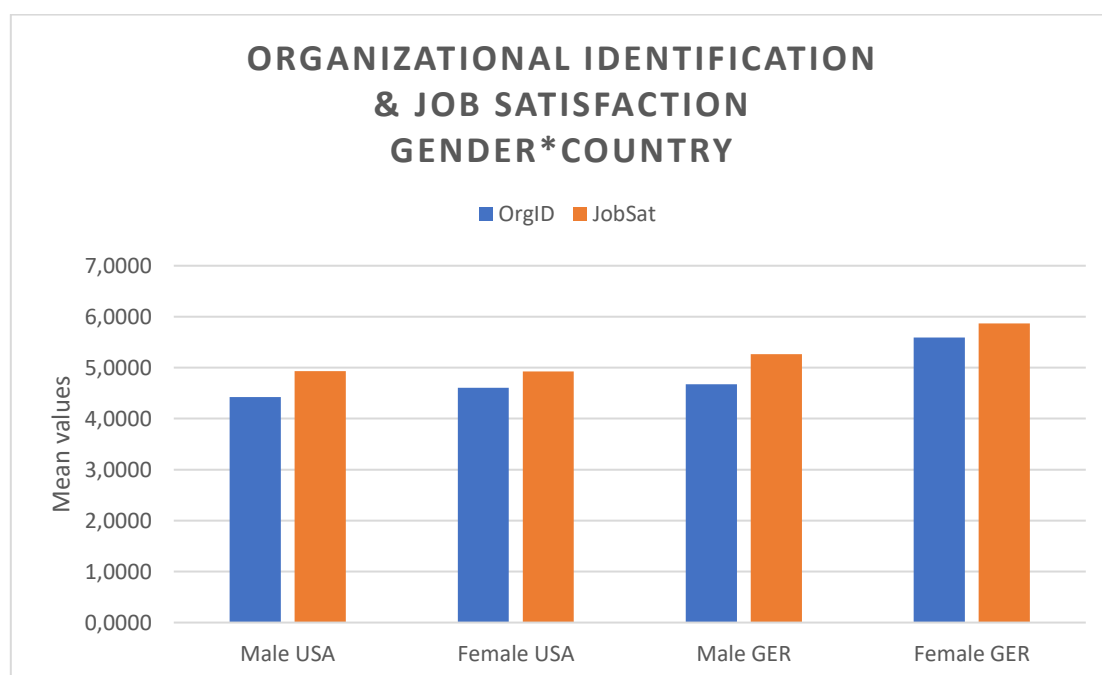
To further explore workplace outcomes, mean scores and standard deviations were analyzed for organizational identification and job satisfaction across gender and country. The highest level of organizational identification was reported by German females ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.22$), followed by German males ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.34$). U.S. participants showed lower identification with their organization overall, with U.S. females rating it at $M = 4.61$ ($SD = 1.74$) and U.S. males at the lowest with $M = 4.42$ ($SD = 1.83$). This indicates that German employees, especially women, feel more strongly connected to their organizations, whereas U.S. participants, particularly men, report lower identification. Job satisfaction followed a similar trend: German females again reported the highest satisfaction ($M = 5.87$, $SD = 1.10$), while German males also rated it positively ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.37$). In contrast, U.S. males and females reported lower job satisfaction ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.59$ and $M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.65$,

respectively). Overall, these results suggest that German employees are more satisfied with their jobs and identify more with their organizations, with German women consistently reporting the most positive workplace evaluations across both outcomes.

Table 11: Mean Organizational Identification and Job Satisfaction by Gender and Country (USA vs. Germany)

	Male USA	Female USA	Male GER		Female GER
Organizational Identification	4.4214	4.6079	4.6753		5.5902
Job Satisfaction	4.9335	4.9273	5.2653		5.8656

Figure 10: Organizational Identification and Job Satisfaction by Gender and Country (USA vs. Germany)



As part of the additional findings, tenure at the current employer was measured using categorized response options and compared across countries. Participants selected one of six-time ranges: 1–6 months, 7–11 months, 1–2 years, 3–5 years, 6–10 years, and over 10 years. On average, German participants selected higher tenure categories ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.22$) than U.S. participants ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.30$), suggesting longer periods of employment. The median category for German participants was “3–5 years,” while U.S. participants were more spread across the “1–2 years” and “3–5 years” ranges. These results reflect broader employment

culture trends, with U.S. organizations typically characterized by higher turnover and German companies often designed to support longer-term employment relationships.

Table 12: Mean Tenure with Current Employer by Country

	USA		GER	
<i>Years working for current employer</i>	M	SD	M	SD
	4.17	1.30	4.45	1.22

5. Discussion

Research Questions & Hypothesis

This part of the thesis analyzes the results of the survey and compares them to previous findings in literature, in reference to the research questions.

In terms of *RQ1: What factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. consider most important for receiving appreciation?* The findings suggest that employees in Germany and the U.S. appreciate being valued for a variety of reasons, with mean scores ranging from 4.33 to 6.16. These results support foundational psychological theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and Herzberg's two-factor theory (1966), which highlight esteem and recognition as key drivers of job satisfaction and performance. The high overall ratings also align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987), particularly the need for competence and relatedness, which are reinforced when individuals feel valued and acknowledged by others.

Despite these general similarities, notable cultural differences emerged. German participants rated 22 out of 24 appreciation items higher than their American counterparts, especially in areas such as personality, team spirit, loyalty toward colleagues, a positive workplace atmosphere, and providing feedback to others. These findings suggest a more relational and socially embedded approach to appreciation in Germany, where interpersonal harmony and group dynamics are emphasized more strongly. This interpretation is supported by Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2010), which describe Germany as having a high Uncertainty Avoidance Index and a moderate Individualism Index, as well as by findings from the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), which classifies Germany within the Germanic Europe cluster. This cluster is characterized by high Institutional Collectivism, structured communication, and strong team

orientation. The U.S. and Germany both showed highest appreciation importance for individual performance (USA $M = 6.16$; GER $M = 5.87$). This finding reflects the strong individualism and high-performance orientation typical of U.S. workplace culture (Hofstede, 2001; GLOBE, House et al., 2004). According to Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), American employees may interpret appreciation as a signal of performance recognition and reward. This focus on achievement-driven feedback also aligns with the U.S.'s preference for charismatic and visionary leadership, as identified in GLOBE findings. Germany's rise in individualism is reflective of recent findings by Minkov and Kaasa (2022). In sum, while appreciation is universally important, the specific attributes that employees want to be appreciated for differ cross-culturally, reflecting deeper cultural norms. German employees tend to value appreciation for prosocial and interpersonal qualities, whereas American employees place greater importance on outcomes. Both countries value individual performance and show lower interest in receiving appreciation for non-professional tasks. These differences underscore the importance of culturally sensitive recognition practices in multinational workplaces.

Participants also had the opportunity to specify what they personally consider important when it comes to appreciation. A total of 284 open-ended responses were analyzed and categorized. The most frequently mentioned themes were team spirit, skills and expertise, work ethic, organizational loyalty, punctuality, and reliability. These were followed by personality, communication, and innovation. Participants rated these responses especially highly, often between 6 and 7 on the importance scale, suggesting strong emotional significance. These open-text responses reinforce the cultural patterns identified in the closed-item data. For instance, the frequent mention of loyalty, team spirit, and reliability reflects Germany's cultural emphasis on structure and collective responsibility, consistent with Uncertainty Avoidance and Institutional Collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004). Meanwhile, U.S.-based values such as innovation, skills, and communication reflect the country's high performance orientation and individualism. The personal nature of these responses reflects concepts from Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996): appreciation tied to personal meaningful behaviors generates stronger emotional responses and influences long-term workplace attitudes. These patterns also align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987), which reinforces the roles of competence and autonomy as key drivers of motivation and recognition preferences. This also aligns with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which posits that esteem and belonging are fundamental psychological needs. Participants' preference for verbal recognition

and team-based support reflects their desire for social validation and inclusion within the organizational community. Ultimately, these findings support the notion that authentic, personalized appreciation, tailored to cultural expectations and individual values, is central to effective workplace recognition.

While RQ1 examined which aspects of appreciation are most important to employees in Germany and the U.S., RQ2 shifts the focus to actual workplace appreciation experiences. By analyzing reported appreciation experience, this section reveals how well organizational practices align with employee expectations in both cultural contexts. These findings reveal what employees value and whether those values are met on a daily basis. The findings for *RQ2: For what factors do employees in Germany and the U.S. actually receive appreciation?* show that, although both German and U.S. employees receive moderate to high levels of appreciation ($M = 3.94$ to $M = 5.74$), the overall scores are notably lower than the scores for importance. This indicates a consistent appreciation gap across both cultural contexts. This discrepancy between what employees value and what they receive is theoretically significant. It echoes insights from Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which posits that a lack of meaningful recognition can lead to negative emotional responses, reducing engagement and job satisfaction over time. From the perspective of organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), insufficient appreciation may signal weak POS, especially when employees feel that their contributions are undervalued or overlooked. Cross-cultural comparisons revealed clear patterns: German employees reported higher levels of received appreciation across all 24 items, suggesting a more consistent integration of appreciation practices into workplace norms. This finding aligns with Germany's higher uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001) and structured workplace practices that emphasize rules, reliability, and fairness. In the German context, appreciation may be more formalized or expected, particularly for task- and duty-based factors such as punctuality, providing feedback to others, and loyalty to colleagues. German employees reported receiving significantly more recognition for these areas than their U.S. counterparts. By contrast, U.S. employees received the most appreciation for individual performance ($M = 5.35$). This once more aligns with U.S. cultural values, such as high individualism and performance orientation (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004). However, this was the only item without a significant difference between countries, suggesting that recognition for performance is a shared value that is implemented differently. U.S. employees scored lowest on appreciation for non-professional tasks and reported lower recognition overall, which may reflect less institutionalized recognition structures in the U.S. There, appreciation is

often discretionary and tied to individual leadership styles or incentive systems rather than collective norms. From a social exchange theory lens, these discrepancies have important implications. When employees perceive an imbalance between their contributions, such as team loyalty, punctuality, feedback and the recognition they receive, the social contract may weaken. German workplaces may offer more consistent reciprocal reinforcement, while U.S. employees may experience recognition more selectively, focusing on outcomes rather than processes or interpersonal behaviors. Overall, the results of RQ2 suggest that German workplaces tend to provide more balanced and socially distributed forms of appreciation, while U.S. appreciation practices remain more performance-focused and individualized. These patterns support the view that appreciation is culturally embedded and shaped by national values, organizational norms, and leadership expectations.

Although RQ2 revealed that employees in both countries moderately experience appreciation, particularly German employees, it also showed noticeable discrepancies compared to the levels of importance reported in RQ1. *RQ3: In which factors do expectations and experiences differ in Germany and the U.S.?* systematically examines these expectation-experience discrepancies using difference scores to determine where underappreciation occurs most prominently and how these discrepancies differ between Germany and the U.S. This analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of how discrepancies in appreciation affect employee motivation, well-being, and perceived organizational support across cultures. The analysis of RQ3 revealed that employees in both Germany and the U.S. consistently experience underappreciation, with all 24 appreciation items showing a negative gap between what employees consider important and what they actually receive. These findings support those of Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which emphasizes that unmet emotional expectations in the workplace, particularly missed recognition opportunities, can lead to dissatisfaction, emotional disengagement, and reduced organizational commitment. Similarly, from the perspective of Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), these gaps suggest a disconnect between employee contributions and perceived organizational care. This leads to weaker POS and lower motivation to reciprocate with loyalty or discretionary effort. However, the degree of underappreciation varied significantly across cultural contexts. U.S. participants reported significantly larger appreciation gaps than German participants across 23 of the 24 items, indicating a more prevalent mismatch between appreciation expectations and experiences in American workplaces. This suggests that, although appreciation is valued in both countries, U.S. organizations are less effective at meeting these expectations. The largest gaps and

strongest effect sizes were found in domains such as honesty, commitment beyond job descriptions, and organizational contributions. This may reflect the individualized and decentralized nature of many U.S. workplaces, where appreciation tends to be more flexible and leader dependent. Despite the U.S.'s high individualism and performance orientation (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004), the lack of structured or institutionalized appreciation mechanisms could explain why even performance-driven contributions go unrecognized. By contrast, German participants reported smaller discrepancies, particularly regarding team- and process-oriented aspects such as feedback, team spirit, and learning from mistakes. Although these items still showed underappreciation, the smaller discrepancy suggests that workplace practices more closely meet the expectations of German employees. This aligns with Germany's higher Uncertainty Avoidance and Institutional Collectivism scores (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004), fostering standardized HR practices, formal feedback processes, and equitable recognition distribution across roles and behaviors.

Interestingly, personality was the only item without a significant difference between countries. This suggests that appreciation for personal traits may be more inconsistent or context-dependent universally, regardless of cultural background. Taken together, these results demonstrate that underappreciation is a shared yet culturally nuanced experience. In the U.S., employees expect broader recognition across multiple domains but primarily receive praise for performance. In Germany, expectations are somewhat more modest and more closely aligned with institutionally delivered practices. These findings underscore the importance of aligning recognition strategies with cultural values and employee expectations to improve morale, strengthen organizational identification, and reduce emotional strain from unmet needs.

It is important to interpret reported levels of appreciation and POS cautiously. As Eisenberger et al. (2020, p. 118) point out, it is unclear whether higher POS scores reflect improved organizational practices or if employees have adapted to receiving limited support by lowering their expectations. This adaptive response may cause individuals to report relatively high levels of support despite receiving minimal recognition, which could distort the validity of self-reported data. Consequently, future research should investigate whether perceived appreciation reflects actual organizational behavior or cognitive coping mechanisms shaped by long-term workplace conditions.

While RQ3 revealed the common experience of feeling unappreciated, particularly among U.S. employees, it also raised questions about who provides appreciation in the workplace and if this

varies across cultures. Therefore, RQ4 shifts the focus to the source of appreciation, comparing how recognition from supervisors versus colleagues is perceived in Germany and the U.S. Understanding the impact of the source of appreciation can offer valuable insights into team dynamics, leadership expectations, and workplace culture. The results of *RQ4: How does employee appreciation in Germany and the U.S. differ depending on the source of appreciation?* show no significant main effect for source, indicating that supervisors and colleagues are generally considered equally important sources of appreciation. However, the significant interaction between source and country reveals more nuanced cultural differences. German employees receive and value more appreciation from colleagues than U.S. employees do, while U.S. employees report nearly equal levels of appreciation from both sources. This finding aligns with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which emphasizes reciprocity and mutual recognition in social relationships. In German workplaces, colleague-based appreciation may reflect stronger horizontal relational norms, which is consistent with institutional collectivism, as described in the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). In Germany, appreciation appears to be embedded not only in hierarchical structures, but also in peer-to-peer interactions. This supports a workplace culture that values collaboration and mutual respect across roles. Furthermore, perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) was evidently associated with appreciation from supervisors. This finding lends support to the notion that leadership behavior is perceived as an indication of how much the organization values its employees. The slightly stronger role of colleague appreciation in Germany may also be influenced by a higher level of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et al., 2010), where formal structures and stable social bonds are emphasized, as well as by cultural norms favoring team cohesion and consistency. These dynamics create an environment in which coworkers are expected to recognize and support each other and in which appreciation is distributed more evenly throughout the organization. In contrast, U.S. results suggest that the source of appreciation matters less overall, as supervisor and colleague recognition are perceived similarly, but supervisor appreciation is still in the lead. However, given the lower levels of reported appreciation among U.S. employees, this may reflect a culture that is more individualized or performance-based, where appreciation is less frequent and more dependent on specific outcomes than on relational norms. This interpretation aligns with the high levels of individualism and performance orientation in the U.S. (Hofstede et al., 2010; House et al., 2004), where interpersonal appreciation may be considered less important than formal recognition and rewards. Together, these results suggest that cultural values shape not only how much appreciation is received but also from whom it is expected and experienced. These

differences have practical implications for multinational teams. Fostering peer appreciation systems may be particularly valuable in German contexts, while formalizing appreciation delivery could benefit U.S.-based organizations.

While RQ4 examined the sources of appreciation and how their perceived value varies in different cultural contexts, RQ5 explores the broader impact of appreciation on two important organizational outcomes: job satisfaction and organizational identification. Examining how appreciation is linked to these outcomes in Germany and the U.S. provides deeper insight into its motivational power and role in fostering organizational commitment in different cultural environments. The results of *RQ5: How does the relation between appreciation, job satisfaction, organizational identification differ in Germany and the U.S.?* demonstrate a positive and significant correlation between appreciation and job satisfaction, as well as organizational identification, in both Germany and the U.S. These findings confirm the central role of appreciation in employee well-being and commitment. However, the German sample showed stronger correlations, suggesting that appreciation may have a more profound impact on employee outcomes in that cultural context. These findings align with Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which states that meaningful workplace events, such as receiving appreciation, evoke emotional responses that accumulate over time and ultimately shape long-term attitudes, such as job satisfaction and identification. The stronger correlations in Germany may reflect a greater sensitivity to social-emotional dynamics in the workplace or a stronger integration of appreciation into the broader organizational culture and communication. This interpretation is supported by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2012), which states that appreciation can reinforce employees' sense of competence and relatedness. These two needs are key drivers of intrinsic motivation and well-being at work. Additionally, Herzberg's two-factor theory (1966) helps contextualize these results by suggesting that appreciation functions as a motivator rather than a hygiene factor. While the absence of appreciation may not directly lead to dissatisfaction, its presence can significantly enhance motivation and foster positive workplace attitudes. From the perspective of Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), appreciation signals that the organization values and supports the employee, leading to a stronger psychological bond. This link appears to be stronger in the German sample, suggesting that German employees may more closely associate appreciation with organizational care and fairness overall. This is consistent with the country's cultural emphasis on structured relationships, mutual obligation, and institutional collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010; House et al., 2004). While the U.S. sample also shows strong positive relationships

between appreciation, satisfaction, and identification, the slightly weaker correlation strength may reflect cultural tendencies toward individualism and self-reliance. In this context, appreciation is valued, but it is less central to identity-building within the organization. It may also reflect more fluid employment relationships where organizational identification is less strongly reinforced due to higher mobility and less structural security. These results ultimately suggest that appreciation universally shapes employee outcomes, though this effect is moderated by culture. In collectivist and structure-oriented contexts, such as in Germany, appreciation is more strongly tied to satisfaction and identification. In individualist cultures, such as the U.S., appreciation still matters but may play a more supplementary or variable role depending on leadership and the workplace environment.

H1: More appreciation leads to more job satisfaction and more organizational identification is supported. Across both countries, employees who reported higher levels of appreciation also reported greater job satisfaction and stronger organizational identification. These results confirm the theoretical expectation that appreciation is a key psychological driver of positive workplace outcomes. This expectation is supported by Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Notably, the stronger correlations observed in Germany imply that appreciation's motivational and relational impact is particularly pronounced in structured, collectivist work cultures.

It is important to note that Germany's higher score in collectivism than the U.S.'s is consistent with earlier findings by Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 95) and is reflected in the survey results of this study. However, more recent data presented by Minkov and Kaasa (2022, p. 13) suggests a reversal of this pattern. Germany now ranks higher in individualism, with a score of 79 (up from 67), while the U.S. has dropped to 60 (down from 91) on the individualism index (Hofstede et al., 2010; Minkov & Kaasa, 2022). These results point to a shift in cultural values over time, potentially driven by globalization, demographic changes, and shifting social norms. One possible reason the present survey results align more closely with Hofstede's earlier data is that workplace behaviors and perceptions lag behind broader cultural shifts. Even if societal values are evolving, it may take years or decades for these changes to be fully reflected in workplace attitudes, especially within larger or more traditional organizations. Additionally, the demographic composition of the sample and the organizational sectors represented may more closely mirror the norms prevalent in the 2010 data. The U.S.'s increased collectivism

may stem from growing cultural diversity due to immigration from collectivist cultures, while Germany's rising individualism may reflect the influence of globalization due to international, particularly Anglo-American, business culture.

Implications for Theory and Practice

This study makes several important contributions to our theoretical understanding of employee appreciation. First, consistent findings across RQ1–RQ5 confirm core propositions of Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) by highlighting appreciation as a critical affective event shaping employees' emotional experiences, job satisfaction, and organizational attachment. The findings also sustain the case for Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) by showing that appreciation, whether from supervisors or colleagues, acts as a signal of POS. This, in turn, enhances employee engagement and identification. Additionally, the findings expand upon Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987) by showing how appreciation fulfills the psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and, in certain instances, autonomy. These effects were evident in both cultural contexts, though they were more pronounced in Germany. This indicates that cultural values influence the extent to which appreciation affects psychological outcomes. By demonstrating the variation in the strength of the effects of appreciation across cultures, this research contributes to the field of cross-cultural organizational behavior, particularly in the context of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2001) and the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). The findings reinforce the need to adapt recognition frameworks to cultural norms, especially those related to individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and performance orientation. Lastly, the findings contribute to ongoing debates in critical management studies and emotional labor theory (Hochschild, 1983; 2012). Although appreciation is typically considered a positive organizational practice, this study suggests that unmet expectations regarding appreciation can result in emotional dissonance, frustration, and disengagement, particularly when recognition seems inconsistent, insincere, or superficial.

From a practical perspective, the study emphasizes the importance of incorporating culturally sensitive appreciation practices into organizational communication and human resource management. For organizations operating in Germany, the results suggest that recognition should emphasize interpersonal appreciation, such as personality, team spirit, and reliability. Peer-to-peer appreciation is especially important in the German context and should be encouraged through collaborative practices, team acknowledgments, and internal feedback systems or 360-degree reviews that promote mutual recognition among colleagues. For U.S.

organizations, the findings underscore the need to improve the alignment of appreciation with employee expectations, as well as its frequency. Since U.S. employees reported significantly higher underappreciation gaps, particularly in areas such as commitment, honesty, and contributions to success, organizations should ensure that supervisors are trained to recognize effort and values-based behaviors, not just outcomes. Personalized appreciation tied to organizational contributions may be especially effective in increasing satisfaction and retention. In both countries, digital recognition tools (e.g., internal platforms, shout-outs, and peer-nominated rewards) may help bridge appreciation gaps, particularly in hybrid and remote work environments. These tools can enable customized, timely, and context-sensitive appreciation, reducing the risk of emotional disconnect or perceived inequality. However, such tools must be designed with cultural awareness in mind. For example, public praise may be motivating in one context and uncomfortable in another. In general, organizations that implement systematic, genuine, and culturally attuned appreciation strategies tend to have higher employee satisfaction, stronger organizational identification, and a healthier emotional work environment.

Further Analysis: Gender x Culture

Additional analyses of gender and country interactions revealed significant patterns in how appreciation is expressed and received in the workplace. These analyses highlighted the intersection of gender roles and cultural norms. Across most items, German women reported the highest levels of both received and expressed appreciation, while U.S. men reported the lowest levels. These results suggest a complex dynamic in which national context and gender identity jointly shape appreciation practices and their consequences in the workplace. These findings extend Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) in valuable ways. For instance, German women's reports of significantly higher levels of appreciation from supervisors and colleagues suggest they experience more positive affective reinforcement. This may explain their high levels of job satisfaction ($M = 5.87$) and organizational identification ($M = 5.59$). Here, appreciation functions as a form of social and emotional recognition that reinforces a sense of belonging, competence, and purpose. In contrast, U.S. men appear to experience the lowest levels of workplace appreciation, particularly for interpersonal or relational contributions, such as team loyalty or providing feedback. This trend may reflect cultural scripts that emphasize performance and autonomy for men in individualistic societies like the U.S., while discouraging emotional expression and relational recognition (Hofstede et al., 2010). From a gender role theory perspective, behaviors and expectations surrounding appreciation may be influenced by

societal beliefs that associate women more strongly with interpersonal sensitivity and emotional labor. This makes women more attuned to appreciation and more likely to be targets of it, especially in relationally oriented cultures like Germany. Interestingly, German men deviated from this gender pattern by reporting a relatively high appreciation for individual performance. This aligns them more with U.S. male respondents who value tasks and outputs. However, they still did not report the same levels of job satisfaction or identification as their female counterparts. This suggests that relational recognition may be more strongly tied to positive workplace outcomes than performance-based recognition alone. Interaction effects between gender and country reinforce the need for culturally adaptive, gender-sensitive appreciation strategies. One-size-fits-all recognition systems may overlook these differences, but tailored approaches could help close the recognition gap and enhance employee engagement. For example, supervisors could be encouraged to recognize male employees in the U.S., and more peer-to-peer appreciation could be fostered for women. Finally, the findings on tenure add further cultural context. German employees reported significantly longer average tenure, suggesting that appreciation may be reinforced over time within stable employment relationships. This could amplify the effects of recognition, especially for women, who are expected to nurture workplace relationships and thus become more embedded in appreciation networks the longer they remain with an organization. Overall, this additional analysis highlights that appreciation is not uniformly experienced across groups. Rather, it is shaped by a complex interplay of gender roles, national culture, and organizational structures. These results underscore the importance of developing inclusive appreciation practices that acknowledge these differences and foster emotional equity in diverse workplaces.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The present study offers valuable insights into the cross-cultural dynamics of employee appreciation; however, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the use of self-report measures introduces the possibility of bias. Participants may have responded in socially desirable ways, or they may have misjudged how much appreciation they receive or express. Since the data reflects subjective perceptions rather than objective behavior, the results should be interpreted accordingly. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Although appreciation was positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational identification, it is unclear whether appreciation leads to these outcomes or if more satisfied employees simply perceive greater appreciation. Longitudinal or experimental research designs would be necessary to establish causality. Another limitation concerns the

cultural framing of the study. Germany and the U.S. were treated as unified national cultures, consistent with frameworks such as Hofstede (2001) and the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). However, this approach overlooks regional, organizational, and individual-level differences within each country. For example, East and West Germany still exhibit cultural and economic differences, and the U.S. exhibits significant variability across states and industries. Additionally, the survey did not explicitly ask about participants' nationality or cultural background; it only asked about the country in which they currently work. As such, although the data reflects employees working in Germany and the U.S., some respondents may not have been native to those cultures. This could have introduced cultural variation beyond the assumed national context and could have affected how appreciation was interpreted and experienced, particularly among internationally mobile workers or expatriates. Therefore, future studies should explicitly measure cultural background, nationality, and time lived in the country to better contextualize cross-cultural comparisons. Language interpretation also poses a potential limitation. Although the survey was carefully translated and adapted for each language group, differences in how specific appreciation items are understood across cultures (e.g., "loyalty" or "personality") may have influenced the results. Despite efforts to ensure semantic equivalence, some items may carry different connotations across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Additionally, while the appreciation scale developed for this study is grounded in relevant theory and prior research, it has not undergone full psychometric validation. While internal consistency was acceptable, future studies should conduct exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to examine the scale's dimensionality and reliability. A validated, cross-cultural appreciation instrument would strengthen the comparability and robustness of future findings.

Finally, although the sample size was large and balanced across countries, it was not representative of all industries or job types. Participants were recruited through online channels and came from various sectors. However, industry-specific appreciation cultures (e.g., healthcare vs. tech) were not analyzed separately. Additionally, organizational variables such as leadership style and appreciation policy were not measured even though they likely influence appreciation experiences. Future research can address these limitations in several ways. Longitudinal and intervention-based studies would be especially valuable for identifying the causal effects of appreciation on employee well-being and organizational commitment. Furthermore, future work should prioritize the psychometric validation of the appreciation scale and adapt it for broader international contexts. Additionally, qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide deeper insight into how appreciation is defined,

interpreted, and communicated across different cultures and identity groups. Expanding cultural comparisons beyond Germany and the U.S. to include countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa could help develop a more globally inclusive understanding of appreciation practices. Recognizing how appreciation is shaped by age, tenure, disability status, and other social categories could deepen our understanding and promote equitable workplace practices. Finally, future studies could examine how organizational factors, such as leadership style, internal communication, and the use of digital tools for recognition and shape appreciation. An important contextual shift that merits further exploration is the rise of remote and hybrid work environments. This transformation has altered the way appreciation is communicated and perceived. With fewer in-person interactions, recognition must be expressed more intentionally via digital channels. This shift underscores the importance of culturally sensitive and personalized appreciation strategies that resonate in physical and virtual workspaces alike. Future research should examine how digital tools and remote communication styles affect the perceived sincerity and effectiveness of appreciation in various cultural contexts, as this remains an open area of study. In sum, a more diverse, methodologically rigorous, and inclusive research agenda is needed to fully understand the nuanced role of appreciation in modern, multicultural workplaces. Through continued research, questioning, and evolution of appreciation practices, scholars and practitioners can foster workplaces where people feel genuinely seen, valued, and connected. This study highlights the importance of employee appreciation and the gap that still exists between practice and value, as well as the importance of filling this gap.

6. References

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7. Tools Used

AI-based Tools	Use
DeepLWrite	Grammar correction and synonym search

8. Appendix

8.1. U.S. Survey

AppSurvey english

Start of Block: Introduction

Introduction Welcome! As part of a project at the University of Vienna, we are studying work experiences. For this, we are surveying employees in the U.S. who are currently in active employment and work in an organization (such as a company, non-profit organization, government agency, etc.) with at least 50 people. The survey will take about 15 minutes. We are interested in your personal opinion, so there are no right or wrong answers. Your data will be collected anonymously. What this means and which rights you have will be explained in more detail on the next page. If you have any questions, you can contact the project team at any time (Contact: [redacted]). Thank you for your interest!

End of Block: Introduction

Start of Block: Informed consent

informed consent Participants in the study have various rights. Please read them carefully: Participation in the study is voluntary, and you can stop at any time. Your participation is anonymous. You will not be asked for information that could reveal your identity or that of your employer. Therefore, your answers cannot be traced back to you and will be treated as strictly confidential. Your responses will only be used for scientific purposes. The research is not commercially driven. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact the project team. (Contact: [redacted]). For general legal questions related to the GDPR/FOG, please contact the Data Protection Officer at the University of Vienna at verarbeitungsverzeichnis@univie.ac.at. Additionally, there is the right to file a complaint with the data protection authority (e.g., via dsb@dsb.gv.at). Do you understand your rights and would you like to participate in the study?

- ☐ Yes, I have understood my rights and would like to participate in the study. (1)
- ☐ No, I do not want to participate in the study. (2)

End of Block: Informed consent

Start of Block: Prolific ID

Prolific ID Please enter your Prolific ID:

End of Block: Prolific ID

Start of Block: employed

employed To begin, we would like to ask you some general questions. Do you currently have an employment contract with an organization (such as a company, a non-profit organization, a government agency, etc.)?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

End of Block: employed

Start of Block: orga size

orga size How many people are employed by the organization you currently work for? If your employer also has employees abroad, please provide the total number of employees worldwide.

- ☐ Less than 50 people (1)
- ☐ 50 to 249 people (2)
- ☐ 250 to 499 people (3)
- ☐ 500 to 999 people (4)
- ☐ 1,000 to 10,000 people (5)
- ☐ More than 10,000 people (6)

End of Block: orga size

Start of Block: state

state In which U.S. state are you currently employed?

▼ Alabama (54) ... Outside the U.S. (52)

End of Block: state

Start of Block: age



age How old are you? Please provide your age in whole numbers (e.g., 45).

End of Block: age

Start of Block: app import

App import 1 At work, people like to receive appreciation for certain things. Please indicate how important it is for you to receive appreciation for the following things at your workplace.

	not important at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	very important (7)
For my professional expertise. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my work experience. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my honesty towards others. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my punctuality. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my reliability. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my personality. (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my social skills (e.g., empathy towards colleagues). (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my flexibility (e.g., taking on unplanned tasks, getting acquainted with new topics). (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my loyalty towards colleagues. (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my good mood at the workplace. (10)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For my
willingness
to listen.
(11)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

For my
individual
performance.
(12)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Page Break

App import 2 Continuation of the previous question: At work, one would like to be appreciated for certain things. Please indicate how important it is for you to receive appreciation for the following things at your workplace.

	not important at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	very important (7)
For professional tasks that I complete in addition to my main responsibilities. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For non-professional tasks that I do in addition to my work responsibilities (e.g., cleaning the coffee machine). (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my commitment that goes far beyond my job description (e.g., moving for a project). (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my daily work effort. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my willingness to take on responsibility. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my solution-oriented work. (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For the feedback I give to others. (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my team spirit. (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my loyalty to the organization. (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For my contributions to the further development of the organization. (10)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my contributions to the overall success of the organization. (11)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my willingness to learn from mistakes. (12)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Break

App import 3 Are there any other things you would like to receive appreciation for at work? Please write each one in the text boxes below and then indicate how important it is for you to be recognised for them. If you cannot think of any further things, please click the ‘Next’ button.

	not important at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	very important (7)
(1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: app import

Start of Block: app receive

app receive 1 Next, we would like to know how much appreciation you actually receive for the things you just rated. Please indicate how much appreciation you receive for the following things.

	very little (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	very much (7)
For my professional expertise. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my work experience. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my honesty towards others. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my punctuality. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my reliability. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my personality. (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my social skills (e.g., empathy towards colleagues). (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my flexibility (e.g., taking on unplanned tasks, getting acquainted with new topics). (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my loyalty towards colleagues. (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my good mood at the workplace. (10)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For my
willingness
to listen.
(11)

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

For my
individual
performance.
(12)

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Page Break

app receive 2 Continuation of the previous question: Next, we would like to know how much appreciation you actually receive for the things you just rated. Please indicate how much appreciation you receive for the following things.

	very little (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	very much (7)
For professional tasks that I complete in addition to my main responsibilities. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For non-professional tasks that I do in addition to my work responsibilities (e.g., cleaning the coffee machine). (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my commitment that goes far beyond my job description (e.g., moving for a project). (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my daily work effort. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my willingness to take on responsibility. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my solution-oriented work. (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For the feedback I give to others. (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my team spirit. (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For my loyalty to the organization. (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For my contributions to the further development of the organization. (10)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

For my contributions to the overall success of the organization. (11)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

For my willingness to learn from mistakes. (12)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

End of Block: app receive

Start of Block: App receive block two

Carry Forward Selected Choices – Entered Text from “Are there any other things you would like to receive appreciation for at work? Please write each one in the text boxes below and then indicate how important it is for you to be recognised for them. If you cannot think of any further things, please click the ‘Next’ button.”



app receive 3 Below, you will find the items for which you previously stated that you would like to receive appreciation. Please indicate the level of appreciation you actually receive for each of these.

	very little (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	very much (7)
(x1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(x2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(x3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: App receive block two

Start of Block: App super coll self



App super Please read the following statements about the behavior of your supervisor, i.e. the person directly responsible for you, and indicate the extent to which they apply to your work situation.

	does not apply at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	applies completely (7)
I feel that my supervisor appreciates me. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My supervisor praises me when I do my work well. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My supervisor highlights when I have done a good job. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My supervisor visibly shows appreciation towards me. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Break

App coll Please read the following statements about the behavior of your colleagues and indicate how much they apply to your work situation.

	does not apply at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	applies completely (7)
I feel that my colleagues appreciate me. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My colleagues praise me when I do my work well. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My colleagues highlight when I have done a good job. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My colleagues visibly show appreciation towards me. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Break

App self Please read the following statements about your interactions with colleagues and supervisor and indicate how much they apply to you.

	does not apply at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	applies completely (7)
I show my colleagues how important their work is to me. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I show my colleagues how important they are to me personally. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I let my colleagues know how much I appreciate them. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I appreciate the time my colleagues dedicate to me. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I remind myself regularly to show appreciation to my colleagues. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: App super coll self

Start of Block: outcome



job satis Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your work.

	strongly disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	strongly agree (8)
My work is really fun for me. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy my work more than the average employee. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On most days, I am excited about my work. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am quite satisfied with my work. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

identif Please read the following statements about your organization and indicate how much you agree with them.

	strongly disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	strongly agree (7)
When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am very interested in what others think about my organization. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I talk about my organization, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My organization's successes are also my successes. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When someone praises my organization, it feels like a personal compliment. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If a story in the media criticized the organization, I would feel embarrassed. (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page Break

End of Block: outcome

Start of Block: socio block one

gender At the end of this survey, we kindly ask you to provide some personal information.
What gender do you identify with?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Other (3)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (4)

Page Break

edu What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Less than high school completion (1)
 - ☐ High school graduate (5)
 - ☐ Some college, no degree (2)
 - ☐ Associate's degree (3)
 - ☐ Higher education degree (Bachelor's, Master's, PhD) (6)
 - ☐ Other: (7) _____
-

income What is your current annual net income?

- ☐ Less than \$10,000 (1)
- ☐ \$10,000 to \$14,999 (2)
- ☐ \$15,000 to \$24,999 (7)
- ☐ \$25,000 to \$34,999 (3)
- ☐ \$35,000 to \$49,999 (4)
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$74,999 (5)
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999 (6)
- ☐ \$100,000 to \$149,999 (8)
- ☐ \$150,000 to \$199,999 (10)
- ☐ \$200,000 or more (11)
- ☐ Prefer not to say. (9)

Page Break



hours contract How many hours per week is your employment contract for? Please provide the amount in numbers with a maximum of one decimal place (e.g., 35.5)



hours real How many hours do you actually work per week? (On average) Please provide the number in whole numbers (e.g., 23).



hours ho How many hours per week do you work from home? (On average) Please provide the number in whole numbers (e.g., 4).

Page Break

years employer How long have you been working for your current employer?

- ☐ 1-6 months (1)
- ☐ 7-11 months (2)
- ☐ 1-2 years (3)
- ☐ 3-5 years (4)
- ☐ 6-10 years (5)
- ☐ Over 10 years (6)

Page Break

org type What type of organization do you work for?

- ☐ For-profit company (1)
- ☐ Public non-profit organization (2)
- ☐ Private non-profit organization (3)
- ☐ Other: (4) _____

Page Break

position Which of the following best describes your current role or employment status?

- ☐ Self-employed / Freelancer (1)
- ☐ White collar worker (3)
- ☐ Blue collar worker (4)
- ☐ Other: (6) _____

End of Block: socio block one

Start of Block: socio block two

leader Do you have leadership responsibilities?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

End of Block: socio block two

Start of Block: socio block three



freq subordi How many people report to you?

End of Block: socio block three

Start of Block: socio block four

indust Which industry does your organization belong to?

- ☐ Manufacturing industry (e.g., chemicals, mechanical engineering), production of goods (1)
- ☐ Energy supply (2)
- ☐ Water supply, wastewater and waste disposal, elimination of environmental pollution (3)
- ☐ Construction industry, building (4)
- ☐ Trade (5)
- ☐ Transportation and logistics (6)
- ☐ Hospitality, accommodation, and catering (7)
- ☐ Arts, entertainment, and recreation (8)
- ☐ Media, information, and communication (9)
- ☐ Provision of financial and insurance services (10)
- ☐ Real estate and housing (11)
- ☐ Provision of other services (12)
- ☐ Public administration, defense, social security (public service) (13)
- ☐ Education and teaching (14)
- ☐ Science and research (15)
- ☐ Health and social services (16)
- ☐ Other: (17) _____

End of Block: socio block four

Start of Block: comment

comment Please feel free to leave us any comments or suggestions about this survey or your answers in the following comment field:

End of Block: comment

Start of Block: End of Survey text

End of Survey text Thank you very much for participating in our survey! Through your responses, you are helping us learn more about the situation of employees in the U.S. Specifically, we are focusing on appreciation. We want to find out what employees want appreciation for and how much they actually receive. Additionally, we are interested in how appreciation is related to job satisfaction and how much employees identify with their organization. If you have any questions or are interested in the results, please feel free to contact us via email: [redacted]) Click the proceed button to be redirected back to Prolific.

End of Block: End of Survey text

8.2 Abstract

English

Employee appreciation is a crucial yet frequently overlooked factor in organizational behavior, especially in cross-cultural contexts. This study examines how employees in Germany and the U.S. perceive and experience appreciation in the workplace. Using theories such as Self-Determination Theory, Organizational Support Theory, and the cultural dimensions frameworks of Hofstede and GLOBE, the research explores which aspects of appreciation employees value most, how much appreciation they receive, and how expectation-reality gaps vary between countries. Based on a quantitative survey of 986 employees (with roughly equal samples from Germany and the U.S.), the study analyzes the importance and frequency of appreciation across 24 items. It distinguishes between sources of appreciation (supervisors vs. colleagues) and links appreciation to job satisfaction and organizational identification. The results show that German employees report higher levels of received appreciation and smaller gaps between expected and actual recognition, particularly among women. U.S. employees, by contrast, experience more underappreciation, particularly for socio-emotional contributions. These results highlight cultural differences in how appreciation is perceived, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive recognition strategies in international organizations.

Mitarbeiterwertschätzung ist ein zentraler, jedoch häufig vernachlässigter Faktor im Verhalten innerhalb von Organisationen, insbesondere im interkulturellen Kontext. In dieser Studie wird untersucht, wie Beschäftigte in Deutschland und den USA Wertschätzung am Arbeitsplatz wahrnehmen und erleben. Theoretische Grundlagen sind unter anderem die Selbstbestimmungstheorie, die Theorie der organisationalen Unterstützung sowie die Kulturdimensionen nach Hofstede und dem GLOBE-Projekt. Das Ziel der Arbeit besteht darin, die Aspekte von Wertschätzung zu erfassen, die für Mitarbeitende besonders wichtig sind, sowie, in welchem Ausmaß sie Wertschätzung tatsächlich erfahren und wie stark die Lücke zwischen Erwartung und Realität länderspezifisch ausfällt. Auf Basis einer quantitativen Online-Umfrage mit 986 Teilnehmenden (je zur Hälfte aus Deutschland und den USA) wurden 24 Wertschätzungsdimensionen sowie deren Quellen (Vorgesetzte bzw. Kolleg:innen) analysiert und Zusammenhänge mit Arbeitszufriedenheit und organisationaler Identifikation untersucht. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass deutsche Beschäftigte häufiger Wertschätzung erhalten und geringere Erwartungslücken berichten, insbesondere Frauen. In den USA hingegen ist Unterwertschätzung stärker verbreitet, vor allem bei zwischenmenschlichen Beiträgen. Die Studie unterstreicht kulturelle Unterschiede im Erleben von Wertschätzung und betont die Bedeutung kontextspezifischer Anerkennungsstrategien in internationalen Organisationen.