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Variation in communication satisfaction of academic staff in universities in Yemen depending on national culture

Communication
satisfaction

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of communication practices in universities in Yemen. The paper also gives further insight into the relationship between national culture (NC) and communication satisfaction (CS) of multicultural teams at universities.

Design/methodology/approach – The study used a quantitative research design and used quantitative instruments to collect data from 338 faculty members from different countries including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, teachers, and tutors working at four universities in Yemen. Data were collected using the CS questionnaire and the Value Survey Module.

Findings – The analysis of the data shows that the CS levels among the academic staff vary according to the nationality. In addition, analysis of the data revealed that there is a significant relationship between CS factors and NC dimensions.

Originality/value – This research provides valuable insight into the faculty members' development and performance. It may assist the multicultural academic staff to be able to help, improve working relationships, and understanding of intercultural communication which help them to reach a CS.

Keywords Communication, Customer satisfaction, National cultures, Multicultural management, Academic staff, Yemen

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Effective communication is a key to organizational accomplishment. Therefore, communication should have been located by organizations in their strategic planning process (Ahmad, 2006; Hargie *et al.*, 2002). It is also very important for all organizations to adopt effective communication practices (Carrière and Bourque, 2009). Hence, examining communication effectiveness plays a practical role in shaping the organization's communication strategy. Accordingly, employee CS is important since it plays a central role for employees' organizational effectiveness. If organizational communication is low that results in low-organizational commitment, more absenteeism, greater employee turnover, and more less productivity (Hargie *et al.*, 2002).

As noted by Applbaum *et al.* (1973), communication process in any organization affects many facets of this organization such as customer service, personal development, teamwork, leadership, organizational climate, culture, job satisfaction, and productivity.

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So, the process of communication is vital in all areas of life, since interaction of any kind requires forms of communication; from personal relationships and interaction to business relationships and interaction. If lack of communication can cause a failure in interpersonal relationship, so, obviously, it can also cause employee dissatisfaction and create problems with efficiency and productivity in an organization as well (Villegas and Cerveny, 2004). Essentially, there are some challenges that have been created by intercultural experiences to one's personal communication skills. One has to learn how to deal with unexpectedness, ambiguity and otherness as well as the resulting culture shock. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for successful intercultural communication have to be observed, discussed and practiced (Ruben, 1976; Huber-kriegler and Strange, 2003). According to Ricard (1993), effective intercultural communication skill is an individual's or a group's ability to achieve understanding through verbal or non-verbal interaction between cultures. van Bakel (2002) has claimed that the literature about intercultural communication shows that differences in culture are the major cause of any international assignment problems. The adapting process is the same for almost every culture, but it can create many problems in the case of cultures that are not close to the home culture.

Universities are considered as important organizations which include within them a big number of academic and administrative staff. These academic institutions play an important role in the development of any nation in the world. As such, the Yemeni Government tries its best to pay greater attention to the universities on which development of the country is dependent. Obviously, a high-quality university requires a sense of community and a common culture and this, of course, desires the existence of a healthy communication process for such goal to be achieved. According to Gizir and Simsek (2005), universities are composed of multiple cultural configurations and they are not homogeneous organizations as their cultural characteristics are influenced by both national and international developments. Toma (1997) claims that academic staff working in the same university increasingly find themselves grounded within different academic cultures. These sub-cultures which are included in the same academic culture and that make up the overall campus culture are defined by Kuh and Witt (2000) as the collective of norms, values, experiences, beliefs, and assumptions guiding individuals' and group's behavior in a university and provide a reference that helps in interpreting the meaning of events and actions on and off that campus. These different sub-cultures, together with the differences in the staff's national cultures (NCs), may cause difficulties in communication between the academic staff (Gizir and Simsek, 2005). Many researchers have showed that internal organizational communication is important for improving employee productivity and performance and for positive organizational outcomes (Argenti, 1998; Clampitt and Downs, 1993).

Communication satisfaction

Communication is vital for any institution and organization since it is the vehicle of human interaction. Scholars believe that a positive communication environment contributes to organizational efficiency (Ahmad, 2006). Many researches have revealed that there is a relationship between CS and organizational identification (Nakra, 2006); productivity (Clampitt and Downs, 1993); organizational commitment (Varona, 1996, 2002; Hsu, 2002); job performance (Pincus, 1986); and job satisfaction (Gulnar, 2007; Downs and Hazen, 1977).

Communication satisfaction has been defined by many scholars as an individual's satisfaction with various aspects of communication in interpersonal, group, and organizational contexts (Downs and Hazen, 1977; Hecht, 1978). Communication satisfaction previously was thought to be a one-dimensional construct (Downs and Adrian, 2004). Thayer (1968, p. 144) defined CS as "the personal satisfaction inherent in successfully communicating to someone [. . .]". Redding (1972) raised a very important question that is whether CS may indeed be a multidimensional concept. He claimed that CS refers to the overall degree of satisfaction an employee perceives in the communication environment. Such questions often spur theoretical and empirical research (Downs and Adrian, 2004). Downs and Hazen (1977) asked the same CS question. And as an answer to this question they managed to develop a questionnaire and administer it to 225 employees from many kinds of organizations. Researches on the dimensionality of CS have then proved that this construct is not a one-dimensional variable but it is a multidimensional one (Downs and Hazen, 1977; Clampitt and Downs, 1993).

Varona (1996) has claimed that the CS construct, operationalized by Downs and Hazen in 1977, has become a successful research stream in organizational communication. Downs and Hazen (1977) produced the communication satisfaction questionnaire (CSQ) as the first means of CS audit for the organizational communication research. The CSQ has initially been developed by Downs and Hazen as an attempt to discover the relationship between communication and job satisfaction. Downs and his colleagues (Clampitt and Downs, 1993; Downs and Hazen, 1977) have proposed that CS consists of eight stable factors described as follows.

1. Communication climate

According to Downs and Hazen, communication climate reflects the organizational and personal communication levels. It explains the extent to which communication in the organization motivates and stimulates workers to meet organizational goals. This dimension also makes employees identify with the organization. It also involves judgments of whether people's attitudes towards communication are healthy in the organization. So it reflects the level of satisfaction with personal and organizational issues (e.g. attitudes, problem understanding, motivation, and identification) (Lee, 2001).

2. Relation with supervisor

Supervisory communication includes both upward and downward aspects of communicating with superiors. This dimension includes the extent to which a superior is open to ideas, the degree to which executive listens and pays attention and the degree to which direction is offered in solving job-related problems.

3. Organizational integration

Organizational integration revolves around the degree to which individuals receive information about the immediate work environment. This dimension focuses on the degree of satisfaction with information about departmental plans, the requirements of their jobs, and some personnel news.

4. Media quality

Media quality deals with the extent to which meetings are well-organized, written directives are short and clear, and the degree to which communication is about right.

5. *Horizontal communication*

Horizontal communication concerns the degree to which horizontal and informal communication is accurate and free flowing. This dimension also includes satisfaction with the activeness of the grapevine.

6. *Organizational perspective*

This dimension deals with the broadest kind of information about the organization as a whole such as its goals and performance, and the measures by which they are estimated are objective.

7. *Personal feedback*

The personal feedback dimension contains questions about supervisors' understandings of problems faced on the job and whether or not employees feel the criteria by which they are judged are fair.

8. *Relations with subordinates*

This portion is filled out only by those with supervisory responsibilities, does not appear on the form filled out by non supervisory employees, and may be omitted entirely. It taps receptivity of employees to downward communication and their willingness and capability to send good information upward, superiors are also asked whether they experience communication overload.

According to Ehlers (2003), CS is studied in the workplace because employers seek for the development of their employee's efficiency in communication so they can perform their job. Also, the construct of CS should be studied because employees should ideally be satisfied while working. Ultimately, better communicators create a more optimal workplace. Most of the organizational communication researchers have considered employees' attitudes by analyzing the concept of CS.

It needs to be mentioned here that there are very few organizational communication studies focusing on universities and academic staff (Gizir and Simsek, 2005; Ahmad, 2006). At the same time, many researchers have examined the relationship of communication satisfaction with many organizational variables but they ignore the role of culture. Therefore, this study is going to be a modest attempt to fill this gap and that will be by examining the relationship between NC and CS of the multicultural faculty in universities.

National culture

Sha (1995), as cited in Rhee (2002), claimed that culture is a complicated concept which researchers in fields such as anthropology, sociology, business management, and communication have tried to define (Sha, 1995). Most of these scholars define culture as "learned behaviors as well as beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals that are characteristics of a particular society" (Ember and Ember, 1998, p. 148). According to Leung *et al.* (2005), culture has been defined as values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral patterns of group, and the term group refers to people in a society for NC; staff of an organization for organizational culture; and specific profession for professional culture. Many researchers as Hall (1976), Geert Hofstede (1980), Gudykunst and Kim (1984) and Samovar and Porter (1985) defined intercultural communication on the basis of a similarity between culture and nation (Jensen, 1996). Hall (1976) distinguishes cultures in terms of low- and high-context styles that explain the differences in communication

process in different nations. High-context communication styles focus on the information in the context of communication which surrounds the message whereas low-context communication styles rely on the words and written message.

Hofstede (1984) has defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from those of another.” There are different levels of culture that people unavoidably carry within themselves (Hofstede, 1997). According to Trompenaars (1993), there are three different levels of culture. These levels are as follows:

- (1) NC and regional society;
- (2) corporate or organizational culture; and
- (3) professional culture and ethical orientation.

Hofstede (1997) has mentioned six levels of culture that people carry. These are:

- (1) a national level according to one’s country;
- (2) a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistics affiliation level;
- (3) a gender level;
- (4) a generation level which separates grandparents from parents from children;
- (5) a social class level that associated with educational opportunities and with a person’s occupation or profession; and
- (6) organizational or corporate level.

The researcher has adopted Hofstede’s definition and employed his dimensions of culture since they are very much applicable to NCs (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). The word “culture”, for Hofstede (1984), is usually reserved for societies which are equivalent to “nations”.

Hofstede and Bond (1988) believed that people who are doing the job for the same organization and who have many things in common such as education and career, except for the fact that they are from different nations, would provide the basis for cross-cultural comparisons. Based on that conviction, he conducted a survey of employees of a multicultural company, IBM, in 50 different countries and through this extensive survey he identified four dimensions which distinguished cultures at a national level. These four dimensions are: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism versus individualism, and femininity versus masculinity. He later added a fifth dimension, long-term versus short-term orientation.

The five dimensions of NC as proposed by Hofstede (1980, 1984, 1991 and 2001)

1. Power distance

Hofstede (1984) has defined power distance as “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”. It focuses on the appropriateness of social status differences. Employees from high-power distance cultures accept a particular social order and believe that recognized authorities should not be challenged. In contrary, employees from low-power distance cultures believe in social equality challenging authority’s figures. So people from high-power distance cultures regard power as a main factor in society, whereas people from low-power distance cultures deem that power should be used when it is lawful

and appropriate (Gudykunst *et al.*, 2005). So in high-power distance subordinates and supervisors consider their status as unequal. People within cultures develop ways of interacting with different people according to the status differential that exists between the individual and the person with whom he is interacting (Robinson, 1998).

2. Uncertainty avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance dimension has been defined by Hofstede (1984) as “the extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations.” By the term “Unstructured situations” he means novel, unknown, surprising, or different from usual. This refers to how comfortable people feel towards vagueness. Employees from low uncertainty avoidance cultures feel more comfortable with ambiguity than those who are from high uncertainty avoidance cultures. It has been further characterized by Hofstede (1991) in terms of curiosity and danger. To people from low uncertainty avoidance cultures different and new behavior or opinion leads to curiosity, while it leads to danger to people from high uncertainty avoidance cultures. According to Robinson (1998), differences in the uncertainty avoidance level can cause unexpected problems in intercultural communication.

3. Collectivism vs individualism

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: every one is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 1997). According to Andersen *et al.* (2003) collectivistic cultures emphasize community, collaboration, shared interest harmony, tradition, the public good and maintaining face, whereas individualistic cultures stress personal rights and responsibilities, privacy, freedom, and self-expression. In individualistic cultures, individual is autonomy and has his own goals away from the group interests. His decisions are based on what is good for him rather than the group. In collectivistic cultures, individual is extremely loyal to the group and decisions always based on what is good for the group. In relation to communication, people from individualistic cultures communicate in direct way, and they convey the message directly. On the contrary, those who are from collectivistic cultures are likely to communicate in an indirect manner (Gudykunst and Lee, 2002). So, variations in individualism dimension cause similarities and differences in communication to be identified across cultures.

4. Femininity vs masculinity

“Masculinity pertains to societies in which the gender roles are clearly distinct; femininity pertains to societies in which the gender roles overlap.” This dimension refers to the role of gender in culture. It indicates the degree of “masculine” values such as: achievement, ambition, acquisition of materials goods or “feminine” values like: quality of life and service of others in organization or a society.

5. Long-term vs short-term orientation

“Long-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift, and short-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and the present in particular respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations”. This definition indicates that thriftiness

and perseverance are values related to long-term orientation, while respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations are the values associated with short-term orientation.

Vatrapu (2002) has found that Hofstede's cultural model of dimensions is very appropriate for any empirical research as scores of NC can be computed "unambiguously".

Communication satisfaction and NC

Culture plays a significant part in communication as people are differentiated on the basis of cultures. It is an important factor which affects the way we interact with each other (Nazir *et al.*, 2009). It is also the factor that makes interactions difficult, resulting in misunderstandings. People interact with each other using cultural properties which existed historically in the geographical group they belong to (Kluckhohn and Kelly, 1945). The relationship between communication and culture has been first introduced by E.T. Hall as the term of intercultural communication in his 1959 book, *Silent Language*. Hall's (1959) statement that culture is communication and communication is culture established the reciprocal relationship between these two constructs. It shows that culture and communication reflect each other. This relationship implies that people from different cultures communicate differently. They apply different styles of interacting and favored strategies of communication (Kim, 1993). Giri (2006) declared that culture provides its members with knowledge that guide them to behave appropriately in different situations and interpret other's behavior in such situations and that is how communication and culture reciprocally influence each other. The term intercultural communication reflects communication between different individuals from different cultures through interacting and sharing of information. According to Gudykunst (1997), some researchers who studied cultural variability in communication stated that individuals are socialized in a culture by the way they communicate and this way can change the culture they share over time. The study of communication has been included in the concept of culture with an emphasis on the value of effective interaction between members of different cultures (Hall, 1976). Many difficulties in intercultural communication come from the lack of understanding of how to communicate with people in other countries (Hall, 1959). Communication behaviors considered appropriate in one culture can be unacceptable to people from another culture. In order to reduce this misinterpretation of communication behaviors, people should obtain knowledge about the communication styles of persons from other cultures (Tran and Skitmore, 2002) as a result they can reach high CS. Thus, it is important to examine those cultural dimensions that have a significant influence on CS.

Although NC is an essential variable in multicultural organizations, studies which incorporate cultural dimensions of nations are mostly lacking (Arrindell *et al.*, 1997; Hofstede *et al.*, 2009). In recent years, there has been recognition of a relationship between communication and NC (Morley *et al.*, 1997; Chow *et al.*, 1998; Nes *et al.*, 2007). The issue of how culture influences communication is becoming increasingly important as researchers take a greater look at communication as a "facilitating mechanism" in inter-cultural relations (Nes *et al.*, 2007). Hofstede *et al.* (2009) investigated how cross-national differences in medical communication can be understood from the first four cultural dimensions, i.e. power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity, together with national wealth. It has been found that there are national differences in communication styles among the participating countries. It is critical to understand the extent to which the NC influences the CS among academic staff in the Yemeni universities. The above-mentioned models of CS,

i.e. Downs and Hazen (1977) multidimensional communication model, and of NC, i.e. Hofstede's cultural dimensions, contribute to the explanation of the research variables and create a theoretical foundation to this study.

The model to be tested in this study is illustrated as follows. Communication satisfaction construct, operationalized by Downs and Hazen in (1977) which includes the eight factors mentioned above is the dependent variable of this study. The independent variables are the NC dimensions. Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been adopted in this study. The Hofstede's framework gives an outstanding vehicle to explore the differences that might be present in the ways that internal communication influences the people in the organization (Downs *et al.*, 1996). As such, an area needs to be explored is whether the academic staff in universities in Yemen are satisfied with communication practices and is there any relationship between the CS factors and the NC dimensions in these universities (Figure 1):

- H1. There is significant difference in the level of CS among the academic staff in universities in Yemen with regard to nationality.
- H2. There is a significant relationship between NC dimensions and CS factors of the academic staff in universities in Yemen.

Methodology

Sample

The population of the study is the academic staff of four universities in the northern part of Yemen. These universities are: Sana'a University, University of Science and Technology, Dhamar University, and Ibb University. According to the Yemeni Central Statistical Organization (2006), the total number of the academic staff in these universities is 2,784 and 23 percent of these staff are non-Yemeni staff. They are from Malaysia, India, Iraq, and Egypt. The sample size of this study is determined to be 338. Table I shows the distribution of respondents according to nationality. From the statistics, more than half of the respondents (64.5 percent) were Yemenis, 8.9 percent were Malaysians, 8.9 percent were Indians, 8.9 percent were Iraqis, and 8.9 percent were Egyptians. According to Hofstede (1994), in order to use Value Survey Module (VSM94) one should obtain a minimum number of 20 respondents per country or region in comparison; otherwise the influence of single individuals becomes too strong. Table I assures that the sample of this study is consistent with this assumption. Stratified random sampling method was used in selecting the required samples.

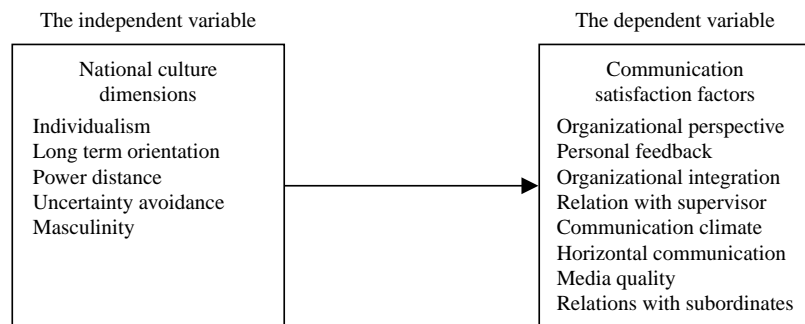


Figure 1. Conceptual representation of the proposed relationship between NC and CS

Measures

Two instruments are used in order to measure the variables of the present study. These instruments are: Downs and Hazen's (1977) CSQ in order to measure the academic staff CS and Hofstede's (1994) VSM94 as a measurement tool for the Academic staff NCs varying.

According to Downs and Adrian (2004), the CSQ, which was developed by Downs and Hazen (1977), has been the basis of several studies and has been employed in many organizations. The CSQ is a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 – very dissatisfied to 7 – very satisfied. It includes 40 items which refer to eight different factors related to CS in organizations. According to Greenbaum *et al.* (1988), the CSQ obtains a reliability of 0.94. In the literature related to the CSQ and through factor analyses, majority of the discussions have focused on the appropriateness of the number of factors in the instrument (Zwijze-Koning and Jong, 2007). Nakra (2006) claims that although the CSQ has been developed many years ago, it is still the dominant instrument to measure CS in both applied and basic research.

As it has been mentioned above, the researcher uses Hofstede's (VSM94) as a measurement tool for NC dimensions among the academic staff in the universities in Yemen. Hofstede (1994) claimed that his experience has shown the answers to all the (VSM94) questions vary substantially between nationalities. The measure also is sensitive enough to differentiate between different national groups on all cultural dimensions (Mearns and Yule, 2009). These claims, in fact, serve the research objectives. The (VSM94) is a 20 items questionnaire that has been designed to assess the five separate dimensions of NC defined previously. Hofstede (1994) has distributed the 20 items of the (VSM94) equally across the five NC dimensions. Four items each are used to assess every dimension. All the items of the (VSM94) that has been used for this study use a five-point Likert scale.

Results and analysis

One of the central questions of this study is whether there are significant differences in the mean score of level of CS between academic staff according to their nationality. This study analyzes the level of CS of the academic staff according to Downs and Hazen's (1977) eight factors. The results show that the level CS of the academic staff in universities in Yemen ranges from low to moderate level. The overall CS level of the respondents was analyzed according to their nationalities. The respondents satisfaction with communication practices was divided into three groups (low, moderate, and high) based on actual scores. Table II shows the distribution of the respondent in terms of their CS level with regard to their nationalities.

Nationality	Frequency	%
Yemeni	218	64.5
Malaysian	30	8.9
Indian	30	8.9
Iraqi	30	8.9
Egyptian	30	8.9
Total	338	100

Note: $n = 338$

Table I.
Distribution of
respondents

As it is shown in Table II, the majority of the respondents in this study are not highly satisfied with communication practices. The results show that the level of CS of the academic staff in universities in Yemen ranges from low to moderate level. Only 32.9 percent of the respondents are with high satisfaction which means that the overall CS among the academic staff in universities in Yemen is low. These results confirm similar findings that high percentage of academic staff in universities is with low CS level (Ahmed, 2006). The table also shows that 41.3 percent of Yemeni respondents are weakly satisfied with communication practices in their universities, and the satisfaction level of 27.4 percent of them is moderate. Only 31.3 percent of Yemeni respondents are highly satisfied. The Iraqi academic staff are close to their colleagues from Yemen in term of level of CS. 40.0 percent of them are highly satisfied, 25.7 percent are moderately satisfied and 34.3 percent are with low-satisfaction level. As for Egyptians and Malaysians, the satisfaction level of the majority of them is moderate. The highest level of CS among the respondents is that of the Indians. The majority of the Indian academic staff (60.6 percent) are highly satisfied. This can be justified by the fact that most of the Indians participated in the study had longer tenure and also due to their seniority. Most of them are more experienced than the others since the majority of them are either assistant professors, associate professors, or professors.

The results also have uncovered aspects of communication that vary considerably from nation to another. It shows some variations in the satisfaction level of the respondents in accordance with their nationality. One way ANOVA was conducted to test the differences in CS among the respondents according to nationality. Table III shows that Indians and Iraqis had the highest composite scores in four factors of CS: organizational perspective, relation with supervisor, horizontal communication, and relations with subordinates, whereas the Yemeni academic staff were the least satisfied staff in the communication practices in universities in Yemen. All the CS factors differed

Table II.
Distribution of
respondents by CS

	<i>n</i>	Overall communication satisfaction		
		Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Yemeni	218	41.3	27.4	31.3
Iraqi	30	34.3	25.7	40.0
Indian	30	21.2	18.2	60.6
Egyptian	30	6.3	90.6	3.1
Malaysian	30	21.9	40.6	37.5
All respondents	338	34.0	33.1	32.9

Table III.
One-way ANOVA
between CS and
nationality

Factors	Yemeni	Malaysian	Indian	Iraqi	Egyptian	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Organizational perspective	18.05	16.76	18.56	20.33	20.76	2.817	0.025
Personal feedback	18.87	22.10	22.36	20.30	17.56	5.781	0.000
Organizational integration	20.82	22.13	23.80	24.73	24.93	6.345	0.000
Relation with supervisor	21.70	19.46	26.40	24.46	18.70	9.347	0.000
Communication climate	18.44	18.33	17.96	20.83	18.40	1.202	0.310
Horizontal communication	21.45	21.53	25.00	23.30	19.66	5.051	0.001
Media quality	19.65	19.70	21.73	21.43	23.63	3.838	0.005
Relations with subordinates	22.42	22.33	27.00	25.00	20.14	1.451	0.225

significantly according to the nationality of the academic staff except communication climate and relations with subordinates. The absence of significant differences between respondents in terms of their subordinate communication can be justified by the fact that the items which make up this dimension were answered only by supervisor and most of these supervisors are Yemenis and they belong to the same culture. Although the results have indicated highly significant differences between the academic staff in accordance with their nationalities, it is important to know where the differences occurred. To investigate the location of these differences, the researcher has used *post-hoc* test which is part of the ANOVA output and which is provided by Statistical Package for Social Sciences. *Post-hoc* analysis using Scheffe option was used for this study. The *post hoc* tests revealed significant differences between Yemenis and all other academic staff from the different four countries in their organizational perspective and organizational integration at the 0.05 level of significance. Scheffe tests also show significant differences between Yemenis, Malaysians and Indians in personal feedback at the 0.01 level of significance. Significant differences are also found between Yemenis, Indians and Egyptians at the 0.05 level of significance. Yemenis and Indians are significantly different in their horizontal communication at the 0.05 level of significance. These results confirm similar findings which show that some academic staff are more satisfied with the amount and quality of communication in their universities than others are (Ahmad, 2006).

Hofstede's VSM index calculation for NC

Unlike prior studies in which researchers have depended on Hofstede's cultural dimensions index (Taylor, 2005; Nes *et al.*, 2007), this study calculated the scores of the actual participants on the cultural dimensions of NC. As it is clear that sample in this study is academic staff working in universities which is different from those of the original study of Hofstede, employees in IBM company. This process helped the researcher attain a good understanding of the context of participants before carrying out an analysis of the relationship between NC and CS. Hofstede (1980) developed a methodology for analyzing the VSM94 questionnaire results. This analysis was based on formulas that combined answers from the questions that correlated to one dimension. This methodology of Hofstede was applied in this study for calculating the actual NC dimensions' indexes. The calculation results of these dimensions are presented in Table IV.

The results above show that there are some differences in academic staff's power distance. Using Hofstede's formula, the researcher found that Malaysian staff scores the highest in power distance (81.95), whereas Egyptian staff's power distance scores were the least (49.8). In comparison with Hofstede's index of NC values scores, the sequencing of the countries here according to their power distance scores is still the same, i.e. Malaysian comes first then Arab countries, except Egypt, and India comes at the

Nationality	PDI	UAI	MAS	IDV	LTO
Yemenis	65	61.9	48.2	47.9	52.3
Iraqis	63.65	38.85	78.4	52.3	57.15
Indians	60.7	42.95	41.7	39.6	42.9
Egyptians	49.8	26.95	76	30.2	75.7
Malaysians	81.95	-3.2	37.1	17.9	53.9

Table IV.
NC dimensions index
score calculations

end although the scores in this study is a little bit less than the scores in Hofstede's. Among the study sample, the Egyptians values of power distance are the lowest. And this is what makes this study useful and valuable since it proves that some of the Arabs from different countries are different from each other in term of their NC values.

The results come from the above formula show that there was more variability in uncertainty avoidance scores: the Malaysians' uncertainty avoidance is the lowest among the academic staff, whereas the Yemenis' uncertainty avoidance is the highest. According to Hofstede (2001), index normally has a value between 0 and 100, but values below 0 and above 100 are technically possible. The results above show also that the Iraqis' score of masculinity values is the highest among the five nationalities (78.4) whereas Malaysians' is the lowest (37.1). Individualism was generally low for all respondents from different countries and significantly lower in the Malaysian sample. Malaysian staff were found to be more collectivistic than the Indians or the Arabs. There are also some differences located between the participants in their individualism values.

A *t*-test analysis revealed significant differences in NC scores between some Arab countries. There is an interesting result found in this study. Arab people from different Arab countries differ significantly in terms of their NC (values). There are significant differences between Yemenis and Egyptians in terms of IDV ($t = -8.375, \rho = 0.000$); MAS ($t = -4.168, \rho = 0.000$); UAI ($t = 5.356, \rho = 0.000$); and LTO ($t = -8.664, \rho = 0.000$) which indicates that different Arab people from different Arab countries are not the same in terms of their NC values. The *t*-test analysis also shows that there is no significant differences between Yemenis and Egyptians in terms of PDI ($t = -1.937, \rho > 0.05$). The results also show significant differences between Iraqis and Egyptians in terms of their NC dimensions scores, PDI ($t = -2.562, \rho < 0.05$); IDV ($t = -3.764, \rho < 0.01$); MAS ($t = -3.130, \rho < 0.01$); UAI ($t = 3.826, \rho = 0.000$); and LTO ($t = -5.605, \rho = 0.000$). There are no significant differences between Yemenis and Iraqis in terms of their NC values and that implies that Yemenis and Iraqis are similar in their NC values and belong to the same culture since they live in the same area of the Arab Gulf. Given the fact that some Arab countries relatively shares different cultural norms, Hofstede should have divided the Arab region into different territories according to the cultural proximity (e.g. Yemen, Iraq, and all the Arab Gulf countries as one territory; Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine as another one; Egypt as a separate territory; Arab West as a territory; and Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia as a separate territory). The findings of this study are also significant as it provides a calculation to the time orientation dimension scores for the Arab countries and Malaysia which have not been calculated before by Hofstede or by any other researcher.

Correlation between CS and NC

To reveal correlation between CS and NC Pearson correlation analysis was performed. Several NC dimensions showed significant correlations with the CS factors (Table III). Academic staff's individualism values had a moderate positive correlation with organizational perspective ($r = 0.19, p < 0.01$); personal feedback ($r = 0.12, p < 0.05$); organizational integration ($r = 0.12, p < 0.05$); communication climate ($r = 0.13, p < 0.05$); media quality ($r = 0.14, p < 0.01$). These results demonstrate that individualistic staff is more satisfied with communication practices than the collectivistic. This confirms that the more individualistic the staff are, the more they are satisfied with communication practices in their organizations. Since a collectivist

normally communicates in indirect ways (Gudykunst and Lee, 2002) and emphasizes community and collaboration (Andersen *et al.*, 2003), the communication process between him and the others from different NCs, specially those who seem to be more individualistic, is going to be difficult. Consequently, CS level is influenced. The results of this study show that among the eight CS factors only organizational perspective ($r = 0.21, p < 0.01$), and Relations with Subordinates ($r = 0.21, p < 0.05$) had significant correlations with masculinity. This indicates that the influence of masculinity on the staff's CS level is not to a great extent. Power distance dimension is one of the most influencing dimensions that affect individuals' CS level. Hofstede *et al.* (2009) claim that the cultural differences between countries create some impediments. The larger power distance of a nation is the less room there is for unexpected information exchange and the shorter the consultations are. Findings show that power distance had positive significant relationships with organizational perspective ($r = 0.21, p < 0.01$), personal feedback ($r = 0.14, p < 0.01$), organizational integration ($r = 0.21, p < 0.01$), communication climate ($r = 0.16, p < 0.01$), media quality ($r = 0.13, p < 0.05$). The correlation discovered between power distance and horizontal communication is negative ($r = -0.13, p < 0.05$).

Uncertainty avoidance is seen to play an important role (negative influence) in the multicultural faculty satisfaction with communication practices. This finding indicates that when uncertainty avoidance is high, the satisfaction level with communication practices is low and vice versa. According to Hofstede *et al.* (2009), uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which uncertainty causes anxiety in individuals and groups. It is the degree to which people feel threatened by unknown situations. As the academic staff in universities in Yemen belongs to different cultures, they feel worried and threatened by the unknown situations which can be created by these differences in cultures as a result their CS level is affected as well. These results confirm similar findings that the higher the level of uncertainty avoidance is, the less attention is given to rapport building and effective communication (Hofstede *et al.*, 2009). The academic staff time orientation had a strong positive correlation with their relations with subordinates ($r = 0.44, p < 0.01$) and a moderate correlation with media quality ($r = -0.21, p < 0.01$).

As seen on Table V, the academic staff overall CS significantly and positively correlated with their overall NC values. The masculinity dimension has no significant correlation with most of the CS except with organizational perspective and with relation with subordinate. Referring to Hofstede's (1991) NC indexes, this result confirms

Factors	IDV	MAS	PDI	UAI	TIMEORI	Overall NC
Organizational perspective	0.191 **	0.212 **	0.216 **	-0.133 *	-0.001	0.146 **
Personal feedback	0.122 *	0.024	0.141 **	-0.104	0.142 **	0.106
Organizational integration	0.122 *	0.067	0.219 **	-0.140 *	0.131 *	0.125 *
Relation with supervisor	-0.007	-0.086	-0.028	0.024	0.068	-0.005
Communication climate	0.123 *	0.097	0.165 **	-0.104	0.165 **	0.142 **
Horizontal communication	-0.003	-0.071	-0.134 *	0.029	0.097	-0.015
Media quality	0.148 **	0.064	0.134 *	-0.209 **	0.213 **	0.124 *
Relations with subordinates	0.141	0.219 *	0.076	0.014	0.443 **	0.250 **
Overall CS	0.153 **	0.074	0.130 *	-0.131 *	0.137 *	0.120 *

Note: Correlation is significant at: *0.05 and **0.01 levels (two-tailed)

Table V.
Correlation analysis
between CS and NC

similar findings that Arab, Indian, and Malaysian people are mostly close to each other in terms of masculinity dimension.

These findings are significant for many reasons. It has several implications for universities to improve their multicultural faculty's level of CS. These implications can be summarized as follows:

- The findings of this study provide a valuable knowledge to universities and organizations which have multinational staff working in them and guide these universities to understand the significance and the importance of CS for their staff to perform well and help the management of these universities to develop strategies for elevating their staff's CS level in order to provide a healthy academic environment and to reach a high-quality outcome.
- This study raises the universities' management awareness about the communication problems created by the diversity in the staff's NC and provide a clear explanation about the effects of NC dimensions on CS factor which can help them reduce these differences in culture and develop the staff's relationships and their communication skills.
- Academic staff need to build good relationships among themselves in order to exchange experience and discuss academic issues and developments; they also have to participate in research. All these activities require effective communication to be achieved. When intercultural communication is effective, there are increased possibilities of engaging in richer and more rewarding relationships resulting in more beneficial outcomes. Therefore, the management of universities should arrange cultural day's activities and informal gathering in which staff can show their cultural norms. The academic staff should also be encouraged to share their expertise with their peers.
- In order for the universities management to achieve cultural proximity among the staff, they should arrange an orientation week for the academic staff at the beginning of every semester in which the staff can be exposed to each others' culture and in which they can learn about the cultures of their partners. They can also learn in such activity about the university goals and policies. Gizir and Simsek (2005) listed many factors that can enhance communication process in an academic context such as co-teaching, co-advising, seminars, symposiums, collaborative studies, and social activities.
- Universities management should also arrange academic staff exchange programs with overseas universities as for their local staff to be exposed to different cultures and also gain experience in this respect. They should also arrange symposiums, seminars and social activities as these activities create chances for the academic staff to be brought together and enhance their communication practices. These implications would help the multicultural faculty in universities to improve their satisfaction with communication practices and that is, according to Ahmad (2006), essential to build knowledgeable, supportive and productive work force.

Conclusion

In today's workplace, the issues of CS and NC are definitely of great importance in organizations' development as described in this paper. It has been proved in this study that the individuals' NC has a significant effect on their CS. It is essential for multicultural

team members to have an understanding of their partners' cultural differences in order to achieve high level of CS. As it has been explained earlier, this study results in better understanding the relationship between CS factors and NC dimensions and also it helps in determining some implications for improving the academic staff relationship as well as productivity. It provides a valuable insight into the development and performance of individuals. It may assist the multicultural academic staff to be able to help, improve working relationships, and understanding of intercultural communication which help them to reach a CS, and result in elevating their performance and productivity.

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