

# Development and Validation of Malaysian Communication Style Instrument

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## Abstract

The Malaysian Malay Communication Style (MMCS) formulated by Che Su and Hassan (2010) was developed to measure specific Malay communication characteristics in the workplace. We extended this work by using structural equation modelling to determine the factor structure of the 60-item version of the MMCS. Based on a sample of 320 employees, we found eight stable dimensions which measure communication style among Malay employees in Malaysian contexts. Moreover, scores on the scale developed to measure the MMCS criteria yielded excellent validity and reliability estimates. This study provided and presented insights and further understanding of communication style from the indigenous perspective, which allows practitioners to gain in-depth knowledge about the implementation of organizational communication in an organization. The implications of this research were discussed.

**Keywords:** communication style, indigenous values, instrument development, organizational communication, Malaysian

## 1. Introduction

Early definitions of organizations focused on groups of individuals working together in a coordinated way in the pursuit of production-related goals. Every organization has many audiences: members, staff, volunteers, partner organizations, groups, funders, government officials, local leaders and decision-makers, and the general public. Iedema and Wodak (1999, p. 7) state that organizations do not exist independently of their members, but are “created and recreated in the acts of communication between members”. When we consider “*organizational communication*”, we reflect on *what message our organization as a whole* is transmitting and *how best to send it* to different audiences.

The literature relating to organizational communication has largely taken the Western concepts, such as communication satisfaction, workplace communication and communication climate, and has attempted to describe what they might mean in a different cultural context (Blunt, 1983). There has been an implicit assumption that the instillation of such motives is both desirable and possible, and this is despite the fact that the comparisons with the Western countries suggest fundamental differences which indicate the need for redefinition of some of these concepts (Blunt & Jones, 1997).

Jaeger (1986) argues that there are a number of large differences between managers in certain countries and in the West in terms of values, attitudes and motives, which have serious consequences in terms of management education, training and development, payment systems, appraisal, etc. He refers to a developing dichotomy in the literature about the transfer of Western management concepts and practices: on the one hand, “the imperatives of organizational life will sweep aside local variations in culture”, while on the other hand, “the culture is so distinctive and so enduring that imported notions about organizations and their management will be radically modified or even rejected”. Jaeger demonstrates that both tendencies are present and suggests that this is inconvenient for theorists and educators, a view which is evident from many other authors.

Issues related to culture, Western concept, indigenous values and many others are one of the many relevant questions in discussing management, communication, development, etc. in Malaysia. The importance of culture

in the context of organizational management in Malaysia has been acknowledged by Westwood (1991). According to Westwood (1991), in the context of management in Malaysia which is complex and bounded by cultural heterogeneity, there are various factors that influence the management pattern and organizational approach including organizational culture. The natural multicultural atmosphere that exists often proves to be a challenge to leaders (Abdullah, 1992a). From the perspective of organizational culture, studies on organizational cultures that exist in Malaysia have not been widespread and documented scientifically.

The Malaysian public sector has gone through several restructurings since independence. It was only in the early 1980s that the civil servants were encouraged not only to uphold integrity and pursue the prescribed duties loyally, but also to be proactive, and take on responsibility for the delivery of services that would meet the needs of the public. They are expected not only to respond to the public problems and needs (including national unity, human life, environmental protection, and so on), but also to identify and search for problem areas and to provide the required remedies, solutions, and services. Thus, every person should strive to realize his or her potential for independent, creative, and innovative thinking. Similar arguments on the need for changing the attitudes of civil servants continued to be made throughout the 1980s by the top management politicians and senior civil servants.

If reforming the human factor of public administration was met with wide acceptance in Malaysia, it was soon discovered that such efforts had to be based on indigenous values. The promotion of integrity and efficiency was supported by non-discriminating and universalizing legal devices notably and the update of disciplinary regulations based on principles laid down by the British colonial administration at the end of the nineteenth century. However, the reformation of bureaucratic self-conduct rested not only on universalizing judicial norms but on local, technical devices of agency and performance informed by Malaysian values persistently hammered out by senior government officials and managers of the early 1980s. The attempt to transform the civil service by identity-based values has essentially interacted with two distinct but closely interrelated systems, namely a religious system basing its authority on the Islamic notion of allegedly universal values, and an anthropological system basing its authority on scientific examination of local cultural values.

The Malaysian social scientists and managers started to objectify Malaysian workers according to their specific "cultural value systems" (e.g., Abdullah, 1992a; Dahlan, 1991). Hence, in Malaysia one could distinguish among the four major value systems, each pertaining to a specific ethnic group, namely the Malays, the Chinese, the Indians, and the Westerners. For example, the values of the Malays, the single largest ethnic group in Malaysia, could be dealt with under the notion of *budi*. According to the (Malay) anthropologist H. M. Dahlan, "*budi* embodies all the virtues ranked in the system of values of the (Malay) society...the structure of *budi* is composed of virtuous qualities, such as *murah hati* (generosity), *hormat* (respect), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *mulia* (righteousness), *timbang rasa* (discretion), and *malu* (feelings of shame at the individual level). In social relations, these virtues imply that the codes of conduct for politeness, refinement, and consideration for others would involve gestures, and intonations of speakers that vary according to the hierarchical status of the person addressed.

Thus, our research project sought to develop and validate a comprehensive scale to measure the Malaysian Malay Communication Style (MMCS) by incorporating some of the indigenous values of the Malaysian Malay ethnic. The Malay population in Malaysia is defined by Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution as someone born to a Malaysian citizen who professes to be a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, and adheres to the Malay customs.

## 2. Need for Indigenous Measurement

Current explanatory theories and perspectives toward communication within an organization require expansion and modification to better capture the increasing complexities of communication at the workplace. Most communication and management research has been conducted with respondents from North America, Europe and to some degree China (PRC) and Taiwan. We strongly contend that broadening the literature via Asian based studies such this one are essential as we moved toward more meaningful and deeply thought through comparison and contrast between people from nations located in various regions. Within the framework of communication and management, prior studies have demonstrated links between communication and various organization outcomes.

The popularity of Western-based educational model programs has led to the transplantation of many Western practices within the managerial ranks of developing country organizations. As a result, the communication practices in Developing and Western countries should be more closely aligned over time, especially given increased international investment, international travel and rapid growth in usage of the Internet. For example a study by Ali and Wahabi (1995) in Morocco discovered that Moroccan managers had value systems relatively similar to those of the Westerners rather than the Arabs since the managers were trained under the French influence.

This factor also influences their career advancement which strongly linked to French culture and ability to speech the language.

These developments serve to reduce misconceptions and perceptions of communication practices in workplaces across national boundaries. However all these changes have taken place under the backdrop of cultural values and context continues to influence communication practices in the workplace. Such little is known about what underlies the communication and management practices in a truly diverse culture in developing countries like Malaysia. Here too we have a unique opportunity for investigation as we are capturing workplace diversity in a society that is inherently diverse.

For example Ali and Wahabi (1995) found that managers in Morocco more predominant in French culture compared to Arab culture in the context of their careers and the management of their organizations since the managers were trained under the French influence. This factor also influences their career advancement which strongly linked to French culture and ability to speech the language. These developments serve to reduce misconceptions and perceptions of communication practices in workplaces across national boundaries. However all these changes have taken place under the backdrop of cultural values and context continues to influence communication practices in the workplace. Such little is known about what underlies the communication and management practices in a truly diverse culture in developing countries like Malaysia. Here too we have a unique opportunity for investigation as we are capturing workplace diversity in a society that is inherently diverse.

According to Boya Cigiller and Adler (1995), economic dominance has resulted in the management models presented in the west are practiced throughout the world. They also noted that: After the Second World War, United States became major powers that dominate the world economy and contributed to 75 percent of the world's GNP. The US worldwide organizations controlled business industry over the world. Throughout this era, the Western scholars concentrated their empirical study on organizations, perceptions, and issues prominent to Western leaders and set aside the countries and cultures of other nations.

Another reason is, the Western management perspectives disseminated all over the world via printed resources. For example, it was found that 80% of the articles in an analysis of more than 11,000 articles published in 24 leading periodicals between 1971 and 1980 by Adler (1983) were studied on the United States carried out by Western scholars. He pointed out that less than five percent of published materials related to the study of organizational behavior taking into account the importance of cultural factors. This obviously shows the Western parochialism in the field of study related to management in which the philosophy and conventions of the researchers are grounded in the Western perspective.

According to Hofstede (1984b), American dominance in the growth of management knowledge from the 1950s has headed to the growing dependence of the developing world on the American-made management perspectives. The various means in which paradigms, methods and perspectives of the Western management are transmitted to the other nations necessary to be explained. Firstly, it has been claimed that colonialism does not just affect the political and economic aspects of countries that colonized but also brings together influences on how local organization should be managed and administered in accordance with the policies and procedures of the colonial state.

Secondly, the Western management theories and perspectives disseminated throughout the world mostly through published materials, training, and conferences. Blunt and Jones (1997), in their analysis on leadership, commented: Many contemporary available philosophies and ideas of leadership discovered and introduced by the researchers from the West. The ideas have been extensively spread by the higher learning institutions, and thus any MBA graduate will know generally the same things about leadership.

Undeniably, the Western management perspectives have provided knowledge that is useful and beneficial to the developing countries. Somewhat alarming, is the unseen presumption that the Western perspectives are considered generally suitable to manage local organizations. Theory and practice built on the western has been adopted by developing countries without a critical effort to adapt to the local culture. This inclination is noted by Sendut et al. (1989): After receiving the disclosure of research conducted in western countries, receiving the training syllabus built in western countries and rely on case studies from the west, the local managers are trying to adopt western management culture in the context of the east without doing a proper assessment of the suitability of the theories with respect to the local culture. They fail to note the ability of these theories to be translated in the context of the management of local organizations.

Ghiat and Willey (1989) have conducted research on the influence of indigenous beliefs on organizational success in Algeria reinforced on the significance of incorporation of native values into local organization management. They found that organization in Algeria practice both forms of management of the western and eastern. .Even

though there are many positive developments related to this, still many more things to do by practitioner, researchers and organizational theorists in exploring indigenous values that best fit to manage the local organizations.

The achievement of the Japanese management practices, which were established based on the society's cultural values is another prominent example. Kiggundu (1989) emphasizes: Studies of Japan illustrate that another nation can also benefit from their own local values and management styles to develop an excellent organizations. Lesson carried by Japanese management to managers in developing countries is not to compete with Japanese management culture, but to build an organization's management styles that are consistent with their own cultural values, procedures and methods. More significantly, they have demonstrated that by including local cultural ways of managing, the local manager is capable to make best use of its benefit for development and success.

Comparable to other developing countries, the trend for local administrators in Malaysia to blindly accept Western management perspectives and models in the Malaysian situation was often stated. Tong Tin Sin (1991, p. 161), for instance, notes: "Generally, the average and large-sized trade organizations owned by government practice management styles which are mostly Western-oriented". The extensive acceptance of Western management styles, practices and models across the board in part because of the weakness of the education system. This is consistent with the views expressed by De Bettignies (1987) which states that Malaysian students are often exposed to a lot of textbooks and references from the West. The content of the materials are sometimes not appropriate or suitable in term of knowledge to manage in the ways appropriate with Malaysian indigenous values. Sendut (1991) also gave a similar critique in relation to this matter. He noted that the dependence on imported materials especially Western-based textbooks, courses and trainings, has led to the graduates adopt a management style in the way that Western administrators desired.

Lately, critiques related to the suitability of Western perspectives have gained more attention (e.g., Abdullah & Gallagher, 1995). This is not a surprising thing because there is a huge difference between western and eastern cultures. Although concerns regarding this matter have been raised by western scholars in the past two decades and in the context of Malaysia nearly in a decade, the development of research relevant to this matter is somewhat less favorable.

However, there is evidence that researchers are trying to conduct scientific research related to the impact of local culture on organizational outcomes (e.g., Abdullah, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1995, 1996; Abdullah & Gallagher, 1995; Che Su & Hassan, 2012; Dahlan, 1991; Maniam, 1986; Poon, 1995; Sendut, 1991) while others have concentrated on comparative studies related to the management styles of Malaysian organizations and multinationals companies (e.g., Poon et al., 1990; Sin & Jain, 1988).

As awareness about these matter grows, the necessity to change management structures that are suitable with Malaysian local indigenous values has been emphasized. For example

Sendut et al. (1989) and Abdullah (1992c) suggested that there is a need for a balanced approach in an attempt to develop distinctive management methods. Local managers and scholars must appreciate their own indigenous values and define how to merge and incorporate them with Western styles. As claimed by Abdullah (1992c), it is important not to abandon all Western management perspectives, but local leaders and researchers need to assess the appropriateness methods and perspectives in local environment. Sendut et al. (1989) proposed that the greatest matter is for the local leaders to recognize "management practices that will benefit to modernize their nation, in ways harmonious with their local values and without the damage of their Asian uniqueness" (p. 18). The models produced from the western countries should be in congruence with indigenous values. As they noted: Having exposed to the Western concepts for example motivation, assertiveness, accomplishment, competition, risk management and power, they need to merge these to other indigenous thoughts such as trustworthiness, belief, teamwork, kindness, empathy and religiosity i.e., to integrate between the values of the western and eastern values.

Two main issues need consideration on the basis of the above discussion. Initially, local managers and researchers must assess the current management and communication style, and examine whether it's applicable to the local cultural contexts. Any efforts to present innovative ideas or models must include an inquiring of the suitability in advance. Generally, the adaptation and preservation of indigenous values are essential.

### **3. Malay Communication Characteristics**

It is widely agreed that countries in the Pacific Rim have a diversity of people and cultures and these people lead their life through various stages of economic and technological development. As one of the countries located in the Pacific Rim, Malaysia also possesses similar characteristics. Even though it is just a small country, Malaysia

is still large in terms of geography, human and natural resources, and disparate business practices. Malaysia is an example of a highly pluralistic society, populated by more than 80 ethnic groups. Geographically, Malaysia is located in the heart of Southeast Asian region. It has a coastline of 4800 km and over 200 islands. Malaysia is a plural society that is made up of three main racial groups: Malay, Chinese, and Indian. The Malays constitute more than 60% of the population followed by the Chinese with approximately 25%, however are economically powerful, and 7% of the Indians. Both the Chinese and Indians are the descendants of immigrants who came to Malaya during the middle of the 19th century to fill up the labour gap required to spur colonial economic activities.

In the last two decades, Malaysia has undergone tremendous growth and prosperity and has arguably made significant progress in race relations. Mutual respect for each other's culture, traditions, religious beliefs and way of life has created a peaceful social environment, stable political climate and a strong economy for the nation. The Malays are less expressive in giving their views and opinions, feelings and ideas to their leader; uncomfortable in critically evaluating peers and subordinates; negative feedback are considered as awkward and difficult; and indirectness in communication is the norm, particularly with negative messages. Research findings indicated that the Malays communicate with their peers in a friendly manner; they have casual discussions in a specific place; and their interactions with their colleagues indicated that they are part of a big family in the organization. Any messages that they receive from their colleagues are treated as personal and they address each other to show respect. The Malays, when they communicate with their subordinates, exhibit firm character but are friendly in manner. They avoid giving instructions but lean more towards seeking help and opinions from the subordinates. Orders are given indirectly as a gesture of respect.

In terms of superior-subordinate relationship, when communicating with their superior, the communication is done in the form of group and interactive discussions. In this aspect of communication, the subordinate needs to show respect and acknowledge the supervisor in terms of their social status, education status and organizational hierarchy. Thus, communication with co-workers and subordinates for the Malaysian Malays indicates that their communication reflects a collectivist nature society. These communication characteristics exhibit close ties among individuals and a greater tolerance for a variety of opinions. In addition, as noted by Kennedy (2002), leaders in Malaysian organizations are expected to show compassion while using more of an autocratic, rather than a participative style.

Malay employees emphasize on relationships in co-worker communication and indirect instructions in communication with subordinates (Hassan & Che Su, 2012). Respect also comes as leader credibility in communication with superiors. In this regard, the indication of power distance index by Hofstede could also mean that the acceptance of power distance in Malay employees is merely a gesture of respect to their leaders and not because of the power of the leader. This aspect of character in Malay communication reinforces Abdul Rashid and Ho's (2003) review of research on multiracial society of Malaysia, which dictates the preference of Malaysians to work as a group. For example, Malaysian employees regardless of their ethnic backgrounds are more likely to use coordination to integrate their work tasks, and use team workflows to deal with task uncertainty (Pearson & Chong, 1997). There is also a high preference for teamwork goals rather than individual goals (Chan & Pearson, 2002) and they tend to be more idealistic in group performance (Karande, Rao, & Singhapakdi, 2002).

Even though the country is made up of many different races and ethnics, Malaysians in general hold the same values that are considered appropriate for those who come from the Eastern countries. Hofstede's four dimensions of national culture provide useful characterisations of the Malaysian culture. The individualism-collectivism dimension characterises Malaysians as collectivist, where there is a tight social framework in which people seek fulfilment and happiness in the harmony of the group. The ties between individuals are tight. Meanwhile, in the power distance dimension, Hofstede suggests that there is a global relationship between power distance and collectivism, where collectivist countries always show large power distances. In relation to this, Hofstede classifies Malaysia as a culture with the greatest power distance. However, the findings could be acceptable or relevant at the time when the research was conducted, but as time passes by, Malaysia has becoming more open and liberal and thus the power distance is not that obvious and can be categorised as moderate. Undeniably, some government institutions may still be at the greater side of the power distance continuum. Attitudes such as obedience and conformity are present in the culture but autocratic decision-making and close supervision, which are mainly the characteristics of a collectivist culture, have not been very much practised these days.

On the uncertainty-avoidance dimension, the Malaysian culture can be characterized as moderate to weak uncertainty-avoidance. Malaysians are usually comfortable with ambiguity, not likely to be emotional and

intolerant of change, relatively tolerant of behaviours and opinions different from their own. The final dimension, masculinity-femininity, provides a less clear characterization of the Malaysian culture. Even though Malaysian women have now become more advanced in terms of education, career and positions in the society, traditional male traits of assertiveness, competitiveness and ambitious are still present together with traditional female traits of emotion, compassion and nurture of the needy. The gap between male and female is even more obvious among those who still hold very strongly to the culture-male is always the breadwinner.

In other aspects, the everyday etiquette in Malaysia is relaxed and rather straightforward. Courteous behaviour will less likely cause offence to the people around. Generally, Malaysians are a very soft, gentle and friendly people, slow to anger and quick to embrace other cultures and people. In relation to this, Hall's (1976) characterisation of high-and low-context cultures is helpful in describing the Malaysians. As the Malaysian culture can be categorised as a high-context culture, communication can also be viewed from the high-context perspective. This would mean that relatively little information is contained in the coded, explicit point of the message. Much of the information lies in the nonverbal expression (i.e., physical context or internalised in the person). A simple example would be when an individual visits a home of a friend or relative and the host offers a drink. To be polite and with a thought of not wanting to bother the host, the guest would usually object to the offer. However, the host would still insist of serving a cup of tea or coffee. This is different from those from the low-context culture. To reject the offer would mean that the guest would not be served with anything.

Even though visitors or foreigners are usually treated as one of the family members, it would still be appreciated if they learn or know some of the basic rules that are being practised in the culture. This will help them better in adjusting to the culture. The followings are some of the basic rules about the Malaysian culture:

- Seniority is greatly respected within Malaysian households regardless of races and religious practises. Children are always taught to respect and obey the older persons. Usually children are not allowed to interrupt while the older people are in conversation.
- Although handshakes generally suffice to both men and women, some Moslem ladies may acknowledge an introduction to a gentleman with a nod and smile. A handshake is only to be reciprocal if the lady offers her hand first. For the Moslems, the traditional greeting or 'salam' resembles a handshake with both hands but without the grasp.
- Pointing with a finger is considered to be extremely rude. Instead, a thumb of the right hand and four fingers folded under is the preferred usage.
- Dress modestly, especially outside the cities and when visiting religious buildings. Shoes must be removed when entering places of worships such as mosques or temples. Some mosques provide robes and scarves for female visitors. Taking photographs at places of worships is usually permitted but always ask for permission.
- It is polite to call before visiting a home. Shoes must always be removed when entering a Malaysian home. Drinks are generally offered to guest(s) and it would be polite to accept. The right hand is always used when eating with one's fingers or when giving or receiving objects. The left hand is always regarded as unclean.
- Politeness, humbleness and patience are held in esteem as great virtues and it is considered inappropriate to argue, show affection or raise one's voice in public.

The above discussion indicates that Malaysians especially the Malays have their own unique culture, which will probably influence workplace communication. Thus, as stated above the objective of this paper is to identify the values and communication style among the Malay employees, and develop and validate an instrument to measure the communication characteristics.

### **Study 1: Development of the MMCS**

The goal of the first study was to develop an instrument to measure the Malaysian Malay communication characteristics and to determine the factor structure of the 60-item version of the scale.

#### *3.1 Methods*

Our method in assessing the communication construct was to develop a local based measurement to evaluate various features of organizational communication in a varieties cultural contexts as described by DeVellis (2003) and Hinkin (1995). The scale development process began with a review of organizational communication and cultural studies in the communication literature. Items were generated from the organizational communication literature as well as from reports of experiences by individuals from the work setting, subjected to content validation, administered to a large and diverse sample of employees, and again administered several weeks later to generate retest data. Items surviving these analyses were then administered to employees representing three

organizations. In addition, one validation variable was collected in these organizations (Hassan & Che Su, 2012). This second phase of scale development was designed to assess the construct and criterion-related validity of the new organizational communication scale. As a result of the review also, the following criteria for scale structure were adopted. The instrument would be multidimensional with each dimension representing a specific aspect of communication characteristics. For each construction of reliability in the measurement of each dimension, summated (Likert) rating scale would be used to represent each dimension. Item format would be that traditionally used for communication measures: items would be constructed as statements of opinion on an agree or disagree continuum. Items would contain a personal versus a general referent; that is, they would focus on the individual's personal experience rather than the experience of people in general. We produced an initial set of 296 items created from the characteristics of organizational communication extracted from the literature. Furthermore, focus group discussion with 60 participants was carried. The participants involved different managerial levels: upper managers (20 people), middle managers (25 people), and administrative group (15 people) from three public organizations in Malaysia. These participants were fairly varied in terms of sex (60% male and 40% female), and age ( $M = 31.5$ , ranging from 23 to 44). The participants were asked to describe about the types of interaction they had at their workplace and also to provide specific examples. The entire items developed were 356.

The 356 generated items were validated using content validity. The first step of content validity involved eight professors of organizational communication at public universities in Malaysia who served as expert judges and were asked to identify which of the six defined dimensions each of the 356 items was intended to capture. Recommendations to drop, change, or add items, to mark unclear items, and to provide written comments were gained from the judges. Assessments of judgments across the experts for each of the items were made. A total of 150 items were deleted from the item pool based on the written comments from the judges or a high degree of inconsistency in identifying specific items with one of the dimensions (Hassan & Che Su, 2012).

The second stage involved four lecturers and six PhD candidates of organizational communication served as a second set of expert judges for content validation of the remaining 206 items. Selection of items to be retained for inclusion in the data collection questionnaire was based on the number of judges in agreement that the item belonged to a specific dimension. A total of 93 items survived the second content validation stage.

Finally, these 93 items were visited by the authors for theoretical content adequacy prior to submitting them to empirical analysis. Content adequacy evaluation is different from an evaluation by the judges of whether the items reflect defined dimensions of organizational communication. This was done to help ensure that the items remained were cleanly reflecting organizational communication in Malaysian contexts and the fundamental theoretical aspects of organizational communication.

Each item was studied for an indication of communication in organization from an indigenous perspective. The items were dimension distribution of the resulting 60 items known as Malaysian Malays Communication Style (MMCS). All item responses were scaled from Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5.

### *3.2 Factor Analyses*

Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the dimensions of (factors underlying) communication style and to identify group of homogenous items suitable for measuring each dimension of communication style. Principal component analysis of the partial correlation matrix was used. The number of factors selected for varimax rotation was determined by a combination of criteria: 1. The root criterion of selecting factors with eigenvalues greater than one. 2. The Scree test, which directs the investigator to examine a plot of eigenvalues and stop factoring at the point where the plot begins to level off. 3. The interpretability and meaningfulness of trial factor rotations. For a rotated factor solution to be interpretable each factor should have two or more loadings above 0.40, and each variable should have only one factor loading above 0.40. Also the variables loading on one factor should fit together logically.

We analyzed the data obtained from a sample of 205 respondents using an exploratory factor analysis via principal components with unspecified number of factors. The magnitude and scree plot of the eigenvalues showed eleven factors. In the following factor analysis, we determined the number of factors to twelve and interpreted factor loadings based on the pattern matrix which resulted from oblique rotation (Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, 2009; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Oblique rotation was appropriate because of the predicted relation among factors (Allen et al., 2009). Analysis of the 60 items resulted in twelve factors that explained 79.0% of the variance. Based on the oblique factor pattern, each factor obviously reflected one of the twelve a priori dimensions. Subsequent iterations were done following deletion of cross-loaded items basing on .50 as our cutoff criteria or items that were theoretically inconsistent with their factor. The resulting solution consisted of 60 items explaining 78.5% of the variance. The analysis of these items was Causal Discussion (4 items), Honour (4 items), Keep in the

heart (4 items), Respect (4 items), Friendship (4 items), Discussion (5 items), Face-saving (5 items), Satire/Indirect (2 items), Manners (3 items), Politeness (7 items), Concern (8 items) and Caring (10 items). The rotated factor loadings for these 60 items appeared in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor loading of the 60 items

Items	Factor Loading
<b>F1 Casual Discussion</b>	
Casual discussions can increase my work productivity	0.60*
Casual discussions can help my work	0.64*
Work input is obtained from casual discussion with my co-workers	0.43*
Information giving or exchange can easily be done in informal situations	0.23
<b>F2: Honour</b>	
I knock on the door before entering my boss' office	0.77*
Formal address shows respect	0.89*
Superiors and subordinates respect each other during communication	0.56*
I feel satisfied when I can entertain the customers by providing the information needed	0.67*
<b>F3: Keep in the heart</b>	
I feel more comfortable to keep silent than voicing out my dissatisfaction	0.57*
It is hard for me to voice out my dissatisfaction with my co-workers	0.74*
I rarely voice out my dissatisfaction to my co-workers	0.78*
I always keep my work problems to myself	0.56*
<b>F4: Respect</b>	
I feel respected when I am asked to give opinions about something	0.43*
Words used in giving instructions indicate respect towards employees	0.70*
The way my superior gives instruction reflects in-depth knowledge about something	0.55*
It is important for me to ask something repeatedly until I really understand it	0.52*
<b>F5: Friendship</b>	
It is hard for me to accept instructions from leaders of different gender	0.67*
I know my work performance from third parties, not from my immediate boss	0.84*
Small differences in evaluation could create conflicts among co-workers	0.51
I do not voice my opinions if I disagree about something	0.70*
<b>F6: Discussion</b>	
Two-way discussions could solve problem at the workplace	0.60*
Discussions with my superior could let me identify my work performance	0.85*
Problems are discussed immediately	0.63*
We need to tell our work problems to the respective parties	0.24
Support from subordinates for organizational success should be appreciated	0.28
<b>F7: Face-saving</b>	
The employees' age needs to be considered while giving instructions	0.12
I only share my work problems with certain co-workers	0.32
If my friend does something wrong, I will discuss with him or her in private	0.60*
Taking care of the subordinates' feelings before giving instructions is important	0.64*
My words reflect my true self	0.40*
<b>F8: Satire/Indirect</b>	
It is hard to say thank you	0.63*
Using satire is an important factor in organizational communication practise	0.67*
<b>F9: Manners</b>	
I get a lot of job-related information at the office canteen	0.77*



Items	Factor Loading
I use satire in dealing with my co-workers' works	0.82*
Being straightforward will decrease face-saving in the context of workplace	0.46
<b>F10: Politeness</b>	
Jokes contain serious work-related matters	0.56*
Advice should be given based on individual personality	0.53*
It is hard for the senior employees to accept the junior employees' opinions in this organization	0.38
The superior asks about the employees' personal matters	0.50*
A compliment is not conveyed directly to avoid jealousy among the employees	0.55*
I feel more comfortable with informal discussions in meetings	0.48
Advice is given indirectly to avoid dissatisfaction	0.65*
<b>F11: Concern</b>	
I am very careful in giving opinions during meeting	0.76*
Interactions about work with my co-workers happen all the time	0.47*
Gentle advice may reduce conflicts	0.62*
The way I give instructions to my co-workers is like talking to my friends	0.43*
I need to show my respect to the senior employees of this organization	0.51*
In giving my opinions, the age factor is taken into consideration	0.43*
I ask my co-workers if I do something wrong	0.76*
Problem-solving can be done easily during informal discussions	0.50
<b>F12: Caring</b>	
Listening is enough to show concern	0.61*
Each employee has his or her own abilities	0.57*
Greetings that I received from my superiors make me feel appreciated	0.37*
I am always asked about my work progress	0.64*
I need to understand the needs of my superiors correctly before doing my work	0.59*
Remembering my birthday makes me feel appreciated	0.64*
I always give good opinions about my friends when asked	0.35*
We need to ask the person directly if we heard something negative about him or her	0.46*
Help should be given when asked	0.32
It is a sin to say something that we are not sure of whether it is right or wrong	0.50*

## Study 2: Scale Validation

The goal of the second study was to evaluate the construct validity of the 60 items of MMCS by using structural equation modelling. Thus, this technique has gained much attention among researchers in various areas such as social science, education marketing, strategy and management information systems (Campbell & Ntobedzi, 2007; Chin, 1998; Fornell & Cha, 1994; Hulland, 1999; Johansson & Yip, 1994). MMCS was measured using a 60-item test derived from study one.

### 3.3 Profile of Respondents

The sample profile shows that the majority of the respondents were female (55.30%). Ages ranged from 30 to 39 with the average being 35 years old. Compared to the first study, this study utilized samples from the private sector. Nearly half of the respondents have been working with the organization for more than 10 years.

### 3.4 The Measurement Model

The measurement model assessment focused on the relationship between indicators and corresponding constructs. Assessment which is also referred to as construct validity; consists of convergent validity and discriminant validity. Thus, convergent validity evaluates how closely the items in a single construct correlate with each other. Besides, assessment of such validity includes individual item reliability and internal consistency (Barclay et al., 1995; Santosa et al., 2005). Conversely, discriminant validity measures the degree to which

constructs in the study differ from each other (Barclay et al., 1995). Hence, the measurement model can be assessed by examining the item reliability, internal consistency, and the discriminant validity (Barclay et al., 1995; Hullan, 1999; Santosa et al., 2005).

The proposed hypothesis measurement model (Figure 1) was tested using Structural Equation Modelling based on Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS Version 18). In this study, the MMCS scale consisting of the relationships between the constructs and the indicators used to measure them was tested as the second order reflective indicator. The measurement model was analysed and interpreted based on the convergent validity, construct reliability, and discriminant validity. The sequence ensures that the construct measures are valid and reliable before attempting to draw conclusions regarding relationships among constructs (Hair et al., 1998). Only 48 items survived this process. The details of the items are in Appendix (Table 2).

The 60 items derived from EFA in the development phase were subjected to a series of eight confirmatory factor analyses to examine more closely the scale of psychometric properties. During each iteration, the compound item (loaded on each factor, as suggested by the modification index) with the lowest squared multiple correlation coefficient (SMC) (individual item reliability) was dropped. In an attempt to carry forth enough items to the validation study to ensure valid construct measurement, and because items would be subjected to additional purification analyses in the validation study, the iteration procedure stopped at the point where all the items remained in the model were sufficiently significant and the overall model fit was acceptable. The basic generated model (Figure 2) produced a chi-square of 2308.662 (df = 1070, P = 0.000), a goodness of fit statistic (GFI) of 0.707, a Tucker Lewis index (TLI) of 0.691, a ratio of 2.158, and RMSEA of 0.068. Since the generated model is not the fit model, then the deletion process in modification index was performed to achieve the requirement of producing a model with a goodness of fit level.

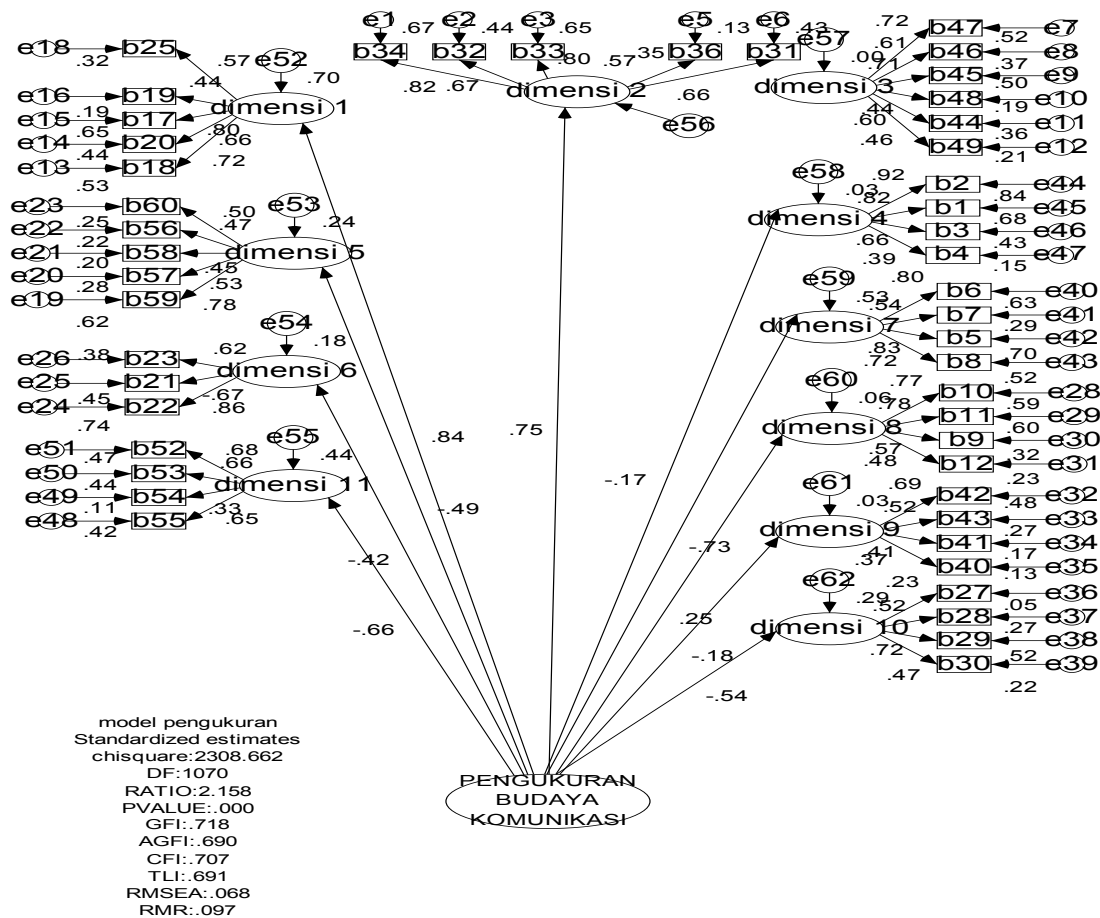


Figure 1. Hypothesis measurement model of the MMCS

The final results of modification index are shown in Figure 2. The basic generated model produced a chi-square of 826.358 (df = 426, P = 0.000), a goodness of fit statistic (GFI) of 0.831, a Tucker Lewis index (TLI) of 0.812, a ratio of 1.940, and RMSEA of 0.061. The purification process resulted in retaining eight dimensions with 29 items: Dimension 2/Respect (4 items), Dimension 4/Honour (4 items), Dimension 7/Face-saving (4 items), Dimension 9/Manners (4 items), Dimension 10/Politeness (4 items), Dimension 11/Caring (4 items), Dimension 6/Discussion (3 items), and Dimension 5/Friendship (4 items). The final generated model achieved all the requirements of goodness of fit compared to the hypothesized model. Results indicated that only 31 items survived the whole process with eight dimensions.

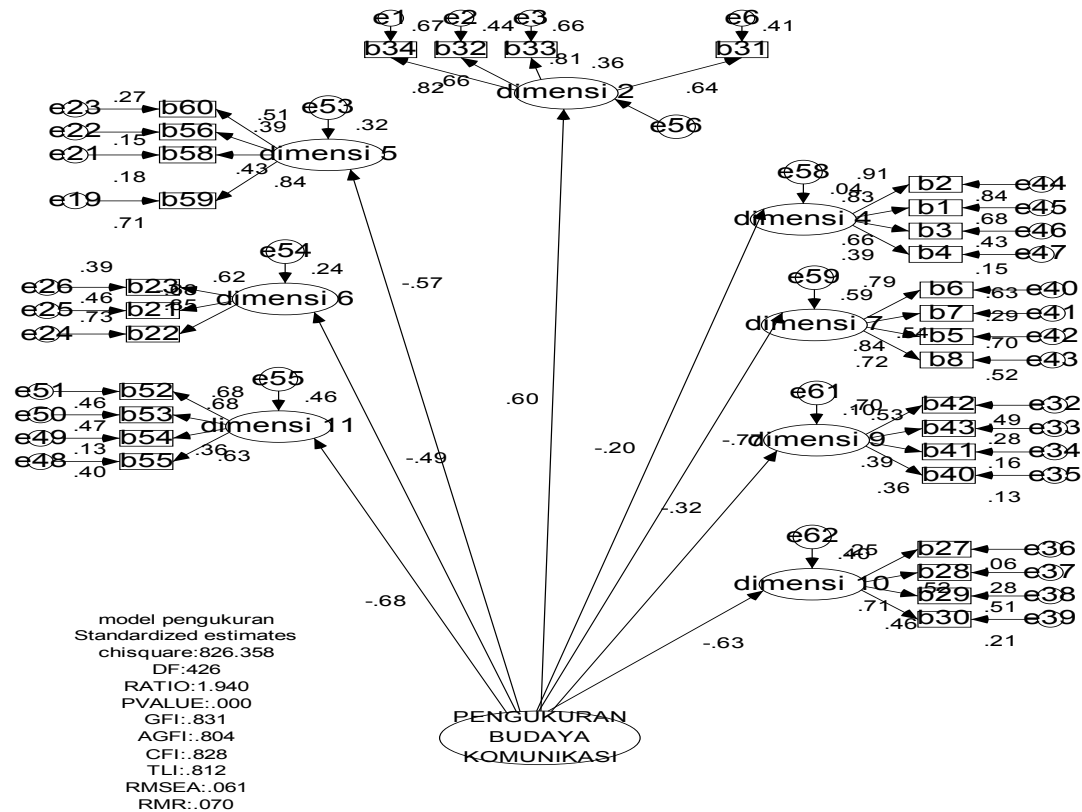


Figure 2. Generated measurement model of the MMCS

#### 4. Discussion

In this current study, we tested the validation of MMCS measures. The results of factor analysis indicated that there are twelve factors consisting of 60 items. The dimensions were Casual discussion, Honor, Keep in the Heart, Respect, Friendship, Discussion, Face-saving, Satire/Indirectness, Manners, Politeness, Concern, and Caring. These dimensions reflect the Malay values. For example, in terms of respect, the Malay employees emphasize on relationships with the co-workers and subordinates as a meaningful relationship, where respect towards each other plays a vital role. In terms of co-worker communication, giving indirect instructions or critics is a skill that needs to be comprehended by both the superior and subordinate. This is leader credibility in communication with subordinates. The results also indicated the acceptance of power distance in the Malay employees. This is consistent with Chan and Pearson (2002), Karande, Rao, and Singhapakdi (2002), and Abdul Rashid and Ho (2003).

Through the validation of a MMCS, evidence was found for the proposition that MMCS Malaysia composed eight factors, consistent with prior categories based on theory and critical incident interviews. In summary, support for the Malaysian organizational communication measures was provided by a reliable set of results: 1) factor loadings from exploratory factor analysis provided support for twelve separate factors, and 2) the structural equation modeling results showed that different organizational communication factors were significant in the explanation of the variance in organizational communication. The Structural Equation Modeling results showed that the

dimensions of Respect, Honour, Face-saving, Manners, Politeness, Caring, Casual Discussion, and Friendship serve to highlight and reveal some unique ways in which the Malay culture and communication are conceptualized, valued, and constructed by the Malay employees within the organizations. Furthermore, through these characteristics we begin to see the influences such culture has on the workplace that the Malay employees are communicating.

Moreover, these communication characteristics illustrate how the conceptualizations and constructions of the work's meaning and socialization process are intertwined between culture and communication. The findings of this study also indicated that the Malay employees also practice some universal values such as face-saving. According to many researchers (Garcia, 2008; Ho, 1976; Nam, 1998; Oetzel, Garcia, & Ting-Toomey, 2008; Zheng, 1994), the origin of concept face is derived from the Chinese culture. Goffman (1955; 1959; 1967) conceptualized face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact." In the same context he used the term "face" to describe the social identity that individuals desire to establish in front of other people. This is consistent with the Malay values which value modesty and respect to each other during interactions. Politeness is also a very important characteristic in the Malay culture.

Politeness is also a very important characteristic in the Malay culture. In the so-called Western societies, strategic politeness reflects the paramount concern for individual rights, namely what is owed to the individual, whereas in many non-Western societies, normative or indexical politeness signals a concern for duty; what is owed to the group. It is the manifestation of an individualistic ontology, as opposed to a communitarian ontology that rests on a group-based society (Moghaddam et al., 2000). The normative nature of politeness rules feed on the moral order within which encounters take place and the ontology of which tends to be either individualistic or communitarian. The concepts of right and duty are powerful interpretative tools for an understanding of self-other relationships (Bhatia, 2000) and for an explanation of behaviours that have been subsumed under the label of politeness.

Caring is a perception of a series of informational, emotional and practical support, and help provided by the supervisor in workplace communication contexts. The process in which the superior conveys caring for the subordinate is a dynamic superior-subordinate communication process. The superiors provide informational, emotional and practical support, and help, which will be perceived as caring by the subordinates. The professional knowledge, attitudes and skills of superiors are three determinant factors affecting the subordinates' perception of caring because the subordinates could directly receive and perceive the informational, emotional and practical support and help, and indirectly evaluate the levels of the professional knowledge, attitudes and skills of superiors. Furthermore, the perceived caring contributes to establishing a superior-subordinate trust relationship and enforces the effectiveness of support and help.

Causal discussion is a form of informal communication, which seems to be a dominant activity. The conversations seem fluid and undersigned and yet, clearly, work is being accomplished. Informal communication is an important mechanism to help achieve both the production goals and the social goals of groups. Informal communication is a loosely defined concept and is often treated as the residual category in organizational theory. According to this perspective, informal communication is that which remains when rules and hierarchies as ways of coordinating activities are eliminated. More positively, informal communication is communication that is spontaneous, interactive, and rich. There is a reason to think that informal communication is particularly useful in supporting the social functions of groups. This is because organizations are less explicit in regulating social relationships than they are in regulating other aspects of work procedures.

The findings also indicated that the Malays value concrete evidence of friendship as manifested in self-disclosure, sociability, day-to-day assistance, and shared activities. The old proverb says, a friend in need is a friend indeed. In the Malay cultural contexts, a high-quality of friendship is characterized by high levels of prosaically behaviour, intimacy, and other positive features, and low levels of conflicts, rivalry, and other negative features. A few researchers have described various positive features of good friendships including prosaically behaviour, self-esteem support, intimacy, loyalty, plus others, and investigated the associations between these features by asking questions assessing them.

Scale validation is inextricably intertwined with scale development. The results of validity tests of MMCS serve as evidence that scale refinement should be undertaken. Revised scales are submitted to further validity testing, which indicates the need for additional revisions and so on. The development of MMCS has thus far passed through two phases. Evidence for the validity of the questionnaire is drawn from each of these phases.

Many of the items for this scale contribute an addition to the current scales of organizational communication,

and it was through the focus group and interview process that the dimensions related to the cultural aspect were found. Previous organizational communication studies did not recognize the importance of these dimensions and assumed it is applicable across culture. Also improving upon previous organizational communication development efforts (Goldhaber, Yates, Porter, & Lesniak, 1978; Roberts & O'Reilly, 1974) was the rigorous content validation procedure involving faculty members and doctoral students, and the evaluation of all the items and scales for social desirability set. Finding that matched a priori dimensions using the conservative approach of exploratory factor analysis with the unspecified number of factors provided strong support for the hypothesized organizational communication dimensions in Malaysian organizations. In addition, the scales developed for the Malaysian organizational communication from organizational employees were validated using structural equation modelling with data collected from diverse organizations.

### 5. Limitations of This Study

We present two limitations in this study. First, this scale was developed in a single community with differences in terms of cultural heritage, or even this community in the coming years may define communication and culture differently. Second, the sample used in this study consisted of employees from the public and private sectors. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing this study. In the future, other populations and research settings could be used for the purpose of obtaining further evidence of instrument validity and reliability.

### 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the current research offers support for the new organizational communication construct in Malaysian organizational contexts. Further, the findings provide psychometric support for the Malaysian organizational communication measures. Use of the measure may enrich organizational communication literature through an investigation of the different dimensions of the construct in Malaysian organizations.

The present research would benefit from more replications in additional countries, leading to more evidence for the cross-cultural validity of the scales developed. Recommendations for future study of the questionnaire include revising items, testing in a broader population, and further testing of construct validity.

### 7. Suggestions for Future Research

The value of identifying multiple dimensions of organizational communication in Malaysian contexts lies in considering when and how these dimensions relate to the issue of applicability of Western-based organizational communication in local cultural settings and their impact on the expectation of organizational outcomes. For instance, much research has been done on the relationship between organizational communication and commitment or satisfaction using organizational communication satisfaction (CSQ) or organizational communication questionnaire (OCQ) but all of those studies failed to consider the culture of the country (Greenbaum & Clappitt, 1988; Varona, 1999). One immediate need for research consideration is that more items should be added so that the scale is appropriate for use in multiple indicator structural equation models. Creative item-writing will be necessary so as to capture organizational communication features without suffering from biases.

Different settings and research questions require different research methods. The research to date has relied almost exclusively on surveys and quantitative methods. The immediate need for future research using the Malaysian organizational communication scale is longitudinal research on the organizational communication process and outcomes, as the consequences of the identified dimensions of organizational communication may differ between newly emerging and established organizations in Malaysia. For example, maybe honour takes a longer time to grow than respect. Or possibly, organizations based in central, southern Peninsular Malaysia or East Malaysia has different focal organizational communication dimensions due to different local culture practices. Research examining differences in the relative importance of organizational communication dimensions for new organizational members and current organizational employees within the organization is also desired. Only longitudinal tests of the identified dimensions can address such causal issues.

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## Appendix

Table A1. Items and dimensions for Figure 1

Dimension 1	b17. It is hard for me to accept instructions from leaders of different gender
	b18. I know my work performance from third parties, not from my immediate boss.
	b19. Small differences in evaluation could create conflicts among co-workers
	b20. I do not voice my opinions if I disagree about something
	b25. Support from subordinates for organizational success should be appreciated
Dimension 2	b31. It is hard to say thank you
	b32. Using satire is an important factor in organizational communication practices
	b33. I get a lot of job-related information at the office canteen
	b34. I use satire in dealing with my co-workers' work
	b36. Jokes contain serious work-related matters
Dimension 3	b44. Interactions about work with my co-workers happen all the time
	b45. Gentle advice may reduce conflicts b46. The way I give instructions to my co-workers is like talking to my friends
	b47. I need to show my respect to the senior employees of this organization
	b48. In giving my opinions, the age factor is taken into consideration
	b49. I ask my co-workers if I do something wrong
Dimension 4	b1. Casual discussions can increase my work productivity
	b2. Casual discussions can help my work
	b3. Work input is obtained from casual discussions with my co-workers
	b4. Information giving or exchange can be easily done in informal situations
	b56. Remembering my birthday makes me feel appreciated
Dimension 5	b57. I always give good opinions about my friends when asked
	b58. We need to ask the person directly if we heard something negative about him or her
	b59. Help should be given when asked
	b60. It is a sin to say something that we are not sure of whether it is right or wrong
	b21. Two-way discussions could solve problems at the workplace
Dimension 6	b22. Discussions with my superior could let me identify my work performance
	b23. Problems are discussed immediately
	b5. I knock on the door before entering my boss' office
Dimension 7	b6. Formal address shows respect
	b7. Superiors and subordinates respect each other during communication
	b8. I feel satisfied when I can entertain the customers by providing the information needed
Dimension 8	b9. I feel more comfortable to keep silent than voicing out my dissatisfaction
	b10. It is hard for me to voice out my dissatisfaction with my co-workers
	b11. I rarely voice out my dissatisfaction to my co-workers
	b12. I always keep my work problems to myself
Dimension 9	b40. A compliment is not conveyed directly to avoid jealousy among the employees
	b41. I feel more comfortable with informal discussions in meetings
	b42. Advice is given indirectly to avoid dissatisfaction
	b43. I am very careful in giving opinions during meetings



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	b27. I only share my work problems with certain co-workers
Dimension 10	b28. If my friend does something wrong, I will discuss with him or her in private
	b29. Taking care of the subordinates' feelings before giving instructions is important
	b30. My words reflect my true self
	b52. Each employee has his or her own abilities
Dimension 11	b53. Greetings that I received from my superiors make me feel appreciated
	b54. I am always asked about my work progress
	b55. I need to understand the needs of my superiors correctly before doing my work

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Table A2. Items and dimensions for Figure 2

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Dimension 2	b32. Using satire is an important factor in organizational communication practices
	b33. I get a lot of job-related information at the office canteen
	b34. I use satire in dealing with my co-workers' work
Dimension 4	b1. Casual discussions can increase my work productivity
	b2. Casual discussions can help my work
	b3. Work input is obtained from casual discussions with my co-workers
Dimension 5	b4. Information giving or exchange can be easily done in informal situations
	b56. Remembering my birthday makes me feel appreciated
	b58. We need to ask the person directly if we heard something negative about him or her
Dimension 6	b59. Help should be given when asked
	b60. It is a sin to say something that we are not sure of whether it is right or wrong
	b21. Two-way discussions could solve problems at the workplace
Dimension 7	b22. Discussions with my superior could let me identify my work performance
	b23. Problems are discussed immediately
	b5. I knock on the door before entering my boss' office
Dimension 9	b6. Formal address shows respect
	b7. Superiors and subordinates respect each other during communication
	b8. I feel satisfied when I can entertain the customers by providing the information needed
Dimension 10	b40. A compliment is not conveyed directly to avoid jealousy among the employees
	b41. I feel more comfortable with informal discussions in meetings
	b42. Advice is given indirectly to avoid dissatisfaction
Dimension 11	b43. I am very careful in giving opinions during meetings
	b27. I only share my work problems with certain co-workers
	b28. If my friend does something wrong, I will discuss with him or her in private
Dimension 10	b29. Taking care of the subordinates' feelings before giving instructions is important
	b30. My words reflect my true self
	b52. Each employee has his or her own abilities
Dimension 11	b53. Greetings that I received from my superiors make me feel appreciated
	b54. I always ask about my work progress
	b55. I need to understand the needs of my superiors correctly before doing my work

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