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Web: www.muslimartscollege.in, Email: muslimartscollege@gmail.com.




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on

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# MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH ETHICS

4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2023



MAC RESEARCH FORUM

**MUSLIM ARTS COLLEGE (MAC)**

(Affiliated to M.S.University, Tirunelveli)

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Edited by  
Dr T. Kumaran  
Dr V. Rejulin Jerin Kumar

31.	FORMULATION AND EVALUATION OF CUCUMIS SATIVUS SEED BASED INCORPORATED READY MADE KANJI FOR DIABETIC PATIENTS <i>G.C.Gilbis Tamil Priya<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Yasmin<sup>1,3</sup></i>	91
32.	INFLUENCE OF SELECTED MINERALS ON COCOON AND SILK CHARACTERS OF SILKWORM, <i>BOMBYX MORI</i> L. <i>D.Jeba Jini<sup>1</sup> and Dr..M.Ramani Bai<sup>*</sup></i>	94
33.	A STUDY ON THE PHYTOREMEDIATION OF HEAVY METALS BY USING, <i>BRASSICA JUNCEA</i> (INDIAN MUSTARD) PLANT. <i>D.Dayana Jebamalar, Dr.M.Ramani Bai<sup>*</sup></i>	97
34.	POTENTIAL SEAWEED-DERIVED BIOACTIVE COMPOUNDS FOR BIOLOGICAL AND THERAPEUTIC APPLICATIONS <i>D.Beula Shiny and J.Vijila Jasmin</i>	100
35.	IMPACT OF <i>PONGAMIA PINNATA</i> L. EXTRACT ON THE TUKRA INFESTED MULBERRY LEAVES AND NUTRITIONAL PARAMETERS OF SILKWORM, <i>BOMBYX MORI</i> L. <i>T. Baby Davana<sup>a</sup>, D. Dayana Jebamalar<sup>b</sup> and Dr. M. Ramani Baia<sup>*</sup></i>	103
36.	PHYTOCHEMICAL AND ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES OF <i>BORASSUS FLABELLIFER</i> SPROUT MILK <i>T.Sherin Mary<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> and J.Vijila Jasmin<sup>2, 3</sup></i>	107
37.	BIODEGRADATION OF POLYTHENES BY PSEUDOMONAS AND BACILLUS SPECIES ISOLATED FROM DUMPED SOIL AREA <i>Sujithra. S, M.Jenifer Tamizharasi, T.Sindu Kumari, Lekshmi and Dr. T. Kumaran</i>	111
38.	<b>BARRIERS OF CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MULTINATIONAL FIRMS</b> <i>Archana. H, Lt. Dr.Jagathish</i>	115 ✓
39.	REVIEW OF CATTLE STRUCTURE HELD BY DAIRY FARMERS IN KERALA <i>Shajeela Rani A, Dr, Antony Raj P</i>	119 ✓
40.	CONSUMER PRECPECTION TOWARDS BRANDED CLOTHES AMONG YOUNGSTERS <i>Anjumol Sasi, Lt.Dr.MJagathish</i>	121 ✓
41.	THE IMPORTANCE OF ONLINE PURCHASE AND ONLINE PAYMENT DURING COVID 19. <i>Merlin k joseph<sup>*</sup> and Dr. M Jagathish<sup>**</sup></i>	124 ✓
42.	AWARENESS AND SATISFACTION ON INVESTMENT AVENUES OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KAYAMKULAM VILLAGE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY <i>Mubarak S. A<sup>*</sup> &amp; Dr H. Sabeena Parveen<sup>*</sup></i>	127 ✓
43.	A STUDY ON WORK LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN BANKS IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT <i>Soumya. S, Dr. M. P. Asha Kumari</i>	130 ✓
44.	A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GRIEVANCE HANDLING MACHANISM IN SIDCO <i>Vidya V.J<sup>*</sup> &amp; Dr. A. Safia<sup>**</sup></i>	133 ✓
45.	A STUDY ON CONSUMERS PURCHASING DECISIONS REGARDING "SEVEN GREEN PRODUCTS" <i>B. Abilasrin, Dr.H.Sabeena Farveen</i>	136 ✓

## BARRIERS OF CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MULTINATIONAL FIRMS

**Archana. H**

Phd. Scholar

Muslim Arts College, Thiruvithancode

**Lt. Dr. Jagathish**

Vice Principal & HOD of Commerce

Muslim Arts College, Thiruvithancode

### Abstract

In times of hasty growth, both in economic development and globalization, an cumulative number of firms spread their businesses abroad. A ensuing challenge of this development is the managerial implications of cross-cultural management. This study pays a qualitative approach in a single case study of a US company and its subsidiary in China. After reviewing the previous studies, the authors précis the variances of management style, staff behaviors and communication system in different culture context and find the barriers of cross cultural communication in multinational firms. The discoveries of this study show that the barriers of communication come from the national culture's encouragement on the work place and behaviors of people with different identity. Moreover, culture also influences people's mode of thinking and behaving and result in different empathies toward vision and purposes of firms.

Key words: cross cultural, communication, multinational firms, management style, staff behavior

### Introduction

Because of the globalization and the rapid expansion of economics, multinational firms are more and more rampant. Intercultural communication grants a new contest to managers. Culture, as Hofstede (1997, p. 4) states, is the "software of mind" that can impact people's outlines of thinking and behaving. Mental programming stimulates people's living and working all over their lives. For example, Sweden and China are engrossed in different cultures which lead to different ways of thinking and behaving. When a Swedish company tries to realize the management style or behaviors of Chinese staff, some basic principles are rebelled. For instance, Chinese feel that all men are born unfit and they should all adapt the decision of the authority (Martinsons & Hempel, 1998). While Western people trust that all men are born identical and they can make self-governing decisions and act on their own (ibid). Ambos and Schlegelmilch (2008) contend that one culture may support certain type (or types) of organizations rather than other types, and culture differences will eventually influence on the performance of company (ibid). In addition, national culture can impact the management and communications of organizations.

Companies who cover their business abroad have to face a task of cross-cultural communication. Especially for multi-culture firms with some holdings in other countries, it is essential that managers have common communication and sufficient understanding for organizational goal. Technical developments have detached most of the physical barriers on communication. However, managers still happenstance some cultural barriers. In order to attain success, managers working in global environments must be capable in cross-cultural communication. Different characteristics of culture result in thinking, considerate and communicational diversity. These diversities barricade organizational development and management more or less. More and more managers have paid attention to the problem of cross-cultural conflict on communication.

### Statement of the problem

To understand the different barriers of communication in Mncs which obstruct the communication within an organisation, it is very important to analyse the types of barriers. To go more into it is very important to conceptualise the content. There are several reasons where interpersonal communications may fail. There are numerous reasons wherefore interpersonal communications may fail. In many communications, the memo (What is said) may not be established exactly the way the sender envisioned. It is, consequently, vital that the correspondent seeks feedback to check that their message is clearly understood.

There are numerous barriers to communication and these may befall at any stage in the communication process. Barricades may lead to your message becoming slanted and you therefore risk degenerative both time and /or money by causing confusion and misinterpretation. Effective communication involves overpowering these barriers and transmission a clear and concise message.

### Review of Literature

Culture is the design of taken-for-granted molds about how a given collection of people should think, act, and feel as they go about their daily affairs" (Joynt & Warner, 1996, p. 3). Hofstede (1997) discourses that there are two kinds of cultures: organizational culture and national culture, which differs when it comes to values and practice. Values come from the knowledge of life, in other words, one's value comes Halmstad School of Business and Engineering Rufe He & Jianchao Liu (2010) 5 / 32 from family and school in the early year of his/her life. While performs come from social experience: working. The alterations in national culture lie in values rather than practice. While, in organizational level, culture differences seem mostly in practice rather than value (ibid). Ybema and Byun (2009) refer to Schneider and Barsoux's (1997) quarrel that the parent country's culture is often remained in multicultural companies, and the national culture of parent's company is often defied by the national culture of subordinate company, because of the foreign rule put on it. National culture provides a principle for employees in organizations to comprehend how to work, how to approach to the goals and how they want others to delicacy them. If the management within an organization fails to consist with these "deeply hold values" together, the employee will feel discontented and frustrated, thus will poorly perform (Newman & Nollen, 1996). Besides, the effectiveness of organization will decrease. Hofstede (1980) claims that there are four dimensions of national culture: low vs. high Power Distance; individualism vs. collectivism; masculinity vs. femininity; and indecision avoidance. Before long, the fifth dimension is organed by Harris Bond, which was called Confucian dynamism (Bond & Hofstede, 1988). Later, Hofstede takes it into his agenda in terms of long vs. short term orientation. Low vs. High Power Distance Power distance is "the level to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is disseminated" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 28). In low influence distance countries, the authority is dispersed within the organization. Superiors are dependent on subordinates as session on a limited extent. Thus, emotional distance between them is relatively small: it is easy and agreeable for subordinates to approach and contact their superiors. However, in high power distance countries, power is always federal within the organization. Only a substantial dependence exists from subordinators to superiors. "Subordinates retort by either preferring such dependence, or rejecting it entirely, which in psychology is known as "counter dependence": that is requirement, but in a negative sign" (ibid, p.27). High power detachment countries thus show a pattern of divergence between dependence and counter dependence (ibid). Individualism vs. Collectivism "Individualism relates to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is predictable 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 cliques, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning faithfulness" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 51). The two dimensions (power distance and individualism) incline to be negatively Halmstad School of Business and Engineering Rufe He & Jianchao Liu (2010) 6 / 32 connected: larger power distance countries are also likely to be more collectivist; small power aloofness countries are more individualist. When the authority is disseminated, people are likely to be individualist. When the authority is centralized people is likely to be collectivist.

### Objectives

1. To understand the best solution to drive subsidiary company into parent company's way of communicating.
2. To ensure The best solution for communicating multinational firms to grasp a mutual understanding between a parent company and subsidiary.

### Research Methodology

The data has been collected from around 100 respondents through convenient sampling method. The data collected for the study is both primary and secondary. The primary data was collected through interview method and secondary data was collected with the help of journals. The data was calculated through percentage method.

### High context-communication and low context communication.

High context or Low context communication theory is one of the most vital theories in cross-cultural research, which can be watched as a culture based on the communications that people within the culture prefer to use . It appropriately links management style and staff behaviour to converse the issue of cross-cultural management in communication. According to Richardson and Smith, cultures cannot be easily

described into HC or LC, but to some extent, "some cultures tend to be at the higher end while others are at the lower end of the continuum". To some range, management style imply superior part of the organization, similarly, staff behavior imply subordinate part in the organization. Frequently, because of the gap among these Halmstad School of Business and Engineering Rufe He & Jianchao Liu (2010) 8 / 32 positions, barriers also occur during the conveying of messages and information. Communication system is the ways that are used within the organization to help contemporaries to transmit messages and information. Organization uses communication system to link people together and make them work toward administrative goals. Management style Culture is a factor manipulating the style of management. Several researchers have underlined the importance of culture on management style. The different way managers use to solve the battles within the organization. Chinese managers rely on an avoiding style while US managers prefer a rival style. Leadership style is prejudiced by culture result in centralized or decentralized. In addition, an effective management style facilitates communication and informational transmission (Mcphee, 1985). Chinese have a different point of view on the thought of leadership with western norms (Martinsons & Westwood, 1997). As a result, aidiosyncratic in-group exists in the organization and bureaucratic regulations are used moderately (ibid). Chinese leaders are not rummage-sale to listening to subordinates or adopting team's perspective (Martinsons & Westwood, 1997 refer to Fukuda, 1983). Therefore, in China, important results are only made by leaders according to their individual experience or knowledge. It is natural that Chinese leaders who own authority to determine the organization objectives (Martinsons & Westwood, 1997 refer to Silin, 1976). Western countries trust that person has his/her individual right and a legitimate power to protect their private property. The belief has been deeply entrenched in western organizational structure. According to Martinsons and Westwood (1997), in greatest western organizations, any decision-making in the system does not depend on its top managers or owners, in its place, on a rational and impersonal set of rules with a well-defined purpose. Staff behavior Staff is critical asset of organizations. They bring organization with their knowledge, skills, and skills. Webb (1996) argues that education provides important developments and has been observed as one of the most important values of staff. Skills of the labors will ultimately leads to the inequality of their wages (Juhn, Murphy & Pierce, 1993). Wage is always viewed as the enthusiasm part or the purpose of working. Educational level, which has a positive relationship with skills, will regulate the wage level of staff. Thuswell educated stuff will earn more and be more driven than their less educated colleagues. In multinational organizations, Halmstad School of Business and Engineering Rufe He & Jianchao Liu (2010) 9 / 32 language is another chief skill of staff that cannot be neglected (Usunier & Lee, 2005). According to Jiang (2000), there is aadjacent relationship between language & culture. Moreover, both of these two inspiration each other interactively. Culture is immersed in its language and will influence the way of people uttering and receiving messages. Lots of researchers have highlighted the importance of enablement within the organization to both motivate staff and achieve efficiency. Empowerment within organizations mains to high productivity and high performance as well as the satisfaction of the employees themselves. (Labianca, Gray & Brass, 2000; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) Communication system System is measures and rules both formal (plans and budgets) and informal, which communicates devices and goals; monitors the organization; and informs others of the developments within the group (Hitt, 1995). System can be used to maintain the patterns in organizational activities, not only those can be foretold but also the surprised ones (Simons, 1995). In multinational firms, communication system is the greatest important system in international knowledge transfer. According to Erez (1992) refers Bennis and Nanus (1985) that communication is the private approach group can exactly move toward the goal of organization. In addition, accentuates that there is a closed relation between interpersonal communication and culture. Interpersonal communication is one of the fragments of organization communication system. Communication forms the links which help cluster members to transmit the social values and facilitate their sharing (ibid). Collective action can be eased by shared meaning and shared communication mechanisms (ibid). Furthermore, Kraut, Fish, Root and organize communication into formal communication and informal communication, according to their point of view, formal communication tends to be scheduled in advance, arranged members, participants in role, preset agenda, one-way, penurious content and formal language & speech register. The structural and functional features of communication and the nature of the communication setting influence the degree of formal. In terms of the different appearances, formal and informal communication suit to different situation, "formal

communication tends to be cast-off for coordinating relatively routine transactions within groups and organizations, while, informal communication seems needed for management in the face of uncertainty and equivocality" (ibid, p 6).

### Conclusion

In a multinational firm it is not the best solution to ambition subsidiary company into parent company's way of communicating, or merely let the subsidiary company work in their own way. The best explanation of communicating multinational firms is to reach a mutual understanding between a parent company and subsidiary, which be contingent on mutual learning and mutual adaptation- in multi-culture management perspective. When a parent company and its subsidiary do not share the same opinions which derive from the influence of different national culture where the firm operates in, problems and barriers will occur. In this study particularly, when the parent company holds the belief that the subsidiary company lacks initiative on work, at the same time, the subsidiary company reflects that the parent company would not treat their suggestions seriously and afraid to nonstop the frustration to the parent company. Due to differences in cultures, the emotional reserve towards superior-subordinate relationship is varying. Swedish managers try to arouse the passion of Chinese employees by asking for their initiative at work. While, Chinese managers clutch the Halmstad School of Business and Engineering Rufe He & Jianchao Liu (2010) 18 / 32 credence that it is better when the power is centralized and subordinates just follow the instructions of the superiors. Therefore, Chinese managers are expected to have a all-inclusive knowledge of the firm to make "good" decisions for the subordinates. However, Swedish managers ponder that it is impossible for one to know all and they are depending on the wisdoms of the group. Besides, the language and geography distances always bring barriers on communicating and understanding each other. Even when they are using the same language (English), they might have unlike understanding on the same message because of the stimulus of the "hidden rules" in their mother tongue. Many researchers have found that in Asian countries people tend to nonstop themselves inexplicitly, while in Western world people are straight when talking (Ybema & Byun, 2009; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Jolly, 2008; Welth & Welth, 2008). Another point to be revealed is that, life pressure varies from country to country. In low life pressure countries, people pay more devotion to fulfill one's self-worthiness, which will enhance the initiatives at work. While in high life burden countries people struggle with their lives and follow superior's instructions is the unsurpassed way to keep their job.

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