

Relationship between Predictors of Intercultural Communication Competence and Multicultural Identity

KAVITHA BALAKRISHNAN
AJITHA ANGUSAMY
Multimedia University, Malaysia

MADHUBALA BAVA HARJI
SEGI University, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism has always been an integral part and aspect of Malaysian culture, with its ethnic complexities. Multicultural identity is a significant predictive factor in assessing intercultural communication competence. Cultural competencies are essential in today's businesses. This research is a systematic attempt to look into the antecedents of these constructs in Malaysian educational contexts given the growing importance of educators' involvement in society's integration. Multicultural factors complement Intercultural communication skills, and this has an impact on the development and effectiveness of organisations/institutions as well as success and performance at work. These attributes are surprisingly underrated in their careers. The role of multicultural identity in determining intercultural communication competency is addressed using Amiot et al. (2007) and Barrett et al. (2013) indicators, respectively, using the structural equation modelling. Therefore, 350 respondents were chosen via the purposeful sampling method by employing a self-administered survey. The findings asserted the importance of cultural competency of educators, especially in settings where both students and faculty members come from different cultural backgrounds. The results supported the hypothesis that the endogenous construct of intercultural communication competence can be used to predict multicultural identity. Any multiracial organisation or institution can replicate the factors and instruments used in this study. By identifying the predicted factors, the research has significantly contributed to controlling and optimising the communication performance of ethnically diverse organisations.

Keywords: *Multiculturalism, identity, intercultural communication competence, ethnicity, integration.*

INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism, with its ethnic intricacies, is an atypical societal environment in almost all countries as a consequence of, among others intercultural marriages, migration and globalisation movements (Kim & Choi, 2020) that attribute to an increased number of multicultural heritages. This adaptation made by the multicultural groups blurs cultural boundaries and fuses cultural identities (Cheon, 2019).

In multicultural societies, ethnic identity has grown even more critical (Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2023) with the emergence of a confederation government. Rich multicultural heritages with the presence of myriad multicultural identities now permeate all levels within societies, organisations, institutions etc. in multicultural countries. Multiculturalism is also a distinctive identity of Malaysia, a nation with a potpourri of different races who experience and sustain multicultural identity throughout their lives. To illustrate, the updated 2023 statistics available from the Department of Statistics Malaysia's official website reflect Malaysia's plethora of cultural varieties, with the Natives '*Bumiputra*'

including the Malays who make up (in '000) a total of 21325.5 of the population, followed by the Chinese (6862.4) and the Indians (2001.0). Thus, Malaysian workplaces can be deemed as good examples of multicultural organisations (Balakrishnan, Harji & Angusamy, 2020) where effective intercultural communication is pertinent.

Multicultural factors are found to contribute to building intercultural communication competence (ICC) (Sousa & Gonçalves, 2019), which is deemed essential for success and performance at work (Thye, 2018; Yusof, Kaur & Lynn-Sze, 2019). In the same vein, Garrido, Garcia-Ramirez and Balcazarm (2019) asserted that cultural competencies impact the growth and efficiency of organisations. Guo (2019) concurs that cultural competencies are imperative in contemporary workplaces, and multicultural identity (MCI) could be used as a relevant predictive factor to assess ICC.

Hence, it is inarguably essential to explore the impact of ICC indicators on the employee and particularly as Sousa and Gonçalves (2019) highlighted, there appear to be limited studies on ICC in educational settings. If multicultural characteristics encourage successful intercultural communication by enhancing one's sense of belonging in various cultural contexts, then exploring, the impact of ICC indicators on the employee is inarguably essential.

The impact of MCI on the ICC of multi-ethnic educators appears to have not been studied extensively in Malaysia. The research gaps are discussed in the following section. Related empirical evidence would explain that there are no systematic efforts to examine antecedents of these constructs in the context of educational settings in Malaysia. The following section will also explain why MCI is used as a predictive factor of ICC.

Multicultural employees, identified as exposed to two or more other cultures, distinct with internalised cultural schemas (knowledge, awareness, beliefs, values etc.) and characterised by ambivalent and complex mix, have become a new demographic in global organisations (Chuang, 2021). Albeit the diversity in cultures and ethnicities, studies on the influences of multicultural identity factors in managing multicultural groups in workplaces are limited. Two particular gaps are found in previous studies. First, is the tendency to broadly group multiracial Malaysians as one culture without much consideration for their internal cultural diversities. For instance, Multi-ethnic Malaysians were compared to expatriates in several cross-racial studies (Halim, Bakar & Mohamad, 2018) without due consideration given to their respective cultural identity configuration. Therefore, employees in Malaysia must adopt appropriate skills to interact and overcome cultural obstacles and complexities (Hartini, Fakhrorazi & Islam, 2019).

However, cultural differences among people of the same nationality have been reported by Hanel et al. (2018) and Balakrishnan, Harji and Angusamy (2019). Hassan and Bahtiar (2017) too reported that each ethnic community of Malaysia primarily maintains its own distinct culture despite constant efforts to establish an integrated national identity. Mahadir et al. (2019) also reported Malaysians as ethnically diverse who receive little recognition for their cultural identities and are subjected to ethnic stereotyping, with some ethnic groups feeling undervalued and disrespected. Therefore, it is not surprising that ethnic diversity poses a challenge in plural Malaysian societies, and educational institutions have been entrusted with resolving this issue of ethnic division (Tan, Naidu & Jamil, 2018), Malaysian universities could impact performance adversely (Thye, 2018). Intercultural communication (ICC) is deemed as a resolution as it promotes confidence and fairness (Yeasmin, Koivurova & Heikkilä, 2019), and multiculturalism increases ICC (Sousa & Gonçalves, 2019).

Thus, given that higher education in Malaysia is rapidly evolving into an industry, institutions of higher learning ought to be mindful of their cultural competence since multicultural and intercultural communication is found to develop cognitive ability, sound judgments, resilience, and innovative planning (Dalib et al., 2019). However, even though Malaysia's development plans include uniting all the three main ethnicities (Harris & Han, 2021) and improving their living standards, intercultural intolerance and misunderstanding are the concerns among Malaysians (Rajan et al., 2021). This could be because although the multi-ethnic groups coexist in typical Malaysian society, cultural groups may share some cultural similarities but not the same degree and priority to each of these values.

Secondly, numerous studies (Mahat, 2021; Keevers et al., 2019) have discussed the need for cultural configuration, but no particular study has specifically discussed MCI in Malaysian workplaces particularly among educators in Malaysian HEIs. Both Yao et al. (2019) and Thye (2018), asserted that multicultural practices develop intellectual abilities, rational judgements, resourceful skills and creative thinking and these attributes are indispensable skills sought after in today's global workplaces (Tripathy, 2020). Gilani, Waheed and Hussain (2020) investigated the perception and experience of internationals towards locals and highlighted the need to strategically develop and foster intercultural communication as the primary responsibility of education institutions (Yao et al., 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism was described by Benet-Martinez (2018) as socio-demographic characteristics of psycho-social experiences at a personal level. In this study, the multicultural educators of Malaysia are exposed to various cultures, have either formed relationships in formal or informal settings at a young age or have been in regular contact with other cultural groups (Koh & Harris, 2020). Therefore, these people have a reputation for being multicultural. They may have multicultural experiences, but they may not always display a nuanced, comprehensive perspective of multicultural identity. Multicultural individuals need to negotiate and maintain their numerous cultural identities within themselves when they are in a multicultural situation. Understanding how various ethnic groups organise and form their multicultural identities for cultural adaptation and identifying how they create relationships in professional situations is crucial, particularly for Malaysia's multicultural workforce.

Educators' cultural competence is imperative, especially in institutions with culturally diverse students as well as culturally diverse academics. Wahab et al. (2018) highlighted the lack of multiculturalism instruction and curriculum offered to students, noting that handling cultural diversity was not highlighted as a significant concern to educators at the outset of their careers. Therefore, investigating educators' cultural competence in Malaysia's multicultural context is pertinent because they play an increasingly prominent role for a bigger purpose in integrating the society.

To create a climate of trust, understanding, tolerance, and respect, it's important to have intercultural communication competency, which goes beyond simple cultural knowledge. In a multicultural situation, intercultural communication skills are crucial for educators to work effectively. To meet the organisational objectives of Malaysia's multicultural tertiary institutions, this study embraces intercultural communication competency from the standpoint of educators from different ethnic or racial backgrounds holding distinct academic positions. In this study, intercultural communication competence is

defined as the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries—between Malays, Chinese, and Indians—while maintaining cultural sensitivity and respect.

Dalib, Harun and Yusof (2017) identified the critical importance of multicultural identity (multiculturalism) as an essential factor for ICC. Although the actual intercultural competency was not observed, they recommended that future researchers observe communication competency in a real-life setting. Sattar, Lah and Suleiman (2012) highlighted that significant differences in the interaction patterns of different ethnic groups can lead to pragmatic failures and miscommunications.

Upon exploring the relationship between cultural diversity and communication competence (efficacy), Caligiuri et al. (2020) recommended that further multidisciplinary research is needed on practices of intercultural communication for building effective work teams. Keevers et al. (2019) study in Malaysian tertiary education affirmed the need to develop ICC to overcome multicultural groups' challenges. They stressed the need to understand the effects of ICC, which would inadvertently affect communication and integration opportunities in Malaysian HEIs.

As mentioned earlier, studies tend to give little consideration to the diversity in cultures among educators themselves and examine general aspects of multiculturalism as seen in studies, for example, by Haque, Haque and Dali (2017) who examined educators' knowledge and awareness of multiculturalism, students, cross-cultural adaptation, and Shafaei, Nejati and Razak (2019) who explored educators' attitude towards acculturation. Consideration ought to be taken into account multiculturalism among educators even before they practice or promote multicultural education in their classes as cultural implications can significantly influence behavioural approaches, interaction patterns, and interpersonal relationships of employees, managers, and peers (Balakrishnan, 2022). All education providers ought to realise the impact and considerable benefit this brings to education institutions. Thye (2018) highlighted the need to study multicultural awareness and competencies among Malaysians, especially educators.

Cultural diversity and multi-ethnic team composition are common at all organisational levels, from senior management to support staff, who collaborate and operate globally. Diversity was previously described as an individual's gender, ethnic, and national identities in cultural studies. However, the term diversity in this study refers to different ethnic or racial backgrounds of the same nationality. As Contreras, Baykal and Abid (2020) maintained, businesses must adapt to the needs and wants of their employees and manage diversity to be successful. Adapting, developing, optimising, and managing multicultural groups at work is a major challenge for organisations as cultural differences can pose a significant challenge to multicultural teams' communication competence, values, beliefs, and behaviours (Szkudlarek et al., 2020).

HEIs are the beacons of peace and harmony in bridging cultural gaps, thus promoting creative prowess, reasoning skills and analytical thinking (Yao et al., 2019). The study also highlighted the three ethnic groups stay polarised despite the several efforts of the government to foster unity and relationships between them. Intolerance, ethnocentrism and segregation are rampant in these educational institutions (Rajan et al., 2021).

Studies have found cultural identity based on religion, culture and language is a complex and dynamic phenomenon among Malaysians (Tamam & Hashmi, 2016), and intercultural intolerance and misunderstanding among the Malaysians (Rajan et al., 2021). Hence, HEIs should bridge the cultural gaps and promote peace and harmony among different ethnic groups (Yao et al., 2019), enforce frequent interaction to enhance racial integration

and unity (Thye, 2018) and shape pluralist society for social transformation and growth (Wan & Sirat, 2018). However, multicultural educators in HEIs are the products of ethnic segregation, and their cultural identities are formed and deep-seated. Ideally, educators as transformation and change agents (Thye, 2018; Wahab et al., 2018) should be free from prejudices and uphold global citizenry and unity (Ahmad et al., 2018), and must possess MCI and ICC (Wong & Wong, 2020).

Yuan (2017) has claimed the importance of multicultural education. Still, very few have tested the multicultural identity of these academics who “influence and shape” the perceptions of their students (Ayaz, 2016) and are responsible for improved communication performance. Hence, this study examines this under-represented population, particularly the MCI of multi-ethnic educators in Malaysian HEIs.

The study assumed that Malaysia’s three major ethnic groups defer their multicultural identities and communication competencies based on their ethnic characteristics. This led to the formulation of the study’s research question:

- (1) What is the relationship between the multicultural identity factor of *categorisation* (MCI-CAT) on intercultural communication competence factors?
- (2) What is the relationship between the multicultural identity factor of *compartmentalisation* (MCI-COMP) on intercultural communication competence factors?
- (3) What is the relationship between the multicultural identity factor of *integration* (MCI-INT) on intercultural communication competence factors?

Hence, an extensive assessment of MCI factors and ICC factors in multicultural workplaces, specifically in HEIs, formed the basis of the research objectives in this study:

- examine the influence of multicultural identity factor of *categorisation* on intercultural communication competence factors.
- investigate the influence of the multicultural identity factor of *compartmentalisation* on intercultural communication competence factors.
- identify the influence of multicultural identity factor of *integration* on intercultural communication competence factors.

Multicultural Identity and Intercultural Communication Competence

Cultural patterns of thought processing are expressed through one’s communication. Culture influences one’s thought patterns, feelings, actions and interactions, which constitute the basic communication behaviour (Vaughn, 2019). Communication is the heart of interaction, and culture affects communication (Yousaf et al., 2022). In multicultural workplaces, a relatively large amount of communication and interaction occurs among all levels from various ethnic backgrounds. Creating a culturally compatible communication platform that rejects ethnic, racial, religious and gender discrimination and accepts equality is the aim of all multicultural research (Balakrishnan et al., 2021). A few exploratory studies also found that cultures and cultural diversity affect communication (Chung, 2019; Brooks, Bloomer & Manias, 2018).

Cultural setup can be better understood by testing multicultural variables of cultural identities in a population, as culture influences communication and perceptions by different cultural groups (Chung, 2019; Brooks, Bloomer & Manias, 2018). Previous research recognised the influence of multicultural societies (Schwarzenthal et al., 2019), multicultural organisations (Engel, Rutkowski & Thompson, 2019), and multicultural (multi-ethnic) teams

(Lev Ari & Husisi-Sabek, 2019) on ICC, the ability to work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Ting-Toomey and Dorjee's (2018) study on the three cultural groups of Malaysia reported significant differences in their respective communication styles. Balakrishnan, Harji and Angusamy (2021) found that (multicultural) identity consciousness is important for intercultural communication competence. The findings identified the importance of identity consciousness for cultural competence. The pyramid model of intercultural competency (Deardorff, 2006) served as the primary source for analysis in this study. Competency is a co-created mechanism that requires members to be knowledgeable of each other's cultural differences (Mashford-Pringle et al., 2023). Individuals hold different cultural identities and become more aware of their cultural rules, practices, beliefs, and traditions when they understand themselves as cultured individuals. Cultured individuals are viewed as dynamic where identity is redefined and reconstructed during interaction in a multicultural environment. One's culture largely influences communication competence, and understanding these differences leads to better understanding and mutually beneficial relationships (Chung, 2019; Brooks, Bloomer & Manias, 2018).

Individuals can be seen as *integrated* individuals, who show the highest coherence (Benet-Martínez, 2018), compared to compartmentalised and categorised individuals who appear to display the least ICC coherence. It is expected that communication adopted by identity integration would be most preferred and conducive for multicultural workplaces. In contrast, communication styles demonstrated by *compartmentalisation* and *categorisation* would be relatively less popular.

A comprehensive study on the association between MCI and ICC variables is required to assess the effectiveness of productive multicultural teams. Putting this into perspective, this study tries to understand the communication competence adopted by each of these cultural groups based on their multicultural identities. In this study, ICC and MCI are seen as an integrated synthesis of cultural appropriation, communication skills, and personal observable characteristics akin to MCI.

This led to the construction of the following set of hypotheses:

- H1 Categorisation has a significant effect on intercultural communication competence factors.
- H2 Compartmentalisation has a significant effect on intercultural communication competence factors.
- H3 Integration has a significant and positive effect on intercultural communication competence factors.

This study investigates how multicultural identity (MCI) among multi-ethnic educators in Malaysian higher education institutions (HEIs) is impacted by Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) indicators. It fills in knowledge gaps in the area and advances knowledge of effective intercultural communication techniques in a multicultural educational setting. Malaysia being a country with a rich and diverse multicultural background, this study emphasizes the value of cultural diversity, the significance of cultural interaction, and the obligation of educational institutions to support the growth of intercultural communication abilities among educators. The study fits in with Malaysia's development plans, which are intended to bring together different ethnic groups and raise living standards. Overall, by examining the relationship between ICC and MCI in Malaysian HEIs, this study fills a gap in the literature, offering insightful information about the opportunities and challenges presented

by multiculturalism in the workplace and growing knowledge of effective intercultural communication techniques in a diverse society.

The MCI and ICC model employed in this study examined multicultural workplaces as a fundamental unit of analysis. Respondents of this study are members of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, gender, socio-economic backgrounds, distinct personalities and attributes and multicultural experiences. This study was based on the Cognitive-Developmental model of Social Identity Integration (CDSMII) by Amiot et al. (2007) and the ICC dimensions of Barrett (2013), with a combination of scales derived from the focused group and suited to Malaysian educational workplaces.

This MCI model identifies, defines, and relates key comprehensive factors influencing ICC. One's approach to communication is controlled by a personal identity within the cultural context. MCI variables such as *compartmentalisation*, *categorisation*, and *integration* impact communication, and how communication is perceived. A good understanding of communication competence promotes active participation and interpersonal relationships. Employers' cultural awareness and competencies strike a balance between the member's cultural identities and their ICC to job performance. Culture impacts communication approach and their perception or desire towards task accomplishment.

METHODOLOGY

Communication competence is important for education providers and educators in a multicultural setting. ICC does not just mean knowledge of different cultures but also awareness of ethnic disparities and cultural practices to build an environment of trust, understanding, tolerance and respect. The MCI constructs are based on the model of CDSMII, which has been presented in the theoretical framework. This comprehensive adopted model examines the MCI configuration strategies of the respondents. The three dimensions of ICC are *attitude*, *knowledge* and *skills*.

The quantitative research method was adopted to examine how culture, specifically the multicultural identity of different ethnicities can complicate perceptions and experiences of communication. It included culturally and racially diverse local Malaysian individuals with multicultural experience who are employed at HIE. Table 1 presents a summary of the respondents. The respondents were from three different ethnicities (namely Malays, Chinese and Indians). These citizens of the same country have lived and socialised with multicultural groups since childhood. The researcher aims to collect data primarily based on random sampling followed by purposive sampling techniques from academics in HEIs. Public and private universities with a good blend of cultural groups were chosen for this study. 350 respondents from twenty-three public and private HEIs in Malaysia were randomly selected to participate in the data collection process and used for data analysis. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the respondents' profiles and demographic backgrounds.

Table 1: Respondents' profile

Gender	Females	58.3 %
	Males	41.7 %
Race	Malay	36.1 %
	Chinese	33.7 %
	Indians	30.2 %
Institutions/University	Private Institutions	58 %
	Public Universities	27.4 %
	International Universities	14.6 %

Academics	Professors	4.2 %
	Associate Professors	10.1 %
	Senior Lecturers	28.1 %
	Lecturers	45.1 %
	Assistant Lecturers	3.5 %
	Tutors	3.5 %
Administrative Positions	Deans/Directors	3.1 %
	Deputy Deans/Deputy Directors	2.4 %
Years of Teaching Experience	≤ 5 Years	36.8 %
	6 -10 years	16 %
	11-15 years	20.1 %
	16-20 years	9.7 %
	>20 years	17.4 %

The data collection was done via an online survey using a structured questionnaire. The apparent advantages of collecting the responses online are the speed, convenience of collecting data, and efforts. This was also carried out to overcome the limitations of social desirability bias. The questionnaire included three sections with 8 demographic items, 23 MCI items, and 20 ICC items. The seven-point rating scale was used with 1 being “Strongly Agree”, and 7 denoting “Strongly Agree”. Data was collected to investigate how individuals from different cultural groups configure their cultural identity and test their ICC. The convenience sample method was used to pilot test the questionnaire with 60 academicians from Malaysian HEIs, including all subgroups from the target population. Cronbach’s alpha of 0.7 for all the MCI and ICC variables demonstrated a high level of internal consistency.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted to confirm the hypotheses and highlight the importance of configuring one's multicultural identities to respondents’ ICC. The SEM) technique employing SmartPLS 3.0 software was used for measurement model estimation and confirmatory factor analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural equation modelling was employed to explore the multivariate data relationships for the three hypotheses stated and assess the measurement model to determine its convergent and discriminant validity. The links between the assessed indicators of the outer loadings were investigated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

The structural model first calculated the outer loadings and linkages between the SEM algorithm's latent variables (path coefficients). Internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were the three critical assessment criteria to be met. Several threshold values were acceptable; however, loads equal to or more than 0.7 were allowed for this investigation (Hair et al., 2019).

Following that, convergent validity was evaluated to see how well specific indicators reflect a converging construct compared to other indicators measuring different constructs (Urbach & Ahlemann 2010). The AVE cut-off was set at 0.50. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2022). The square root of AVE of a construct should be greater than the correlation between that construct and other constructs in the model, according to the discriminant validity for Fornell and Larcker’s criterion. When the 90 per cent bootstrap confidence level of HTMT does not include the value of 1, discriminant validity for the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) is obtained.

Factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted were used to test the measurement model's convergent validity (AVE). Table 2 summarises these findings.

Table 2: Measurement model

	Constructs	Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)		
MCI	Categorisation	CAT1	0.805	0.849	0.652		
		CAT2	0.815				
		CAT3	0.803				
	Compartmentalisation	COMP1	0.833			0.850	0.588
		COMP2	0.707				
Integration	INT1	INT1	0.726	0.886	0.608		
		INT2	0.770				
		INT3	0.746				
		INT4	0.850				
		INT5	0.802				
ICC	Attitude	ATT1	0.759	0.854	0.594		
		ATT2	0.828				
		ATT3	0.780				
		ATT4	0.711				
	Knowledge	KNOW1	0.821	0.858	0.668		
		KNOW2	0.853				
		KNOW3	0.776				
	Skill	SKIL1	0.759	0.872	0.631		
		SKIL2	0.845				
		SKIL3	0.780				
		SKIL4	0.792				

All the items' factor loadings are larger than 0.7, meeting the minimal criteria. The AVE values obtained vary from 0.594 to 0.668, which are higher than the threshold value of 0.5, while the CR values range from 0.849 to 0.886, which satisfy the minimum criterion of 0.8. As a result, the convergent validity is acceptable, as Hair et al. (2022) indicated. Furthermore, Table 3 shows that all items have high loadings with their respective constructs and low loadings in reference to the other constructs. As a result, item-level convergent validity is supported (Amora, 2021).

Table 3: Loadings and cross-loadings for measurement model

	ICC-ATT	MCI-CAT	MCI-COMP	MCI-INT	ICC-KNOW	ICC-SKIL
ATT1	0.759	0.179	0.336	0.196	0.234	0.351
ATT2	0.828	0.196	0.333	0.152	0.156	0.286
ATT3	0.780	0.324	0.344	0.049	0.024	0.173
ATT4	0.711	0.217	0.277	0.102	0.029	0.168
CAT1	0.143	0.805	0.275	-0.272	-0.324	-0.189
CAT2	0.246	0.815	0.493	-0.119	-0.136	-0.071
CAT3	0.348	0.803	0.427	-0.002	-0.050	-0.022
COMP1	0.435	0.412	0.833	-0.003	-0.007	0.157

COMP2	0.216	0.367	0.707	-0.082	-0.024	0.003
COMP3	0.210	0.272	0.704	-0.088	0.034	0.009
COMP4	0.330	0.406	0.813	-0.004	0.028	0.077
INT1	0.085	-0.263	-0.104	0.726	0.436	0.422
INT2	0.101	0.010	0.008	0.770	0.487	0.504
INT3	0.029	-0.156	-0.102	0.746	0.435	0.395
INT4	0.209	-0.157	0.033	0.850	0.617	0.637
INT5	0.168	-0.127	-0.032	0.802	0.567	0.479
KNOW1	0.208	-0.140	0.039	0.550	0.821	0.653
KNOW2	0.069	-0.202	0.019	0.572	0.853	0.537
KNOW3	0.087	-0.203	-0.040	0.497	0.776	0.601
SKIL1	0.236	-0.099	0.157	0.536	0.579	0.759
SKIL2	0.303	-0.078	0.129	0.514	0.572	0.845
SKIL3	0.202	-0.126	0.007	0.528	0.618	0.780
SKIL4	0.284	-0.088	0.025	0.428	0.534	0.792

The discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion and the Heterotrait-monotrait (Henseler et al., 2015) method. The results (Table 4) demonstrate that the variances recovered by the constructs (diagonal values) are more significant than the correlation coefficients between the constructs (off-diagonal values), implying that discriminant validity is sufficient.

Table 4: Discriminant validity using Fornell-Larcker criterion

Items	ICC-ATT	ICC-KNOW	ICC-SKIL	MCI-CAT	MCI-COMP	MCI-INT
ICC-ATT	0.771					
ICC-KNOW	0.149	0.817				
ICC-SKIL	0.322	0.728	0.794			
MCI-CAT	0.297	-0.222	-0.123	0.808		
MCI-COMP	0.421	0.009	0.106	0.483	0.767	
MCI-INT	0.163	0.662	0.638	-0.172	-0.040	0.780

Furthermore, the findings in Table 5 meet the HTMT_{0.9} criteria (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019), and the HTMT inference validates the discriminant validity by not showing a value of 1 in the confidence range.

Table 5: Discriminant validity using The HTMT criterion

Items	ICC-ATT	ICC-KNOW	ICC-SKIL	MCI-CAT	MCI-COMP	MCI-INT
ICC-ATT						
ICC-KNOW	0.202 Cl _{0.9} (0.130,0.357)					
ICC-SKIL	0.405 Cl _{0.9} (0.259,0.571)	0.836 Cl _{0.9} (0.847,0.910)				
MCI-CAT	0.404 Cl _{0.9} (0.282,0.552)	0.287 Cl _{0.9} (0.179,0.456)	0.181 Cl _{0.9} (0.108,0.329)			
MCI-COMP	0.493 Cl _{0.9} (0.330,0.648)	0.082 Cl _{0.9} (0.078,0.226)	0.161 Cl _{0.9} (0.121,0.277)	0.634 Cl _{0.9} (0.525,0.743)		

MCI-INT	0.199 Cl _{0.9} (0.132,0.340)	0.819 Cl _{0.9} (0.716,0.910)	0.752 Cl _{0.9} (0.656,0.836)	0.253 Cl _{0.9} (0.188,0.398)	0.119 Cl _{0.9} (0.096,0.249)
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Structural Model

Figure 1 depicts the structural model created using the Smart PLS. The hypotheses were tested using a bootstrapping technique with a resample of 5000, as Hair et al. (2022) proposed, and the findings are shown in Table 6.

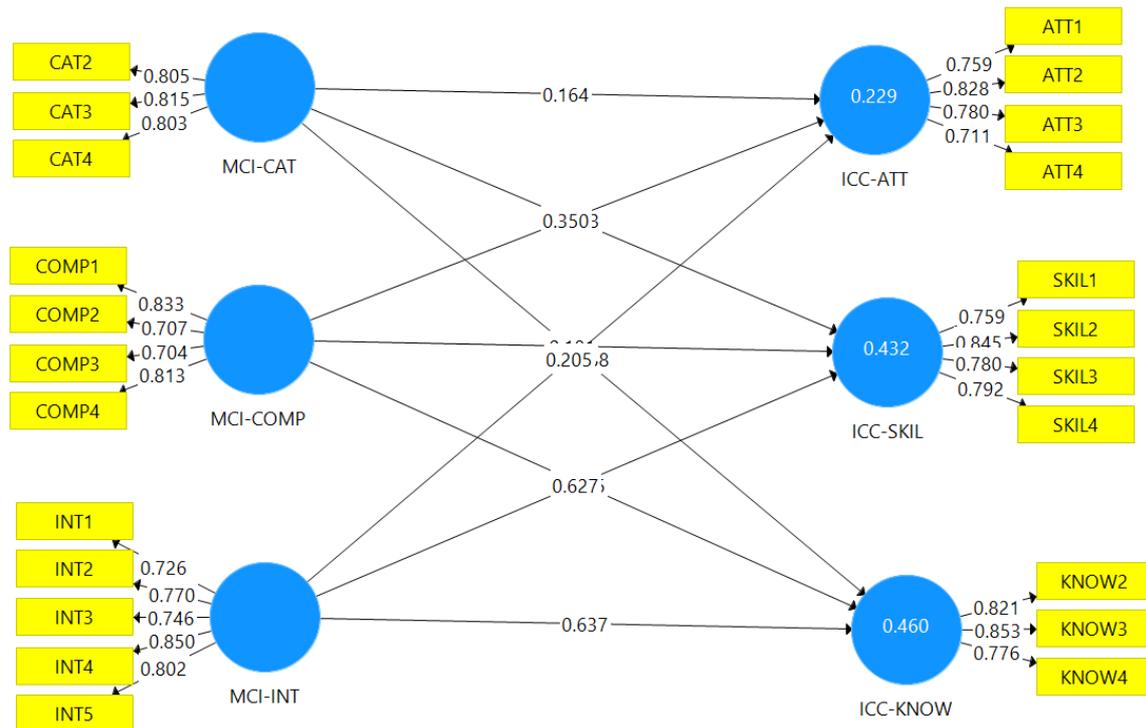


Figure 1: Structural model

The R² values are 0.229, 0.460 and 0.432 for the endogenous ICC variables *Attitude*, *Knowledge* and *Skill*, respectively. This explains 22.9%, 46.0% and 43.2% of the variation in the predictors. The R² value of endogenous latent variables *Attitude* has a moderate effect (more than 0.13), whereas *Knowledge* and *Skill* have a substantial effect (more than 0.26), as suggested by Cohen (1988). The structural model’s predictive relevance was tested using the cross-validated redundancy value of Q². The blindfolding procedure resulted in a Q² value of 0.126, 0.352 and 0.257 for ICC variables *Attitude*, *Knowledge* and *Skill*, respectively. Q² values above zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance, and the values are well constructed (Hair et al., 2022). All Q² values are more than 0, suggesting that the model has sufficient predictive relevance with *Attitude* (more than 0.02) having a small, *Knowledge* (more than 0.35) having a large, and *Skill* (more than 0.15) having a moderate predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 6: Hypotheses testing results

Relationship	Beta	t-value	p-values	Decision	f ²	Q ²	VIF	Tolerance
MCI-CAT → ICC-ATT	0.164	2.198	0.028	Supported	0.026	0.126	1.346	0.742
MCI-CAT → ICC-KNOW	-0.168	2.859	0.004	Supported	0.039	0.352		
MCI-CAT → ICC-SKIL	-0.103	1.915	0.056	Not supported	0.014	0.257		
MCI-COMP → ICC-ATT	0.350	4.796	0.000	Supported	0.121	0.126	1.308	0.764
MCI-COMP → ICC-KNOW	0.116	2.231	0.026	Supported	0.019	0.352		
MCI-COMP → ICC-SKIL	0.181	3.587	0.000	Supported	0.044	0.257		
MCI-INT → ICC-ATT	0.205	3.222	0.001	Supported	0.053	0.126	1.033	0.968
MCI-INT → ICC-KNOW	0.637	14.309	0.000	Supported	0.728	0.352		
MCI-INT → ICC-SKIL	0.627	14.326	0.000	Supported	0.670	0.257		

The results in Table 6 show that except MCI variable *Categorisation*, which does not have a significant relationship with the ICC variable Skill, all other relationships between MCI variables and the ICC variables are significant. The MCI variable *Categorisation* has a positive and significant relationship with the ICC variables namely *Attitude* and *Knowledge*. Similarly, the MCI variables *Compartmentalisation* and *Integration* have a positive and significant relationship with all the ICC variables *Attitude*, *Skill* and *Knowledge*. The effect size f^2 for the three significant variables (MCI-COMP → ICC-ATT; MCI-INT → ICC-KNOW, and MCI-INT → ICC-SKIL) is more than 0.15, and the other variables are more than 0.02. This indicates a large size effect. The variance inflationary factor (VIF) and the tolerance value are used to investigate the problem of multicollinearity. The VIF values range from 1.033 to 1.346, which is less than 2, and tolerance values are between 0 and 1, implying no multicollinearity problem (Hair et al., 2019).

In addition, the Importance-Performance Matrix Analysis (IPMA) was used to identify factors with high importance but poor performance, as recommended by (Hock et al., 2010). The IPMA findings make it easier to focus and improve on the high significance and low-performance areas by offering insights (Hair et al., 2018). The significance is shown by the direct influence of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable, while an index value represents the performance in a range of 0 to 100. Table 7 shows the findings of the IPMA study.

Table 7: Importance Performance Matrix Analysis (IPMA) results

Latent Variable	ICC-ATT	ICC-KNOW	ICC-SKIL	Index value (Performance)
	Direct effect (Importance)	Direct effect (Importance)	Direct effect (Importance)	
MCI-CAT	0.157	-0.142	-0.080	40.086
MCI-COMP	0.332	0.097	0.139	53.666
MCI-INT	0.244	0.666	0.601	68.238

The IPMA of endogenous constructs reveals that *Integration* is the best performer and highly important. The next-best performing variable is *Compartmentalisation* followed by *Categorisation*, which has the most minor performance.

This study supports the claim of Szkudlarek et al. (2020) that cultural differences can significantly affect multicultural teams' communication skills, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, which makes it difficult for organisations to adapt, develop, and manage multicultural groups at work. MCI predictors explain variation in the dependent variable ICC, according to the results of the hypotheses. The findings demonstrate that *integration* has the most significant effect on ICC factors among the three MCI predictors, and variables of *compartmentalisation* and *integration* are significant. In addition, this study also established that integrated identity of academics has an impact on ICC, and their capacity to collaborate effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Schwarzenthal et al., 2019; Engel, Rutkowski, & Thompson, 2019; Lev Ari & Husisi-Sabek, 2019). Benet-Martnez (2018) also discovered that *integrated* individuals have the highest ICC coherence, whereas *compartmentalised* and *categorised* individuals have the lowest.

As a result, the claim that individuals with *integrated* identities are more coherent than those with *compartmentalised* identities is correct. The current study's findings also backed up those of Ketab et al. (2019) and Keevers et al. (2019), who found that multiculturalism increases intercultural communication and cultural variety impacts communication (Chung, 2019; Brooks, Bloomer & Manias, 2018).

The importance of multicultural identities for ICC was examined in the study. Individuals with *compartmentalised* and *categorised* cultural identities perceive their separate cultures to play a distinct and dominant role in their communication and involvement with other cultures. On the other hand, *integrated* individuals are more dynamic, and they tend to redefine and reconstruct their cultural identities as they engage with people from different cultures.

CONCLUSION

To summarise, the main predictors of ICC in multicultural educational environments were discovered in this study. Previous research in this field mainly focused on the relationships between MCI and ICC, with most studies focusing on learning communities. However, this study focused on the teaching communities and merged these two variables to uncover their interrelationships. All variables of MCI and ICC were found to have significant correlations in this study. The findings show that ICC was influenced by all of the study's MCI components. *Compartmentalisation* and *integration* have a positive and substantial relationship with ICC variables, whereas *categorisation* has a negative and significant relationship.

The major contribution of this study was to explore the relationship between MCI constructs with each of the ICC constructs. Hence, both independent and dependent variables are used as multidimensional to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the six constructs. According to a growing corpus of research from organisational and communication studies, multicultural individuals have unique abilities and competencies to help teams function better. However, no cross-sectional analysis of the oft-stated link between MCI and ICC has been done too far. This research addressed the gap in the literature by looking into the relationship between theoretical knowledge composition and the factors that influence MCI and ICC.

The findings of this study will aid organisations and institutions in understanding the cultural and communicative constructs that determine success. This study has added to the body of evidence and arguments that employees need training and coaching to deal with modern organisations' cultural mix and complexities. Furthermore, any multiracial organisation can use the variables and instruments employed in this study. The research has provided a novel contribution to managing and optimising the communication performance of ethnically diverse workplaces by identifying the predicting characteristics.

BIODATA

Kavitha Balakrishnan is a principal lecturer at the Faculty of Applied Communication, Multimedia University, Malaysia. Email: kavitha.balakrishnan@mmu.edu.my

Ajitha Angusamy is a lecturer at the Faculty of Business, Multimedia University, Malaysia. Email: ajitha.angusamy@mmu.edu.my

Madhubala Bava Harji is an associate professor at SEGI University, Malaysia. Email: madhu7560@gmail.com

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