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## Influence of Cultural Dimensions on Intercultural Communication Styles: Ethnicity in a Moderating Role

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### ABSTRACT

In a culturally varied context where managing and coordinating communication with people from various backgrounds is the greatest challenge, effective intercultural communication is even more important. It is critical for professionals and practitioners to comprehend the nuances and complexity of communication and develop competencies in this area. As a result, the importance of intercultural communication styles cannot be more emphasised, as it is a critical component of the current global and dynamic phenomenon in Malaysian workplaces. However, studies in this field are scarce, particularly in a multicultural country like Malaysia. The interaction between the determinants of cultural dimensions on intercultural communication styles variables among employees in Malaysian workplaces from various cultures and social demography is investigated in this study. The data analysis will be undertaken using SMART-PLS for generating the structural equation modelling employing data obtained from 400 practitioners via a self-administered survey questionnaire. The probability sampling technique of simple random sampling will be used for data analysis. The findings will provide insight into industry expectations and the professional skills needed to equip them for careers in typical culturally diverse situations. The findings will reveal if cultural dimension factors have a direct and statistically significant impact on intercultural communication styles. Theoretical and practical significance on the stakeholders is discussed.

**Keywords:** culture, cultural dimensions, communication, intercultural communication styles, ethnicity

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### Introduction

Culture conceals more than it discloses, and paradoxically, what it conceals is more effectively hidden from its own members. The actual task is not to comprehend other cultures but to comprehend our own (Hall, 1976). There is a need to investigate the cultural characteristics of these multicultural groupings that coexist in global businesses (Abu Bakar et al., 2018). Culture affects communication, and how individuals perceive communication (Kim, 2017; Samovar et al., 2016; Ting-Toomey & Korzeny, 1989). Therefore, culture has a significant impact on communication style, and recognising these distinctions result in increased understanding and mutually beneficial interactions.

Organisational communication primarily aims to foster collaboration and partnership among members so they can achieve shared objectives and desired outcomes at the personal, social, and professional

levels. Adair et al.'s (2016) study also indicates that people with stronger intercultural communication are more context-dependent communicators. Likewise, Jablin and Putnam (1990) thinks that workplace communication entails the deliberate production, transfer, interaction, interpretation, and preservation of information. Having shown that culture influences individuals' attitudes and perceptions, it is reasonable to believe that culture affects the communication patterns and styles of persons from various cultural groups. Thus, intercultural communication's primary objective is to comprehend the creation and interpretation of information and messages by distinct cultural groups in the workplace (Kim, 2017; Korzenny & Korzenny, 1984). Intercultural communication refers to the sharing of information or ideas between members of various cultures (Zakaria, 2017). This is a fascinating field of study for multicultural organisations and modern research.

Cultural variety enhances an organisation's adaptability, resourcefulness, dimension, capabilities, perspectives, and qualities (Korzilius et al., 2017). Multicultural groups exhibit a range of demographic and cultural features (Korol, 2017). The high reliance on the productivity of organisations necessitates the development of effective intercultural communication skills for increased work performance in organisations with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Okoro et al., 2017; Yang, 2018). Global workplaces are designed for employees to spend considerable time communicating across cultures, whether inside an organisation or internationally. Individuals' cultural competency enables them to be adaptable and flexible in the face of cultural complexities and disparities. With all its interconnected components (life experiences, personality, gender, and age), culture can provide employers and management with a complex and diverse communication situation (Hampden-Turner et al., 2020). Inadequate communication skills might result in poor decision-making and problem-solving abilities.

This research aims to examine the impact of culture on communication styles. This study will examine different cultural groups' cultural dimensions and how they communicate differently depending on their cultural dimension scores. This would result in an awareness of which communication style employees prefer based on their culture.

### ***Problem Statement***

Malaysia is a diverse and multicultural country with three dominant races coexisting together. Cultural development is one of the primary qualities distinguishing humans from other living creatures (Read, 2016; Wang, 2005). With the growing impact of globalisation and Malaysia's multiracial, multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious society, there is an increasing necessity to educate oneself to function well within one's own and other cultures. Similarly, Hall (1976), Wang (2005) and Read (2016) built on the notion that cultural impact can be established subconsciously, and that most people are unaware of their cultural features. Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2008) discusses differences in cultural characteristics between cultures via the lens of the following dimensions: high vs low power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs femininity. The notion of Edward T. Hall (1959, 1976, 1990) and Lewis's (1999, 2005) research has been validated in several cross-cultural studies (Nishimura et al., 2016).

According to Hall (1959, 1976, 1990), Hofstede (2008), and Lewis (1999, 2005), individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds communicate in a variety of ways, which might result in misconceptions. Recognising cultural distinctions and the influence of culture on one's communication style results in increased appreciation and mutually beneficial engagement. Additionally, research indicates that information transmission is most effective when individuals are comfortable in an environment and access resources tailored to their interests (Lee et al., 2018). They discovered that the communication approach fostered a sense of community, encouraging active engagement and interpersonal ties. Thus, a competent intercultural individual should demonstrate a range of appropriate behaviours in any given setting. In other words, prior to any actual labour output, it is critical to "connect." As a result, a culturally compatible workplace has a favourable effect on performance. Understanding their cultural perspectives and orientations will aid management in preparing people for efficient and successful job performance and training.

Paparella-Pitzel et al., (2016) argued that a culturally responsible individual would recognise their cultural ethnocentrism, develop an awareness of other cultures, respect their distinctions, and learn to

be comfortable with them. With the current prominence and respect accorded to communication, it is incumbent upon us to comprehend individual communication needs and equip members with necessary intercultural abilities for a global workplace and society. Thus, cultural competence is critical for managers in light of the enormous increase in culturally diverse work populations. This is because members' intercultural awareness and competencies balance their cultural dimensions and the multicultural teams' perceptions and preferred communication styles.

Generally, work is handled with little regard for or consideration of employees' cultural or methodological variety. Employers must grasp the cultural implications of their employees' style and behavioural patterns to foster more positive interpersonal interactions and interactions among employees, managers, and peers (Paparoidamis et al., 2019). They regard culturally apathetic individuals who are unaware of these impacts as mere liabilities. Staff employees and managers must acquire intercultural knowledge and dispositions to function effectively. Additionally, they must recognise culturally varied work teams' communication patterns, attitudes, expectations, and features, as each culture brings something unique to the workplace.

More recent research studies exclusively considered Malaysia's cultural population as homogenous (Tan et al., 2019), or contrasted two cultural groups (Ghazali et al., 2019). Those studies established that Asian countries are classified as having high-context cultures. Nonetheless, changing global trends and cultural upheaval have resulted in the emergence of a "new culture" among these races in contemporary multicultural and pluralistic Malaysian society. Researchers sometimes neglect Malaysia's three principal races' cultural heritage, different cultural identities, and variability. Some recent cross-cultural studies conducted in Malaysia considered these races heterogenous (Ghazali et al., 2019; Ketab et al., 2019). They have overlooked that while these groups share some cultural aspects, their degrees and priority for each of these values vary. The study's primary purpose is to shift the focus to these under-researched groups and their communication styles.

This study assumes that the three major races may favour distinct modes of communication due to their cultural traits. As a result, a thorough examination of cultural characteristics and intercultural communication styles in multicultural contexts will explain the current research trends in this field.

### ***Research Questions***

This study will focus on the following research questions:

- a. What are the differences in the cultural dimensions of different cultural groups of the respondents?
- b. What are the significant differences in their mean scores for intercultural communication styles of different cultures?
- c. What is the significant relationship between cultural dimensions and intercultural communication styles of different cultural groups?
- d. What is the moderating effect of ethnicity in the relationship between cultural dimensions and intercultural communication styles?

### ***Research Objectives***

The primary objectives of this research are to:

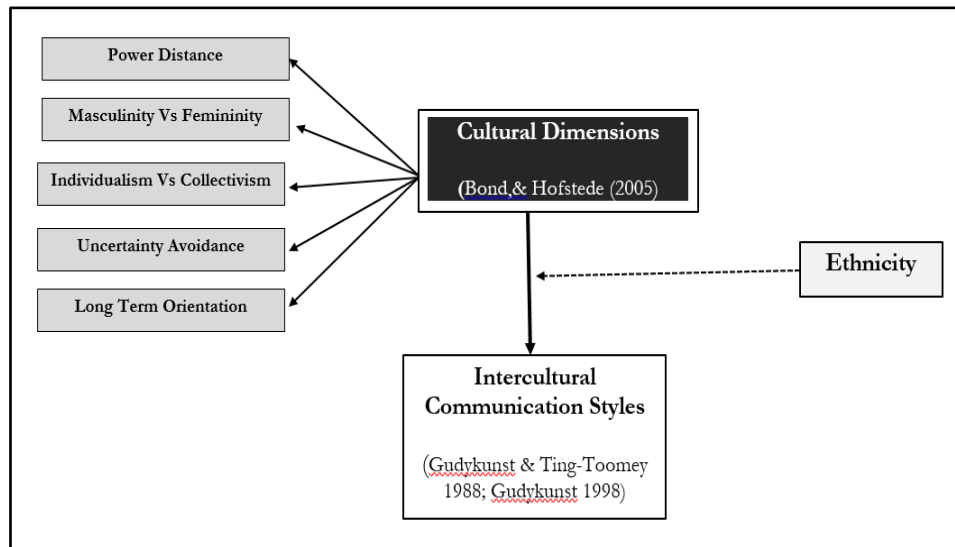
- a. identify the cultural dimensions of multicultural employees.
- b. identify the intercultural communication styles of different cultures.
- c. examine the relationship between cultural dimensions and intercultural communication styles of different cultures.
- d. investigate the moderating effect of ethnicity in the relationship between cultural dimensions and intercultural communication styles.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The link between the independent and dependent variables is described in this conceptual framework. Cultural dimension constructs will be treated as independent variables, while intercultural communication style is dependent. The correlation between the two variables is shown with ethnicity as the moderator in this research framework. The observation and research gap of this study led to the development of the following research model.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework*



### **Literature Review**

#### ***Culture and Cultural Dimensions***

Culture is the way of life, values, customs, attitudes, and resources of an individual (Hall, 1959). Many scholars and philosophers have proposed various uses and vivid definitions for the term “culture”, as produced by various studies investigating the subject from different perspectives. Edward T. Hall (1990) is an anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher well-known for his pioneering work in culture. It was Trompenaars who later developed and called the Universalism and Particularism features in his cultural model. Hall’s monochronic and polychronic time factors are akin to Trompenaars’ sequential and synchronic time factors. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1998) “Seven Dimensions of Culture” concept accounts for most cultural variations. The researchers identified two measurements expressing fundamental attitudes or values, five assessments illustrating interpersonal interactions, two indicating time orientation, and one suggesting engagement with nature. Schwartz (2003) highlighted three cultural elements in his theory of value orientations: embeddedness or autonomy, hierarchy or equality, and mastery or harmony. Schwartz (2003) acknowledged the need for more research on the similarities and differences among ethnic groups and defining dimensions and orientations to explain them.

Hofstede (1980), a Dutch psychologist, evaluated 100,000 persons from Multinational Corporation of IMB in forty nations based on their cultural values. Without a doubt, the most frequently cited cultural dimensions are those of Hofstede (1980, 1991). In the mid-1970s, Hofstede identified four cultural tendencies: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. During the next two decades, Hofstede (1991) added a fifth “Chinese value” dimension called long-term orientation. In conjunction with Chinese social psychologists, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) identified the five quantifiable cultural dimension factors based on cultural values. The cultural aspects are commonly recognised as the most critical component of understanding relative cultural differences. The study empirically deduced five Hofstede cultural dimensions: Power distance, Masculinity vs Femininity,

Uncertainty avoidance, Long Term Orientation, and Individualism Vs Collectivism. The study highlighted four characteristics in which different country cultures differed: Power Distance, Masculinity vs Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Individualism vs Collectivism. However, the inherent disparities in cultural features within a multiethnic society such as Malaysia were not examined.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions provide a basic understanding of cultural variances, organisational concepts and behaviour. He developed a mechanism for evaluating the impact of national and corporate cultures on behaviour. This study aims to ascertain the cultural dimensions of Malaysia's three major races, namely Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

Culture is mutable and interchangeable. Unlike organisational cultures which are purposeful adaptations of working practices, societal cultures are learned unconsciously. Engineers, accountants, businessmen, and scholars from various disciplines have distinct cultures (Hofstede, 2011). Studies have found strong links between cultural dimensions like individualism, power distance, and income (Steel et al., 2018; Ugrin et al., 2017). Minkov (2018) proposed an additional dimension, Indulgence versus Restraint, which refers to the degree of control over one's desire for pleasure (Hofstede et al., 2010). However, this study will use five of Hofstede's cultural dimensions for studying multiculturalism in organisations, which has become the most extensively accepted and recognised concept in cross-cultural research. (AlAnezi & Alansari, 2016; Vasile, 2016).

Recent studies have also used Hofstede cultural dimensions to measure cultural values (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Favaretto et al., 2016). National culture may not reflect the cultural values prevalent in the different ethnic groups or races (Minkov, 2018; Zawawi, 2008). In his 1993 investigation, Trompenaars uncovered new cultural tendencies among Malaysians. His research did not include all Malaysian races, and he conducted most of it for personal advantage rather than to help Malaysian businesses manage and benefit from cultural diversity. As a result, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the entire population, and more research is required to grasp the subject thoroughly. The study found that Malays had an individualistic dimension related to power, prosperity and success.

Similarly, Malaysia excelled in PD (the highest in the world), collectivism (the happy medium between quality and quantity of life), and the avoidance of ambiguity (the lowest in the world) based on the study conducted by Rajiani and Pypłacz (2018). These studies' findings contradict earlier findings by Hofstede (1980), Abdullah (1993), Abdullah (1996), and Neuliep et al., (2004). As a result, new patterns arise and understanding different races' cultural dimensions is crucial for maximising potential to benefit organisations.

Culture influences one's thoughts, feelings, actions, and interactions, all of which affect essential communication (Neuliep, 2017). Kim (2017) and Bonvillain (2019) recognise the role of culture on communication behaviour. Multicultural members' communication wants and requirements should be met by communicators (Simcox & Hodgson, 2019). Samovar et al., (2016) contends that culture influences communication. Sulkowski and Deakin (2008) claim that if communicators do not endeavour to bridge the cultural barrier, it will manifest in the personalities of the members. To understand other cultures, one must first understand one's own. According to Nadeem et al., (2017), Malaysians' social and familial backgrounds influence their attitudes toward others. Family and social surroundings shape an individual's cultural beliefs and attitudes, also socially produced. For this study, we shall define culture as a set of shared qualities and assumptions that are dynamic and subject to change while remaining distinct from one another.

The following hypotheses are drawn based on the above discussion:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in the cultural dimensions of different cultural groups of the respondents.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant difference in the mean scores for intercultural communication styles of different cultural groups.

### ***Culture and Intercultural Communication Styles***

According to Hall, cultural differences in communication might lead to misunderstandings (1959, 1976, 1983). Anthropologist Edward T. Hall defined “Intercultural Communication” in his book, “The Silent Language”, and he called it “the initial founding document” of Intercultural Communication. A culturally diverse approach to nonverbal communication is emphasised in Hall’s paradigm. Hall distinguished between high and low context communication (Hall as cited in Dumitrescu, 2013).

Intercultural studies are transdisciplinary and anthropological, culturally distinctive and contextual. Culture is implicitly and explicitly communicated through communication (Liddicoat, 2016). These disparities, connections, and actions can lead to miscommunication and stereotyping (Yuralevich et al., 2019). Culture and communication studies support intercultural communication and assist in understanding its complexities. The intercultural approach is used in the “approach” stage. Intercultural communication is receiver-centred (Ahmad & Widén, 2018). The receiver’s thoughts and attitudes and the form and style of communication were studied by Liu (2016). To select material and consider the receiver’s communication experiences, communicators must consider these elements. It is also true that one’s cultural background shapes one’s thoughts and attitudes.

Apathy or insensitivity to cultural influences is not the same as intercultural insensitivity (Sulkowski & Deakin, 2008) because intercultural communication fosters an atmosphere of tolerance, respect, courteousness and acceptance. Thus, Intercultural skills are functional beyond communication, and they are not a universal skill; rather, they must be constantly adjusted to match the needs of people (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee 2018; Wang, 2005).

Adapting one’s verbal and nonverbal communication style to that of a listener is an intercultural strategy. Communication is a reflection of one’s culture. Prejudice, miscommunication, and misinterpretation can result in differing cultural communication patterns and approaches (Dang, 2016). Multicultural workplaces have high levels of communication and contact between employees of diverse ethnicities. The intercultural study seeks to create culturally appropriate communication platforms that reject ethnic, racial, religious, and gender discrimination (Samovar et al., 2016). Before judging the cultural attitudes, behaviours, and opinions, employers must first understand their employees’ cultural ethnocentrism and prejudices. Recognising their worldview and cultural norms are not absolute (Beagan, 2018). One must continually examine one’s abilities and recognise the impact of one’s ideas and actions on communication. Intercultural communication requires various strategies customised to the participants’ needs (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). This study’s consideration of international communication styles and organisational well-being adds a fresh dimension.

Comprehending another’s goals and communication might lead to severe misunderstandings (Henderson et al., 2016). Stereotypical views can be distorted, biased and offensive. Bennett (1998) together with Douglas and Rosvold (2018) investigated how miscommunications and disagreements can “death” a company. Cultural misunderstandings are addressed by intercultural communication. Neither the method nor the issue is universal. Intercultural communication is based on self-awareness and connections. For example, in intercultural communication, one’s culture is assumed as reality. At a low abstraction level, ethnic and cultural variations such as gender, socioeconomic status, and religion can be seen. Intercultural communication is primarily face-to-face. This study will examine the impact of cultural variations on intercultural communication.

Culture influences one’s mental processes and communication style. Unlike Africans, Arabs and Asians, Americans and European men prefer indirect and contextual communication. Females from Europe and America also use contextual techniques. During difficult times, Malaysians are renowned for being oblique, imprecise, and “saving face”. Interculturalists attempt to gain competencies in all of these types to better understand and operate. A study of three ethnic groups found distinct variances in negotiation styles (Osman Gani & Tan, 2002). Malays seek a peaceful, harmonious environment characterised by kindness, flexibility, and mutual respect. According to Hofstede and Hall, Asians are a high-context civilisation with similar cultural aspects and a homogeneous nature.

Ethnic diversity has long been a challenge in certain traditional yet plural Malaysian communities. To illustrate, despite continual efforts to build an integrated national identity, studies revealed that each ethnic community in Malaysia primarily maintains its own distinct cultures (Abu Bakar & Mohamad, 2017; Tey et al., 2016). Mahadir et al., (2019) also characterised Malaysians as ethnically diverse who are undervalued, disregarded, and subject to racial stereotyping. Despite the fact that Malaysia is often promoted as a multicultural society where people of many races coexist, it remains polarised along ethnic lines on all levels. The ethnic relations in the country are defined as being in a state of 'stable tension.' Hence, Malaysia's pluralistic society necessitates greater intercultural communication skills and increased intercultural awareness. Malaysians may share some cultural dimensions, but the degree or priority given to these cultural values may vary amongst them. Clearly studies have neglected the racial diversity in Malaysian society due to recent cultural and global transformations (Fontaine & Richardson, 2003; Fontaine et al., 2002; Hofstede, 1991, 2011). Therefore, this study tries to examine how various ethnic groups communicate based on their cultural backgrounds. This implies that better understanding of the influence of culture on the communication styles of different ethnic groups leads to better performance and mutual gain (Kim, 2017; Samovar et al., 2016).

Bennett (1998) defined communication styles as direct/indirect and contextual/personal, while Edward T. Hall (1976) distinguishes two distinct communication styles, "high context" and "low context," that exist in variable degrees throughout cultures. Malays are members of a high context culture who favour indirect communication, understand nonverbal replies, dislike confrontations and anything that can engender ill-will. They cherish connections and are collaborative; they are typically warm, adaptable, accommodating, compromising, harmonic, courteous, analogous and subtly assertive in their communication (Fontaine & Richardson, 2003; Fontaine et al., 2002). In Singapore, a study of three cultural groups found considerable disparities in their negotiation techniques (Osman Gani & Tan, 2002). Several verbal communication styles have been discovered in Intercultural Communication research (Gudykunst, 1998; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988), namely direct/indirect communication style, elaborate/succinct personal or person-centred/contextual communication style, and instrumental/affective communication style. The following hypotheses are drawn based on the above discussion:

- H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive and significant relationship between cultural dimensions and intercultural communication styles of different cultural groups.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Ethnicity moderates the relationship between cultural dimensions and intercultural communication styles.

## **Methods**

The purpose of this study is to collect quantitative data on the cultural dimensions (CD) of Malaysian Malay, Chinese and Indian employees and their associations with preferred intercultural communication styles. This study will choose the deductive reasoning method and employ a self-administered questionnaire, a widely used methodology, to ascertain the cultural dimensions of culturally varied employees. This study will focus on Malaysian working people, and data will be collected online via Google Forms. This study is a quantitative study that deals with the collecting and analysis of numerical data which enables making predictions, evaluating causal linkages, and extending the findings to a larger population (Taherdoost, 2016). Probability sampling will be the sampling strategy used which implies that every person in this population has a chance of being chosen. The simple random sampling method is the most appropriate choice for this study (Taherdoost, 2016). The study will employ SMART-PLS to derive the structural equation model, evaluate the findings and analyse the data.

There are various models designed to predict the behaviour of people from diverse cultural backgrounds; however, in this study, the most influential and commonly used model based on Geert Hofstede's (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) cultural dimensions will be used. To elicit empirical evidence, survey questions or evaluation guidelines will be based on the predications of each dimension and its behavioural characteristics taken from Hofstede and Hofstede (2005).

This study details the research technique utilised to examine Malaysians' cultural characteristics and their link to multicultural employees' preferred intercultural communication styles. The objectives of the study are to ascertain how Malaysians held distinct cultural dimensions and analyse how these cultural dimensions justified respondents' disparate communication styles. The study will collect responses from about 400 respondents from varied workplaces. The cultural makeup will reflect the Malaysian population's racial component (Malays, Chinese and Indians). Descriptive analysis will summarise the cultural dimensions of the respondents who will participate in the study. The demographic distribution and background of the culturally diverse population and their work details will be discussed. Research instruments will examine the cultural characteristics and intercultural communication styles of the respondents. A questionnaire will be constructed to assess the respondents' cultural dimensions using the five behavioural traits collected from Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) cultural dimensions. The following dimensions and interpretations apply:

- Power Distance (PD). A high PD score indicates that learners are scared of confrontations, arguments, or disagreements with their teachers, who they view as authoritative and autocratic. Significant scores would also indicate a high degree of reliance on one another.
- Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV vs Collectivism). A high score on individualism indicates a predisposition to work alone or independently, perform admirably well on assigned tasks, have strong opinions on the majority of subjects, assert one's ideas ahead of others without hesitation, and demand equal treatment, among other characteristics.
- Masculinity (MAS) in comparison to Femininity: A high score reflects masculinity, which necessitates the display of brilliance, determination, aggressiveness and accountability. To be understood, a clear contrast between gender roles must be made, and taboo-related sensitive themes must be avoided.
- Avoidance of uncertainty (UAI). A high score reflects the importance of written and unwritten rules, the importance of defining learning objectives and outcomes, the importance of thorough preparation, effective classroom management skills, and maintaining a certain level of formality, precision, and orderliness in the classroom.
- Long-Term Orientation (LTO) in comparison to Short-Term Orientation. A high score demonstrates dedication, consistent hard work and financial accountability.

Communication styles are judged more appropriately in a certain scenario from a cultural standpoint. In some cultures, straightforward, brief, and instrumental techniques are generally appreciated. The following constructs and explanation of intercultural communication styles is based on the dimensions proposed by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) and Gudykunst (1998).

In a direct communication style, people anticipate explicit verbal expression of objectives, wishes, hopes, etc. In an indirect communication style, people reveal their thoughts through clues or modifiers rather than express them directly. Cultural dimension of individualism has been linked to direct communication, while collectivism has been linked to indirect communication. This is particularly true in collectivist cultures, where people feel more of mutual interdependence than in individualistic civilisations. For face-saving reasons, open criticism, for example, would be improper in public in a collectivist society. In some Asian cultures, indirectness is regarded as a graceful mode of communication. Industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation have had an impact on communication behaviour. Between generations, there are significant changes in directness and indirectness. Even in individualistic cultures, indirect communication can reveal accomplished unity. Mutual rapport and understanding are required to be able to converse indirectly successfully. This is frequently the case in long-term relationships. Northern Europeans generally come out as being highly plain and straightforward in cross-cultural studies. It is important to remember that all characteristics and phenomena exist in all civilisations, and there are no "typical" people in any particular culture.



Communication style is both detailed and concise. Elaborate and succinct communication styles are defined by the amount of speech and expressiveness of the speaker. Within cultures, there are contextual and individual differences in how language is used. Frequent pauses, stillness and “low key” phrases that get to the point are hallmarks of the concise style. In cross-cultural research, personal and contextual communication styles like directness and indirectness, are linked to individualism and collectivism. These approaches also indicate cultural disparities in power distance. The informal person-centered communication style promotes individual and equalitarian connections. Finally, instrumental or affective communication styles are linked to individualism and collectivism, on the one hand, and low- and high-context approaches, on the other. The purpose of affective communication is to focus on the communicator, and explicitness (instrumental style) and implicitness are used in this context.

The study will employ a cross-sectional survey approach to determine how Malaysians may use cultural characteristics and adapt their intercultural communication styles to obtain a competitive advantage. The study will sample local and multinational enterprises, most of which operate in urban areas or cities in West Malaysia. The quantitative data obtained by the study will be examined using descriptive statistics such as percentage distribution, mean, and frequency counts. The qualitative data collected in the study will be transcribed and organised into themes and sub-themes. Multiple regression will be used to describe the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Multiple regression will be used to analyse the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

### ***Research Timelines***

This is used to highlight the duration of this study, split it into components, and eventually demonstrate the complete research timeline. In a concept paper, timelines are critical since they are applied to estimate the length of the research and the funding requirements throughout the study. This period usually is pre-defined by various university standards in academic concept papers, and one should verify their university requirements in the present research period. The timeline must also explain how the research project’s initial and final phases will be executed. The concept paper provides both the research proposal and the research final study timings. This research study is expected to take 12 months to complete, with the following activity durations listed for each research study phase. The duration of the study is explained in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**

### ***Gantt Chart***

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Design Instruments	1 month
Pilot Instrument	1 month
Results and Data Cleaning	1 month
Data Collection	4 months
Key-in Data	1 month
Data Analysis, Results, Interpretations and Discussion	2 months
Journal Article Write-up	2 months

### ***Significance of Study***

This study will help expatriates, international corporations, foreign business investors, and multicultural management in managing a culturally diverse workforce and reaping the benefits of diversity for increased creativity and innovation. The findings of this study will also provide a better knowledge of the communication styles of employees and other managers from other ethnic backgrounds, leading to improved outcomes and performance for all parties. The challenges that culturally varied groups confront are communication breakdowns and a mismatch between delivery techniques and preferred approaches because culturally distinct individuals are more likely to have their actions misinterpreted and unfairly criticised (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Tan, 2017). If communicators do not comprehend

the cultural implications of the receiver's preferred communication, misconceptions regarding the receiver's motive, attitude toward the information received, and intellectual capacities may develop. DeCapua (2016) recognised that a more culturally competent approach to communication would result in more culturally responsive social behaviour and attitude. To facilitate appropriate ascertaining procedures and strategies, communicators must empathise with their receivers' wants and aspirations, which they have grown accustomed to in their cultures (Simcox & Hodgson, 2019). Social variety necessitates that communicators deepen their grasp of the essential relationship between culture and the receivers' response to it. Compassion and adaptability are necessary components of fostering a pleasant and encouraging culturally responsive workplace for everyone. Astute communicators attempt to establish a positive personal relationship based on mutual respect which has a beneficial effect on their members' performance indirectly (Bucăța & Rîzescu, 2017). Positive communication can then occur in an environment where we experience a sense of belonging and acceptance. Cultural competence and awareness would imply efficient communication between multicultural groups. According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), one's origin, education, interpersonal types, cultural time orientation, closeness, religion, and traditions contribute to a more accurate performance assessment.

The globalisation of the workplace necessitates a worldwide attitude. Organisations should endeavour to accommodate diverse cultures to function efficiently. To ensure confidence and well-being, members' preferences and decisions must be considered. Malaysian organisations generally serve the three dominant races, namely Malays, Chinese, and Indians. The reliability and validity of the instruments used to measure the cultural dimensions (IV) and intercultural communication styles (DV) will be examined, and the moderating effect of ethnicity in the relationship between IV and DV will be investigated.

With an increased emphasis on cultural pluralism and variety, it is critical to evaluate communication patterns in Malaysia and from the viewpoints of all multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic communities throughout the world. This study demonstrates that while some cultures exhibit similar but not identical traits, they may differ subtly in emphasising desired values and communication approaches.

Communication is contextual and serves as the study's cultural foundation. The outcomes of this study will contribute to the current body of knowledge about intercultural understanding among ethnic groups by developing a new framework for intercultural communication styles. The variables and instruments employed in this study are transferable to any country with a mixed population. It would be fascinating to research the same races in different nations and compare the results, particularly with the Chinese and Indians, who constitute the world's largest population. As we better understand the influence of country culture, organisational culture, and professional culture on the communication styles of various ethnic groups, this study can add a new dimension and spark interest in intercultural communication research.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) have declared that no competing interests exist.

### **Author Contribution Statement**

All authors contributed to the conception, design, writing, and revision of the manuscript.

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## Ethics Statements

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