

Effect of Biographical Variables on Employees' Adaptation to Intercultural Communication in a University of Technology

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Abstract: Effective intercultural communication is one possible way of improving intercultural competency and ultimately assisting an organisation to achieve success. Employees from different cultural backgrounds are required to adapt and accommodate each other in intercultural communication interactions. Therefore, this article sought to establish the effects of biographical variables on employees at a university of technology. An online self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. A total of 294 respondents completed the questionnaire. Likert items were used to obtain responses to the questions, and SPSS software was used to analyse the data. The findings showed that biographical variables such as education, age, language, race, and country of origin do not influence the adaptation to intercultural communication, competence in intercultural communication, the impact of culture on communication, recognition, and understanding of cultural differences, intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion and improvement of intercultural communication. Additionally, the findings showed that women and men perceive the above intercultural communication variables in the same way. The article advocates for the continuous enhancement of intercultural communication.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Communication Barriers, Intercultural Communication Competence, Intercultural Communication Enhancement, Internal Communication.

1. Introduction

The South African nation is referred to as the rainbow nation because it includes people of different cultural backgrounds. Although South Africans share the important dimensions of the human species, cultural diversity separates and distinguishes them as individuals and groups (Smit, Cronje, Brevis, & Vrba, 2011). This article seeks to establish the impact of biographical variables on intercultural communication. The way employees create assumptions and form decisions is based on their cultural upbringing, and it is through interaction with others daily that people acquire the meanings, attitudes, norms, and styles of communication that are necessary for them to communicate effectively and appropriately in various and different cultural contexts (Gudykunst, 2005; Thompson, 2018). Communication encounters between individuals from different cultural backgrounds are contextualised as intercultural communication (Jandt, 2004; Beerkens, Le Pichon-Vorstman, Supheert & Thijs, 2020).

Communication interactions between individuals from different backgrounds play an important role in the workplace. Cultural diversity in post-apartheid South Africa led to dramatic changes in terms of the composition of employees. It is now the norm that many organisations in the country employ people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Some organisations have neglected purposefully managing how intercultural communication can be utilised to unify culturally diverse employees so that they work towards a common purpose (Gentry, Booysen, Hannum, & Weber, 2010). Fasset (2013). Daft (2006) purports that if the uniqueness of employees and their experiences and knowledge are effectively managed, a culturally diverse workforce can be of immense value to an organisation. Management of cultural diversity is therefore imperative, as it contributes to a workplace that allows employees from different cultural backgrounds to work together and relate to each other with respect and understanding, which has the potential to foster team cohesion. Most importantly, the unification of employees towards a common purpose has the potential to assist organisations across sectors to achieve success.

Intercultural communication competence is considered one possible way of fostering team cohesion and unifying employees from different cultural backgrounds towards achieving a common purpose and is, for the purpose of this paper, regarded as a way of making organisations function effectively and, subsequently, achieve organisational success (see Mazibuko & Govender, 2017,1).

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Nhlapo (2013) investigated intercultural communication in information systems development teams in several organisations in Gauteng province, South Africa. The research concluded that culture and personality could affect the effectiveness of communication. In another similar study, Mahlari (1996) examined intercultural communication in a Johannesburg public library and discovered that mastery of communication skills, which includes an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences, is necessary if culturally diverse organisations are to achieve effective communication between people from different cultural backgrounds.

Mmope (2016) investigated assumptions to motivate a conceptual framework for integrated intercultural employee communication for line management of transformed universities. The study proposes a framework that provides a basis for the inculcation of best practices for effective and integrated employee communication that can help reinforce effective line management communication as a strategic priority, a core managerial responsibility, and an enabling factor to achieve strategic alignment.

Gumede (2016) investigated whether cultural diversity exists, whether it necessitates an organisational response, and whether managing cultural diversity affects performance. Finally, it suggests strategies, methods, and tools for Engen Refinery to use in managing its culturally diverse workforce. Although the study did not identify any issues with intercultural communication, it did emphasise the importance of initiating team-building activities and social gatherings to increase employee interactions, implementing cultural diversity programmes and policies, and restructuring work teams to become more multicultural.

This paper is thus desirable to expand knowledge on the effects of academic and non-academic employees' biographical variables on intercultural communication, including its effectiveness. As a result, the paper seeks to answer the following research question. What are the biographical variables of academic and nonacademic employees that influence the effectiveness of intercultural communication?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intercultural Communication

Defining intercultural communication is necessary, as it is likely to guide the understanding of the primary purpose of intercultural communication, determine characteristics that best capture the focus of intercultural communication, and assist the researcher in formulating an operational definition relevant to the purpose of this paper.

Emphasising a common understanding of information as the main characteristic of intercultural communication, Klein and Chen (2001) and Arasaratnam (2013) consider intercultural communication as the skill of interacting appropriately and individuals who are culturally different share an understanding. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2014) define intercultural communication as the process through which individuals from different cultures use the resources of visual communication in ways that are related to their specific underlying value systems that shape intercultural communication. Also defining intercultural communication from a cultural point of view, Samovar and Porter (2007:45, 58) describe intercultural communication as communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to affect the communication event.

The above definitions put an emphasis on how culture plays an important role in shaping and informing intercultural communication, showing the importance of how people communicate based on their cultural upbringing, even in the organisational setting. It can be deduced from the definitions provided above that intercultural communication manifests a reality that involves communication between people whose cultural backgrounds are distinct enough to alter the communication event. Given this primary theoretical principle and to provide an operational definition for the purpose of this paper, intercultural communication is, in the context of organisations, considered to be a form of internal communication that occurs between employees whose cultural backgrounds are distinct enough to alter the communication event to create a shared understanding. Shared understanding facilitates the unification of culturally diverse employees toward a common purpose and assists organisations in achieving success due to improved performance and productivity.

2.2 Barriers to Intercultural Communication

Shifting the focus to negative outcomes of intercultural communication, Sadri and Flammia (2011, 63) illustrate that the contexts in which intercultural communication encounters occur can have a significant influence on whether the outcome of the encounter leads to the formation of positive attitudes towards members of other cultures. According to Rana (2013, 4), differences between cultures are often perceived as threatening. What is logical and important in a particular culture may seem irrational and unimportant to an outsider. This requires a culturally diverse organisation to note that cultural diversity and poor intercultural communication practises could create personal conflict, misinterpretation, misunderstanding, missed deadline incorrect goal assumptions, and ultimately, failure to achieve success due to ineffective communication.

Jandt (2004), Gass (2005, 70), and Varonis (2007) identified unfamiliarity with the cultural elements that are used during intercultural communication in a cultural environment that is different from your own as one of the factors that lead to misunderstandings during intercultural communication. To develop an understanding and common interpretation, organisations need to be proactive in ensuring that factors that may hinder effective

intercultural communication are identified and obviated timeously (see Schweiger, Atamer & Calori, 2002, 133). Understanding and acknowledging that we have different cultural backgrounds is essential if culturally diverse employees are to become insightful observers of other cultures. Employees should be made aware of cultural varieties as a starting point to work towards enhancing intercultural communication and improving intercultural communication competence. In doing so, diverse organisations, regardless of the cultural background of their employees, could eliminate barriers to intercultural communication.

This would require the university to prepare all its employees through continuous cultural awareness and cultural diversity programmes, for instance, cultural day (each per term), where everyone is encouraged to wear their cultural clothes, cook a variety of foods from different cultures, debating and learning different cultural norms, beliefs, values, non-verbal gestures, etc. so that they can truly understand the cultural diversity in general of the university and employees. Acknowledging cultural differences and accepting and understanding the need to improve intercultural communication could form the basis for understanding the culturally diverse nature of employees and their impact on communication. In the same vein, managers should be tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that communication is purpose-directed so that it directs everyone's attention to the vision and purpose of the team and the institution and influences employees to act in a way that will facilitate the achievement of organisational success. Additionally, intercultural communication should involve employees talking across cultures and about the university's vision, themes, and values that help to achieve a common purpose.

The discussion above regarding barriers to intercultural communication and elimination of misunderstandings associated with cultural differences emphasises that inadequacies in the intercultural communication process could damage relationships between organisation employees due to misunderstandings and misinterpretation of information. On the other hand, organisations must be proactive in ensuring that factors that could hinder effective intercultural communication are identified and eliminated in a timely manner.

2.3 Intercultural Communication Competence

The discussion in this section focuses on intercultural communication competence, which is an extension of internal communication competence with a specific application to culture. Intercultural communication is a person's ability to communicate effectively in situations of intercultural interaction and is defined as the degree to which someone effectively adapts communication to the appropriate cultural context (Hyde & Kullman, 2004; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Neuliep, 2006; Santos & Rozier, 2009; Kiss, 2008; Arasaratnam, Banerjee, & Dembek, 2011). Achieving intercultural communication competence requires a willingness to acknowledge the frequently unexpected differences between one's own and a different culture; it requires a willingness to accept the characteristics of the other culture for what it is (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, 529; Beamer, 2016, 285).

The term competence is considered broadly as an impression that behaviour is appropriate and effective in a given context (Spitzberg, 1993, 379; Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2007, 314; Lieberman & Gamst, 2015, 17). Thus, competency is not an individual attribute; rather, it is a characteristic of the association between individuals with different backgrounds. Someone can be perceived as highly competent in one set of intercultural interactions and only moderately competent in another (Kiss, 2008; Sjuichro, 2023).

In the context of organisations, intercultural communication abilities signify the attributes relevant for employees to become competent intercultural communicators. As an illustration, what is crucial for employees to become competent intercultural communicators is that they should have the ability to adapt effectively to how communication occurs and accommodate one another irrespective of their different cultural backgrounds.

2.4 Workplace Dimensions

Hayles (2009) asserts that workplace dimensions of diversity are important contributing factors in understanding the organisational cultural diversity climate. Healy (1997, 102) maintains that workplace dimensions of diversity apply to all types of culturally diverse organisations and that they set a tone for the inclusion of employees despite cultural differences.

Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003) categorise the diversity dimensions in the workplace into what they refer to as the four layers of diversity (see Figure 1.1), which, according to them, set a tone of inclusion by reflecting the reality of each person within an organisation. The four categories that apply to all organisations are as follows: Personality: Includes an individual's likes and dislikes, values, morals, and beliefs. Personality is shaped early in life and is influenced by and influences the other three layers throughout one's lifetime and career choices. Internal dimensions are largely beyond our control but have a powerful impact on behaviours and attitudes. These dimensions are regarded as the layer in which many divisions between and among individuals exist and include age, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, ethnicity, and race, External dimensions are largely within our control and are choices formed by environmental, social, and cultural factors and experiences. This layer includes aspects of life, such as income, religion, marital status, work experience, recreational habits, personal habits, appearance, geographic location, and educational background, which usually form the basis for decisions on work style and organisational dimensions are largely defined and influenced by the group or organisation in which we work. This layer concerns aspects of culture found in a workplace, namely, management status, work location, seniority, department, union affiliation, functional level, work content field, and work location. Management of

workplace dimensions of diversity is important, considering that culture and communication work in tandem (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003).

Steurer, Langer, Konrad, and Martinuzzi (2005) argue that managing the diversity dimensions in the workplace mediates cultural conflicts and improves internal communication competence. The fact that diverse organisations have employees from different cultural backgrounds creates vast cultural diversity, which may prevent them from using a common language unless internal communication is handled and enhanced such that cultural diversity is managed well (see Steinberg, 2007; Martin & Nakayama, 2013; Neuliep, 2009; Macleod & Mathews, 2012). Figure 1.1 shows the diversity dimensions in the workplace as categorised by Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003).

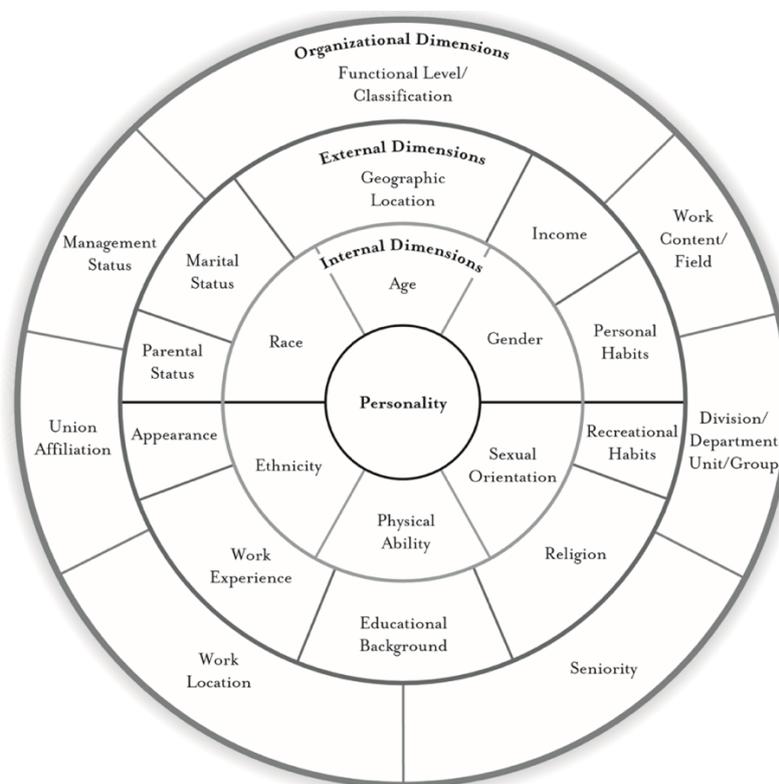


Figure 1.1 Workplace Dimensions of Diversity Wheel.

Source: Gardenswartz and Rowe (2009).

The workplace dimensions of the diversity wheel, as shown in Figure 1.1, show the different categories of a workforce and imply that the assumptions culturally diverse employees make influence their behaviours, which, in turn, impact how they relate, interact, and communicate with others. Regardless of the unique nature of employees, differences can be a source of team cohesion and could help nurture organisational success if managed effectively. Team cohesion is considered, for the purpose of this paper, an important imperative for team members to remain united while working to achieve a common purpose. In this instance, common purpose is considered an attribute that serves to link team members with each other and the team as a whole. Therefore, it is important to manage differences so that team cohesiveness is achieved. It is argued that a highly cohesive team is more committed to organisational goals and activities (Hayles, 2009; Henderson, 2010, 263). Taking into account these perceived realities, culturally diverse organisations must pursue all-inclusive communication enhancement practises that have the potential to unite team members to achieve a common goal. An inclusive approach to enhancing internal communication brings employees from different cultural backgrounds together and increases loyalty and a feeling of belonging, one of the foremost goals and desired outcomes of communication.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The study was quantitative in nature, and a survey research design was followed. According to Bhandari (2020), quantitative data is defined as the process of collecting and analysing numerical data. Bhandari (2020) further points out that quantitative data can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalise the results to the wider population. The researcher was able to obtain a large sample size in the current investigation, leading the researcher to believe that the quantitative technique was pertinent. The design of the current study was considered appropriate because it was likely to address the issues raised by the researcher in the introduction.

3.2. Instrument

An online self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 294 academic employees (lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and full professors) as well as non-academic employees (junior administrators, senior administrators, and personal assistants) employees. A questionnaire was preferred because it provided the researcher with quantifiable data. Closed-ended questions were used, and a four-point Likert scale was used to obtain responses to the questions. These categories assisted the researcher in obtaining the perspective of the topic from both of them, as indicated by McMillan & Schumacher (2006: 194) when they argue that collecting data from various respondents assists in getting different views from the respondents and allows the researcher to obtain information on the perceptions of the respondents about the research problem, by asking questions that required participants to provide strongly disagree/disagree/agree/strongly agree with responses (see McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:194).

3.3. Respondents

The respondents were academics (lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and full professors) and non-academics (junior administrators, senior administrators, and personal assistants) from the largest faculty, namely the Faculty of Humanities. A total of 319 respondents were expected to participate in this study; however, only 294 males and females ended up participating in this investigation. Although 294 respondents participated in the study, the number of responses per factor is aligned with the number of respondents who responded to each question. There were instances where some respondents chose not to answer certain questions. The researcher found it convenient to use only the Faculty of Humanities in this study, as she had direct access to colleagues who could be reached relatively easily. The researcher opted for convenience sampling because the respondents were readily available at the university, where the researcher is a lecturer, and the sampling used was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling refers to the researcher choosing a sample based on convenience (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013: 1). The employees were informed of the study details by email, ensuring transparency in the sampling process.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

A questionnaire was used to collect data. This study used the questionnaire because it provided a relatively cheap, quick, and efficient way to obtain large amounts of information from a large sample of people. Data can be collected relatively quickly because the researcher would not need to be present when the questionnaires are completed. The structure of the questionnaire consisted of two variables.

- Variable A: Biographical information of university academic and non-academic employees
- Variable B: The importance of intercultural communication as a means of achieving performance improvements and, ultimately, organisational success.

A questionnaire was used that followed the Likert scale. The Likert scale is a set of statements offered for real hypothetical situations under study (Schrum, M. L, Johnson, M., Ghuy, M., & Gombolay, M. C. 2020). The scale enables the researcher to obtain more information on the respondent's opinions or feelings on a particular topic than by asking questions that require a 'disagree/agree' or 'yes / no' response (Ghasemi & Ahmadian, 2023), as quoted by David and Sutton (2004:167). In the current study, the Likert scale contained four possible responses, namely, strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. These response categories were given a score that ranged from 1 to 4.

4. Data Analysis

The percentages for the categories of responses 'strongly agree' and 'agree' have been combined for the purpose of the analysis. The percentages for the categories of responses 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' have also been combined. The researcher analysed the data collected through the questionnaire (294) of academic and non-academic employees of the Faculty of Humanities, which was done with the assistance of the Department of Statistics at the university by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 25.0 (SPSS). Tables were used to present the findings in a simplified and visual form, and inferences were drawn about the research group concerned, whereafter they were summarised with data descriptions and interpretations.

5. Results and Discussion

The following is a presentation of the quantitative data. The order of presentation is informed by the order of the research question. First, the effects of biographical variables of academic and nonacademic employees that determine intercultural communication; second, exploring current approaches to intercultural communication.

5.1. Effects of Biographical Variables on the Intercultural Communication Factors

In this section, biographical variables of academic and non-academic employees of the Faculty of Humanities are presented to determine the extent of their significance to intercultural communication variables distinguished for this study. In a study of relationships between variables, we can often distinguish between dependent variables and independent variables. The variables in a study of cause-and-effect relationships are called independent and dependent variables – the independent variable is the cause, and the dependent variable is the effect (Ellis & Steyn,

2003; Maree, 2011, 147). In this study, the intercultural communication factors displayed in Table 1 were studied under the supposition that they depend on the biographical variables of the respondents.

While discussing the dimensions of diversity in the workplace in the above, it was stated that the internal dimensions have a powerful impact on behaviours and attitudes and are regarded as the dimensions in which there are many divisions between and among individuals. In this instance, age, race, education, gender, language, and country of origin are the biographical variables that were used to determine their effects on different variables of intercultural communication. The theoretical assumption made above is that a number of variables, such as the biographical variables used in this study, can influence the perceptions of individuals.

The biographical variables of the respondents were divided into two types. Some of the variables are ordered, and some are not. As an illustration, age and education are for the purposes of this study, the biographical data variables that have order; however, the same cannot be said of gender, race, language, and country of origin of respondents.

Table 1 lists intercultural communication factors extracted from the questionnaire items. Factor analysis was done for the questionnaire items, to explore factor loadings; Six factors were extracted from the 30 questionnaire items. The purpose of factor analysis is to determine which items of the questionnaire belong together, in the sense that they measure the same factor. A factor analysis performed on a set of items produces a matrix of items that are loaded on different factors (Creswell, 2011, 219). In the case of this paper, the analysis involved reducing a large set of items (30 items) to a much smaller set of summary variables (6 factors), in order for the data set to be more manageable and understandable, or a summary of items loaded on each of the six intercultural communication factors.

Table 1: Factor loading.

Factor number	Factor Description
Factor 1 (f1)	Intercultural communication adaptation
Factor 2 (f2)	Intercultural communication competence
Factor 3 (f3)	Impact of culture on communication
Factor 4 (f4)	Recognition and understanding of cultural differences
Factor 5 (f5)	Intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion
Factor 6 (f6)	Enhancement of intercultural communication

Source: Mushaathoni (2021)

The findings of the correlation analysis related to the effects of the biographic data variables of the Faculty of Humanities employees on the intercultural communication factors listed in Table 1 are presented in the next sections. The findings will demonstrate whether, in practise, a correlation exists between biographical variables and intercultural communication factors determined for the purpose of this article, for example, whether age or education impacts any of the intercultural communication variables displayed in Table 1. Information is imperative for organisation managers so that they understand which path to follow in their pursuit of enhancing intercultural communication and improving intercultural communication competence.

5.1.1. Differences in Intercultural Communication Factors Based on Age and Education

The results related to the correlation between factors of intercultural communication based on age and education are given in Table 2. Age and education are of the same type as intercultural communication factors because all factors listed in Table 1 also have age and education orders compared to the factors using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, to summarise the strength and direction of a relationship between them or to determine whether there were statistical differences between factors, and these ordered biographical variables. Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed). A lower mean or lower score for factors means that they agree less than in a case where a higher mean or higher score would have been achieved.

Table 2 shows that there are no statistically significant differences between intercultural communication factors according to age and education level. Table 2 shows that the age and education of academic and non-academic employees of the Faculty of Humanities had no effect on their perceptions of 'intercultural communication adaptation', 'intercultural communication competence', 'impact of culture on communication', 'recognition and understanding of cultural differences', 'intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion' and 'enhancement of intercultural communication'. Although the respondents were of different ages and had different levels of education, the results lead to the conclusion that there were no significant statistical differences in the manner in which the participants responded to questions related to intercultural communication factors according to age and level of education.

Table 2: Correlation between age and education, and factors.

Factors		Age	Education
Intercultural communication adaptation	Correlation coefficient	0.008	-0.003
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.897	0.956
	Numbers	282	284

Factors		Age	Education
Intercultural communication competence	Correlation coefficient	0.099	0.113
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.098	0.057
	Number	282	283
Impact of culture on communication	Correlation coefficient	0.035	-0.027
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.559	0.645
	Numbers	289	289
Recognition and understanding of cultural differences	Correlation coefficient	-0.054	-0.075
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.359	0.201
	Numbers	291	291
Intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion	Correlation coefficient	0.070	0.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.235	0.214
	Numbers	288	290
Enhancement of intercultural communication	Correlation coefficient	0.081	0.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.167	0.210
	Numbers	289	289

Source: Calculated by the author

The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.1.2. Differences in Intercultural Communication Factors Based on Country of Origin

As shown in Table 3, the independent sample t-test was performed to compare differences in factors of intercultural communication based on the country of origin of the participants. Although various countries were listed in the completed questionnaire, all countries, such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana, except South Africa, were grouped for this test because they are a minority, in addition to making it easier to fit the scope of the document. Table 3 shows South Africa and other countries as participants' countries of origin. Table 3 shows that more respondents were South Africans than from other countries grouped together.

Although South Africans had a high mean value on most factors, respondents from other countries recorded a high mean value on intercultural communication competence. South Africans and respondents from other countries recorded the same mean value for improving intercultural communication. Furthermore, Table 3 shows that there were statistically significant differences between South Africans and respondents from other countries on the impact of culture on communication. The scores for this factor for South Africans (mean=2.95; standard deviation=0.42) and respondents from other countries (mean=2.84; standard deviation=0.37) translated to a p-value of <.05 (0.023). However, the effect size of 0.25 is a small effect, and this demonstrates that there is not much difference, in practise, pertaining to the manner in which South Africans and respondents from other countries perceive the impact of culture on communication.

Table 3: Differences in Intercultural Communication Based on Country of Origin.

Factors	Country of origin	No of employees.	Mean	S.D.	p-value	Effect size
Intercultural communication adaptation	South Africa	169	3.08	0.30		0.16
	Other countries	115	3.03	0.35	0.166	
Intercultural communication competence	South Africa	169	3.03	0.30		0.05
	Other countries	114	3.05	0.32	0.665	
Impact of culture on communication	South Africa	174	2.95	0.42		0.25
	Other Countries	116	2.84	0.37	0.023	
Recognition and understanding of cultural differences	South Africa	175	3.03	0.37		0.15
	Other Countries	117	2.97	0.34	0.192	
Intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion	South Africa	173	3.02	0.31		0.02
	Other Countries	117	3.03	0.28	0.835	
Enhancement of Intercultural Communication	South Africa	174	3.03	0.32		0,01
	Other Countries	116	3.03	0.29	0.950	

Source: Calculated by the author.

5.1.3. Differences in Intercultural Communication Factors Based on Gender

Table 4 illustrates the results of a one-way analysis of variance in intercultural communication factors based on gender. Table 4 shows that the largest number of participants (48.6%, n=143) were men; 28 (9.5%) participants did not specify their gender, and 42% (n=123) of participants were women.

The findings in Table 4 indicate that the p-value on intercultural communication adaptation, intercultural communication competence, the impact of culture on communication, intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion, and enhancement of intercultural communication, is less than 0.05, demonstrating that there were statistically significant differences between men, women, and employees who prefer not to say employees in these

factors based on gender. Considering the mean of different gender groupings, they preferred not to say that respondents recorded the lowest scores in all the five factors referenced above. This finding implies that it was statistically proven that there were differences between employees who were not willing to disclose their gender and male and female employees in all five factors that recorded a p-value of less than 0.05. Despite its insignificance, the finding shows that organisations should develop plans of action to improve intercultural communication that seek to advance the inclusion of all employees. The results in Table 4 also show that there were no statistically significant differences in recognition and understanding of cultural differences based on gender, including employees who were not willing to disclose their gender. Furthermore, the results show that there were no statistically significant differences between men and women in all six factors of intercultural communication listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Differences in intercultural communication based on gender.

Factors	Gender	No of employees	Mean	S.D.	p-value	Effect size male with	Effect size female with
Intercultural communication adaptation	Male	134	3.09	0.32			
	Female	123	3.07	0.26		0.06	
	You prefer not to say	27	2.84	0.49		0.51	0.47
	Total	284	3.06	0.32	0.001		
Intercultural communication competence	Male	133	3.07	0.29			
	Female	123	3.04	0.26		0.07	
	You prefer not to say	27	2.85	2.50		0.42	0.38
	Total	283	3.04	0.31	0.004		
Impact of culture on communication	Male	139	2.93	0.38			
	Female	123	2.96	0.38		0.07	
	Prefer not to say	28	2.59	0.49		0.69	0.75
	Total	290	2.91	0.41	0.000		
Recognition and understanding of cultural differences	Male	141	2.99	0.34			
	Female	123	3.05	0.31		0.20	
	You prefer not to say	28	2.90	0.57		0.14	0.26
	Total	292	3.01	0.36	0.091		
Intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion	Male	139	3.06	0.29			
	Female	123	3.03	0.21		0.08	
	You prefer not to say	28	2.84	0.54		0.40	0.36
	Total	290	3.03	0.30	0.002		
Enhancement of intercultural communication	Male	139	3.06	0.28			
	Female	123	3.03	0.27		0.11	
	You prefer not to say	28	2.84	0.51		0.43	0.37
	Total	290	3.03	0.31	0.003		

0.2= small; 0.5=medium; 0.8=large

Source: Calculated by the author

5.1.4. Differences in Intercultural Communication Based on Language

Although various languages were listed in the questionnaire completed by respondents, all languages, except Afrikaans and English, were grouped together, for the purpose of the analysis in this section, as indigenous languages. Therefore, Afrikaans, English, and indigenous languages are the language groupings used to analyse differences in intercultural communication factors based on languages. Table 5 shows that most of the respondents were speakers of indigenous languages. As mentioned above, although 294 respondents participated in the study, the number of responses per factor is aligned with the number of respondents who responded to each question. There were instances where some respondents chose not to answer certain questions.

The findings in Table 4 show that the p-value on the adaptation of intercultural communication, intercultural communication competence, the impact of culture on communication, recognition, and understanding of cultural differences, intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion, and improvement of intercultural communication, is above 0.05, demonstrating that there were no statistically significant differences between speakers of Afrikaans, English and indigenous languages. The findings indicate that in practise, the degree to which intercultural communication is perceived in terms of the factors in Table 5 was not dependent on the language spoken by the respondents.

Table 5: Differences in Intercultural Communication Based on Languages.

Factors	Language	Numbers	Mean	Standard deviation	p-value	Effect size Afrikaans with	Effect size English with
Intercultural communication adaptation	Afrikaans	41	3.1289	0.29949			
	English	71	3.0827	0.28500		0.15	
	Indigenous	151	3.0257	0.34197		0.30	0.17
	Total	263	3.0572	0.3224	0.141		
Competence in Intercultural Communication	Afrikaans	41	3.1293	0.36759			
	English	71	3.0176	0.30344		0.30	
	Indigenous	150	3.0153	0.27727		0.31	0.01
	Total	262	3.0338	0.30165	0.087		
Impact of culture on communication	Afrikaans	41	2.9268	0.36142			
	English	73	2.9178	0.30697		0.02	
	Indigenous	155	2.9151	0.45321		0.03	0.01
	Total	269	2.9176	0.40356	0.986		
Recognition and understanding of cultural differences	Afrikaans	41	3.0285	0.31159			
	English	74	3.0090	0.33999		0.06	
	Indigenous	156	3.0021	0.39982		0.07	0.02
	Total	271	3.0080	0.37079	0.922		
Intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion	Afrikaans	41	3.1098	0.28287			
	English	74	3.0086	0.27500		0.36	
	Indigenous	154	3.0030	0.31754		0.34	0.02
	Total	269	3.0208	0.30256	0.123		
Enhancement of intercultural communication	Afrikaans	41	3.0927	0.30691			
	English	73	3.0055	0.30363		0.28	
	Indigenous	155	3.0110	0.32184		0.25	0.02
	Total	269	3.0219	0.31505	0.294		

Source: Calculated by the author

5.1.5. Differences in Intercultural Communication Based on Race

Table 6 contains differences in intercultural communication based on race. The table reflects that most of the academic and non-academic employees of the Faculty of Humanities who participated in the online survey were Africans, and fewer respondents were white, coloured, and Indian.

The results in Table 6 indicate that African, white, coloured, and Indian participants had higher mean values for intercultural communication adaptation than on the other five intercultural communication factors (Africans: mean=3.04, standard deviation=0.29; whites: mean=3.16, standard deviation=0.35; Coloureds: mean=3.07, standard deviation=0.19; Indians: mean=3.09, standard deviation 0.23). However, the results in Table 6 indicate that not statistically significant (p -value $> .05$) differences (p -value > 0.05) were observed in all factors of intercultural communication based on the race of academic and non-academic employees of the Faculty of Humanities who participated in the online survey. The results show that the perceptions of the respondents about intercultural communication factors were not informed by their belonging to different racial groups.

Table 6: Differences in Intercultural Communication Based on Race.

Factors	Race	Numbers	Mean	Standard deviation	p-value	Effect size African with	Effect size White with	Effect size coloured with
Adaptation to Intercultural Communication	African	188	3.04	0.29				
	White	58	3.16	0.35		0.35		
	Coloured	23	3.07	0.19		0.11	0.25	
	Indian	14	3.09	0.23		0.17	0.20	0.07
	Total	283	3.07	0.30	0.060			
Intercultural communication competence	African	188	3.03	0.29				
	White	58	3.05	0.42		0.04		
	Coloured	23	3.03	0.24		0.02	0.06	
	Indian	14	3.04	0.16		0.04	0.02	0.07
	Total	283	3.04	0.31	0.980			
	African	193	2.88	0.45				

Impact of culture on communication	White	59	2.95	0.32		0.16		
	Coloured	24	2.88	0.30		0.01	0.22	
	Indian	14	3.05	0.12		0.36	0.29	0.56
	Total	290	2.91	0.41	0.363			
Recognition and understanding of cultural differences	African	194	3.01	0.36				
	White	59	2.99	0.35		0.04		
	Coloured	24	3.04	0.36		0.10	0.14	
	Total	291	3.01	0.36	0.764			
Intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion	African	192	3.01	0.30				
	White	59	3.09	0.31		0.25		
	Coloured	24	2.01	0.30		0.01	0.27	0.07
	Total	289	3.03	0.30	0.320			
Enhancement of intercultural communication	African	193	3.01	0.31				
	White	59	3.08	0.34		0.19		
	Coloured	24	3.01	0.30		0.01	0.20	
	Total	290	3.03	0.31	0.491			

Source: Calculated by the author

6. Discussion

Biographical variables of academic and non-academic employees of the Faculty of Humanities were presented with the aim of determining the extent of their significance to the factors extracted for the purposes of the study. Age, race, education, sex, language, and country of origin were the biographical variables that were used to determine the effect of biographical variables on various factors of intercultural communication.

The study findings on the relationships between intercultural communication factors and biographical factors show that employees' perceptions of adaptation to intercultural communication, intercultural communication competence, the influence of culture on communication, recognition, and understanding of cultural differences, and intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion were not influenced by education, age, language, race, or country of origin.

The results of the online survey show that there are no significant statistical differences in the way participants responded to questionnaire items related to the intercultural communication factors extracted for the study, despite the fact that the participants were from different countries, spoke different languages, and were of different ages, educational levels, and races.

Regarding the gender variable, the findings show that despite their differences in gender, women and men had the same perceptions of the adaptation of intercultural communication, the competence of intercultural communication, the influence of culture on communication, the recognition and understanding of cultural differences, and intercultural communication as a source of team cohesion and enhancement of intercultural communication. However, the results show that participants who decided to withdraw their gender status had distinct experiences with the intercultural communication characteristics mentioned above.

Despite the fact that the result was minor, it shows that culturally varied organisations should create intercultural communication enhancement and intercultural communication competence improvement strategies and implementation plans that aim to promote the inclusion of all employees.

The findings of all components had an impact on each other in general, although the adaptation of intercultural communication tended to have a stronger impact on the other five factors. This was an important result of the link between intercultural communication factors. This finding demonstrates the mutually reinforcing nature of all intercultural communication variables and highlights the need for a culturally diverse organisation to improve intercultural communication, taking into account the various intercultural communication variables, for example, taking into account the correlation between all factors used in the study.

For example, the findings revealed that when the adaptability of intercultural communication is high, all other variables inferred from the study-relevant questionnaire items are high. This finding is significant because it highlights the need for diverse organisations to use the adaptation of intercultural communication as a foundation for their efforts to improve intercultural communication by showing that it tends to have a greater impact on all other variables. This confirms the literature's conclusion that the degree to which intercultural communication adaption factors are incorporated into a communication plan determines the degree to which intercultural communication effectiveness is attained.

7. Conclusion

In summary, by applying a quantitative approach, this study was able to uncover statistically validated information regarding the nature of the interconnectedness between (1) biographical variables and factors extracted from questionnaire items and (2) the relationship between various variables of intercultural communication.

The findings show that employees' perceptions of intercultural communication variables identified for the purpose of this study are not influenced by biographical variables such as education, age, language, race, and country of origin. The results also indicate that the aforementioned intercultural communication variables are seen in a similar way by men and women. These results go counter to the theoretical premise that there are considerable differences between and among persons in the workplace's internal diversity dimensions, which include biographical factors.

It was also intriguing to see that the respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender status had a different perspective on the intercultural communication variables mentioned in the preceding paragraph compared to the respondents who preferred to disclose their gender status. The findings point to the conclusion that various organisations should create measures to improve intercultural communication that seeks to promote the inclusion of all employees.

Moreover, the findings of this study's analysis of the intercultural communication variables indicate that all the variables that were chosen for the study's purposes are mutually reinforcing in that they all influence one another. The statistical validation of the positive nature of the relationship between intercultural communication variables supports the justification for organisations to integrate all intercultural communication variables. It is imperative for diverse organisations to develop initiatives aimed at improving intercultural communication with due consideration of this fundamental interconnectedness. Positive relationships between variables of intercultural communication suggest that to improve intercultural communication in various organisations, all employees must adapt to new communication methods, and efforts must be made to ensure effective intercultural communication. Additionally, all employees must recognise and appreciate cultural differences, and the institution as a whole must adopt a multicultural mindset.

The finding that the adaptation of intercultural communication tends to have a greater impact on other variables is especially important because it suggests that the adaptation of intercultural communication is a variable that has a more favourable impact on other variables of intercultural communication. This finding highlights the need for diverse organisations to use adaptation to intercultural communication as a foundation for their efforts to improve intercultural communication. The findings of this paper add to the body of knowledge that highlights the need for culturally diverse organisations to promote intercultural communication in order to increase intercultural communication effectiveness.

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