

Cultural influences on interpersonal communication among a different gender of KUPTM KL students

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Abstract: The influences of culture are affected by history, geography, traits and changes through the process. It's perceived by individuals differently, especially by a different gender. However, good communication skills are crucial to survive in a different environment, especially in a higher education institution. A different environment, geography and culture required a very high level of communication skills to avoid misunderstanding or any communication risk. The study aimed to describe the relationship between different gender cultural influences and interpersonal communication among KUPTM KL students. Quantitative methods were applied in the study, and a set of questionnaires was distributed among 160 students of KUPTM KL. In addition, the result showed a significant relationship between cultural influences and interpersonal communication of KUPTM KL students, while gender differences do not affect cultural influences and interpersonal communication. It also shows the level of cultural influences and interpersonal communication of the respondents. Hence, the study contributes to the field of communication through the establishment of more comprehensive variables related to participation in interpersonal communication and helps in extending the Social Penetration Theory in most of the stages includes.

Keywords: Interpersonal communication, cultural influences, gender differences, Social Penetration Theory

1. Introduction

The concept of culture is imbedded in human life since the beginning. Human develop a process of learning in their daily life through culture. Culture consist of derivative experience learned and created by the individual including the interpretation transmitted temporarily or individual formed (Avruch, 1998). While Hofstede (1994) defining culture as collective mind programming which

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differentiate an individuals between each other in a group. The influences of culture rooted from the factors that can affect assessment and intervention process such as family, historical and geographical (Zimmerman, 2017). The core elements of culture as mention by Matsumoto (1996) being communicated from one generation to another generation. This process helped the population to remain their shared value and kept the culture originality.

The process of communication as discussed by scholar is a culture transportation. An information move from one individual to another individual and transmitted in the process of culture development. Avrunch (1998) and Matsumoto (1996), did agree about the involvement of communication in cultural development. Hence, culture is learned from the interaction process (Spencer-Oatey, 2012) mostly through interpersonal communication (DeVito, 2019). DeVito (2019) even stated the relationship between cultural influences and interpersonal relationship especially on the factors effects each other variables.

A different individual learned and perceived a different things. As mention by Matsumoto (1996), in learning culture, a different individual will perceived a different set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behavior shared. According to Giuliano (2020) which study on the relevance of culture in the determination of different forms of gender gap, there's the role of different forms of cultural transmission in shaping gender differences. Gender is not only an individual-difference or person variable but also a stimulus variable and an emerging approaches to cross-national measurement of constructs such as gender equality provide new insights into patterns of gender differences and similarities across cultures (Hyde, 2007).

Gender was originally a cultural construct that was historically malleable (Hirdman, 2002). Gender ideas such as feminine and masculine have been mostly defined by societal constructs rather than biology (Connell, 2002). In society, Harding (1986) identified three main contexts for gender construction which are structural, symbolic, and individual levels. While, Connell (2002) saw gender as a crucial capacity or evaluative talent in describing the relationship between gender and the absence of fundamental inequity or hierarchy as a relational concept.

1.1 Cultural Influences

Culture will determines individual character or behavior. The way a person speaks, behave and their personality are influence by culture (Kluckhohn et al., 1953). An individual develop their communication skills and behavior through the learning process around the society since kids (Kluckhohn and Murray, 1948). Cultural experience could possess the process of sending and interpreting the message depends on both parties which is the speaker and listener Porter & Samovar, 1996). Either the listener really understands on what the speaker trying to say based on what the listener listened and interpret the message data cognitively. But experience of these both individuals are varied and cultural experience interfere unconsciously (Samovar et al., 2014). Thus, may lead to misinterpret the message that have been sent.

The process of adapting culture involved the process of understanding and adjustment to avoid misunderstanding or controversial issues (Chang et al., 2014). The interpersonal conflict will exist when an individual failed to adapt with the new norm culture (Morris & Fu, 2001). Culture does show the value of where does a person came from, even influence towards their behavior or norms in their daily life. It shows how culture influences a person psychological thinking and behavior (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). Meanwhile, Oyserman and Lee (2008) also found the geographic factors as a feeder which lead to individual psychological thinking into individualism or collectivism. Asian have stronger culture influence their daily life while for the western region the result shows barely the same even for some places that have higher culture context in daily life (Samovar et al., 2016). The context also being explained through their ad preferences where's Dutch as low-context culture perceived the ad way simpler while Belgian is the other way around (Hornikx & Le Pair, 2017). This shows that the culture

influences their way of perceiving things, thinking and even preference of them liking their ads on Hornikx and Le Pair studies.

Triandis and Suh (2002) studies conclude that culture influences individual as a whole, including emotional. It does relate more with individualism and collectivism on how the person operate on their daily task even how they are socialized (Siegel, 2020). For example, collectivism type of person is leaning towards simplicity such as avoiding complex feeling like the fear of being missing out or left out, while individualism is more complex such as feeling that better than anyone else.

1.2 Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication skill is crucial in human personal development and productivity. It's being identified as a one of importance skill required by individual to communicate effectively (Berger, 2010). The basic concept of interpersonal communication derived from the process of interaction between people. DeVito (2016) highlighted on two main elements as a core of interpersonal communication which are connected and interdependent. The concept of connected as mention by DeVito (2016) is around within a small intimate group (dyadic), while interdependent as the consequences received by the other parties based on another action taken by others parties.

The process of interpersonal communication required a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication (Berger, 2010; DeVito, 2019). While Richmond and Buehler (1962) explained the interpersonal communication through the message, purpose, effects and characteristics of the sender or receiver. Richmond and Buehler (1962) also found that interpersonal communication involves within how close the communicator with recipient and related with socio-cultural of people surrounding. In line with that, Miller (1978) mentioned that an interpersonal communication relationship will grow when communicator and recipient who involve with the process of communication shared the same culture values or relevant group cultures members. Compare to non-interpersonal communicator, they will only could describe or making an assumption towards the other person during communication process (Shapiro et al., 1981). Therefore, an interpersonal communication can be identified routed in between communicator and receiver culture.

In explaining a deeper concept of interpersonal communication, Shapiro et al. (1981) listed three main component of interpersonal communication which related each other; i) the communicators on what their connection or relationship towards each other, ii) how the communication flows without any obstacle, and iii) how the communicators communicate through time they known each other. It shows that an interpersonal communication done with a purpose and communicator will control the purpose of the process according to their plan and need (Miller, 1978).

Another perspective of interpersonal communication context is listening skills. Haas and Arnold (1995), and Robert and Vinson (1998) is a few early scholars which found the relationship between communicators listening skills with interpersonal communication. There are two characteristics of listener involved in interpersonal communication with are good and bad listener (Bodie, 2011). Hence, Bambacas and Patrickson (2008) research among workers in organization found that an ability of workers to listen actively which meant to show an appreciation towards the speaker. The involvement of listening in interpersonal communication strongly will affect the output of the communication process.

In explaining the perspective of interpersonal communication as a dyadic which around between a small circles of people, DeVito (2016) focused it in a family context (intimate relationship). Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) stated that interpersonal communication within family is bit related with the social class itself. Meaning that, family that are in higher level of social class or standard tend to be more protective centered kind compare as a normal family, the communication revolves around norms control and supporting (DeVito, 2019). While the higher-level social class family are more towards ordering and compliance with standard with their children (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Therefore, it

will affect the way children communicate in the future and develop a specific interpersonal communication skill.

1.3 Cultural Influences in gender

In explaining the relationship between cultural influences and gender, Tulviste et al. (2010) did a research on comparing Finnish, Estonian and Swedish kids on their culture, context and differences in gender when communicating among friends. The result showed the Estonians have a wider range of vocabulary when communicating than others. Moreover, Estonians used directives or ordering in purposes more than others especially on boys. The highest of directive usage would be Estonian, Finnish and the least is Swedish. They conclude that the way these children communicate is mainly affected by their surroundings and the gender differences were not interfered during the process.

Meanwhile, Schneid et al. (2015) found that gender differences towards work performance in a team would have differences between various cultures. The result found that the group that have men and women as a team are more productive when collaborated and this may happen because of the equality treating each other's and less affected by the culture background itself. Relating to collectivism, the gender in the group is focused as one more than individual itself (Schneid et al., 2015). Hence, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) stated that the mix of culture and gender are affecting on communication processes. Some of the components that are affecting the process are mostly about feelings and behavior such as, sensitivity, appreciation, politeness and supports (Trauth et al., 2008). Those components more sided to non-western cultures and woman while other components like aggressive, controlling, efficiency and interaction management are related to western culture and man (Krasnova et al., 2017). Therefore, the skill traits of individual are different as well as some of their interpersonal communication skills.

However, Miller & Stigler (1987) found that gender and culture background of certain ethnic are related to their way of communicate. In the study, Miller and Stigler (1987) found that man from their scope of studies which are Japanese and Chinese tend to use more intensity in communicating rather than the women. But in Western society, there are barely same due to difference background culture (Berry et al., 2002). Miller and Stigler (1987) they also emphasize on the importance of intercultural knowledge because this might help communicator avoid any misdemeanor towards others.

Another study on gender teamwork performance by Fernandez-sanz and Misra (2012) shows that the performance of their respondent's works is about the same between male and female, but the significant differences are their background culture whereas Spanish are more focusing to collectivism while American are more self-centered focused or individualism. It shows that male and female are about the same but culture background makes it difference where their culture more leaning to self-centered or a group-centered (Fernandez-sanz and Misra, 2012)

As the time changes, Giuliano (2020) argue that there's a significant relationship between culture and gender where's gender roles may changes as woman are more focusing on outside such as working, paying bills and others that man can do event some culture background still become a limit to woman becoming independent. Both of this context contradictory against each other.

1.4 Interpersonal Communication in Gender

Most individual have the same characteristic or traits and created their own interpersonal direction based on the characteristics own (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). Jaffe and Hyde (2000) mentioned that women evolve and forming the identity and have different interpersonal direction from men and women develop their interpersonal communication deeply in relationships compare to men. According to Chodorow (2011), women learn about their gender characteristic by their primary connection which is family during child unlike men where they learned differently. Men develop their personal character more than intimacy while women, their personal character development blend with

intimacy (Chodorow, 2011). From the context kid's relationship, Wood and Lenze (1991) found that kid's relationships role reflects themselves and others during the process. In line with Chodorow (2011), it's their natural process that include knowledge that they about gender identity and interpersonal direction. Wood and Lenze (1991), and Chodorow (2011) even found that female learn more by the way the touch or being touch and how people speak. Therefore, the interpersonal orientation is blend with part on learning according to gender.

Supportive behaviors happened when people seek or provide help in interpersonal communication. Burlison and Kunkel (2006) research have revealed that gender differences affect supportive behavior where's women tend to more seeking and providing emotional support, attend to the others feeling and more highly person-centered. Hence, Tannen (1990) found that women are shows more interest during a conversation where they tend to use body language, eye contact and grammatical words that relates than men. Women also more emotional than men and in line with their social roles in life (Grossman & Wood, 1993). Women expressly their emotion especially on close relationships (Tannen, 1990).

While according to Maltz and Borker (1983), and Eagly (2013), women and men have their own ways to communicate where's women mainly through talks in which are more towards their relationships and chemistry between people they communicate with, and men communication is mainly for task accomplishment such as acquiring information or decision making. However both genders should have the same values of communication. Even women provide more comforting and emotional support than men, these actually led to more complex messages from their communication including on values of their relationships and partners (Kunkel & Burlison, 1999; Eagly, 2009).

1.5 Social Penetration Theory (SPT)

Social Penetration Theory was first introduce by Altman and Taylor (1973) to s the process of bonding that moves a relationship from superficial to more intimate. According to Carpenter and Greene (2015), SPT was develop to explain the phenomenon of how information exchange while developing and breaking the walls of interpersonal relationships. It describes the process of speaker and listener bonding towards another level (intimate). It is specially done through sharing personal information and how it purposely conducted in sharing that information. It can happen in many forms including friendship, social groups, romantic relationship and work relationship. The main core of SPT is self-disclosure which can be explain as a purposeful process of revealing information about oneself to others (Derlega et al., 1993). According to Carpenter and Greene (2015), the concept of self-disclosure have an ability to increases intimacy in relationships to a certain point. In this age, this theory also can be applied to online communication context such as online dating or chatting.

As proposed by Atlman and Taylor (1973), there are five stages of SPT used to explain the level of interpersonal relationship which are orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, stable exchange and de-penetration. The first stage is orientation, during which people share only the most superficial information about themselves. People are cautious when disclosing information at this early stage (Taylor & Altman, 1987). The second stage of social penetration theory is exploratory affective exchange, in which people share details beyond the most superficial information and use less caution when self-disclosing. Although the breadth of topics discussed has expanded, these topics continue to reveal the public self (Taylor & Altman, 1987). The third level of social penetration theory is affective exchange, in which information from the more intermediate layers is shared and interactions become more informal (Taylor & Altman, 1987). People are likely to give some details about their private selves or more intimate information at this stage. Hence, the process of disclosure is casual and spontaneous, and it represents a higher level of commitment and intimacy.

In the context of the study, the application of the theory can be used equally to explain the stages of relationship without concerning the respondent gender. In explaining stages of the theory, the

orientation stage explain that individual are being cautious of not to share information that might ruin the relationship. In this research, even if applied to the first stage, high context culture person might need feedback from others in relating to collectivism, prioritize others than oneself. Finally, the result of person social penetration in context of time may vary meaning that this research shows that the result of some respondents is approachable and sharing their information but some might share only within their close-person range.

2. Methodology

Quantitative research by using a questionnaire in the data collection process was used in this study. A set of questionnaires was distributed among 160 respondents (KUPTM students) using random sampling. Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA KL is a private institution which offer a massive amount of course ranging from foundation studies, undergraduate's programmes, professional studies and postgraduates. A total of 60 questions were included to find the relationship between gender, culture influence and interpersonal communication. The instruments to measure the variables was adopted originally from Oddou and Derr (1999), and Learning Dynamics (2002).

3. Results

The reliability of instruments was done using Cronbach's alpha values that can measure the internal consistency of the instruments used. The following table showed a value of $\alpha = .719$ for cultural influences and $\alpha = .832$ for interpersonal communication.

Table 1 : Cronbach's Alpha for Pre Test Analysis

Variables	Items	α
Culture influences	20	.719
Interpersonal communication	40	.832

Table 2 shown the result of the respondent frequency participated in the study. 67 (41.9%) of the respondents were male while another 93 (58.1%) were female.

Table 2 : Frequency of respondents

Gender	n	%
Male	67	41.9
Female	93	58.1

The following results showed that there is no difference in culture influence based on respondents' gender ($t = -.164$ $p > .05$). This indicates that there is no difference in the context of culture influence between male and female respondents.

Table 3 : T-test analysis based on gender and culture influence

Variable	Gender	n	Mean	St Deviation	t	Sig.
Culture influence	Male	67	3.6806	.43952	-.164	.950
	Female	93	3.6930	.49451		

For relationship between gender and interpersonal communication, the result shown there are no differences between gender and interpersonal communication which mean that gender will not affect interpersonal communication.

Table 4 : T-test analysis based on gender and interpersonal communication

Variable	Gender	n	Mean	St Deviation	t	Sig.
Interpersonal communication	Male	67	3.4940	.45371	-1.16	.642
	Female	93	3.5763	.41772		

In explaining the relationship between culture influence and interpersonal communication. Table 5 shown that there is the relationship between culture influence and interpersonal communication ($r=.585$, $p<0.01$). It shown that the higher people in culture influence, the higher usage of interpersonal communication.

Table 5 : Frequency of respondents

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
r	.585**
n	160
p	.000

r significant at 0.01**

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the finding, this research failed to achieve the objective of the study to examine the differences between gender and culture influence. The hypothesis showed theres no differences between genders towards their culture influence. On top of it, culture influence does not determine by gender but through the individual itself based on the environment they growth with and followed. For example, based on how the parent nurtured them, learning during their primary and secondary school, and even the family status. This finding is similar with the past research as done by Oyserman and Lee (2008), Samovar et al. (2010), and Schneid et al. (2015)

For the objectives of examining the differences between gender and interpersonal communication, the result showed no differences between genders towards their interpersonal communication skill. A few study such as Kunkel and Burlson (1999), and Chodorow (2011) stated that women tend to be more skills in interpersonal communication but the results of this study show differently. This may lead to similar factor affects culture influence which is the environment individuals grow up with but it was more towards self-taught which mean that everything that have being shown by the surrounding and seen by the individuals, depends on themselves whether they learned or not.

As for the relationship between cultural influence and interpersonal communication, it shown that the higher cultural influence of a person, the higher their interpersonal communication. This may happen due to most respondent is Asian and relating to that, most of the Asian being categorized as a high context culture (Samovar & Portal, 2014). Researcher found that, a high context culture person have low level of interpersonal communication due to the factors of religion which affected the way Asian people communicate. Other than that, most Asian culture is connected with politeness and avoiding shows bad expression or emotional. With the high context culture prone to focus on togetherness or collectivism as social focus on community and meaning that in most Asian socialize, prioritize on what others feel first rather than oneself. Thus, higher cultural influence of the person the better their interpersonal communication skill.

Based on the findings and the set of conclusions of this research, here are several recommendations to be considered for future research. The future researcher could widen the number of respondents that are needed for the study as it can assure the researcher that their findings can be more solid and reliable.

It is also advisable for future researchers to target this study not only in one specific college but to another university as well as this study mainly focuses on the students of Kolej University Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur. Furthermore, the future researcher could also use a qualitative methods (interview) to get a deeper understanding to study culture influences and interpersonal communication.

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