

# Emotional Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Communication in the Context of Business Endeavors

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## ABSTRACT

*The focus of this theory is to examine the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in business communications and describes the crucial role it plays in establishing skills that are vital to a firm's global network of operations. As of significance in amplified globalization, organizational environments are becoming enormously composite and considerably more culturally diverse. In reaction to this growing trend, a key question for managers is to establish how to progress organizational consciousness of the thoughts, feeling and emotions that dwell in other dissimilar cultures. By focusing on how gender variety can potentially impact group functioning, we hope to draw awareness to the need for an amplified understanding of the behavioral tendencies and significance orientations that exist among unrelated others and by inference, dissimilar cultures. The findings recommend that EI has a greater impact on the performance level of gender of different groups than that of their homogeneous counterparts. The results are discussed in correlation with cross-cultural competencies and skills that are essential for a multinational enterprise.*

**Keywords:** corporate communications, emotional intelligence, globalization, group dynamics, multinational companies

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural factors have long been known to influence communications, both within and between organizations. Accordingly, as companies expand into foreign markets, many are finding that stylistic tendencies in the home office frequently conflict with those of their global subsidiaries. Not surprisingly, with over 200 nation-states in the world, these cultural differences are continuously emerging and converging all across an organization's global network of operations. Unfortunately, such cultural variations frequently act as an invisible barrier in international business communications, often representing a significant impediment to a successful venture overseas [4]. For that reason, managing stylistic variations between diverse national contexts offers a

significant competitive advantage for firms operating in foreign markets.

## The Cultural Norms of International Business Communication

Some nations' claims will affect public policy on international trade rules. They also might initiate worldwide cultural protectionism for transnational trading. As the voice of cultural rights increases, firms doing business internationally will face other challenges from other dimensions of culture. From a management perspective, it is important for companies to realize that markets today are worldwide and cross-cultural [2].

## Cross-Cultural Issues:

As more and more firms enter the international arena, the challenge of

diversity takes on added significance. It is well understood that a natural byproduct of going international is increased diversity, in this case cultural diversity [3]. Given that there are several other demographic dimensions which contribute to workplace diversity (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, education, etc.), many organizations already have experience in dealing with a heterogeneous workforce. Those organizations, which have promote diversity, are accustomed to working with people who have different customs, social norms and stylistic tendencies. It is reasonable to expect that as these firms expand globally, they are likely to be comfortable working with people who are different from themselves, thereby minimizing communication barriers in their overseas operations. By focusing on group performance across different levels of gender diversity, this investigation seeks to illustrate both a means and the utility of thinking about and describing communication constraints, especially as they relate to exchanges between individuals from a different social context. The jump from diversity based on gender to diversity based on culture, requires a wide-ranging perspective on diversity. The answer to the question of whether or not a gender-based observation and interpretation of performance can provide a basis for drawing inferences about cross-culture exchanges depends, in part at least, on how diversity is understood. The notion of partial replication, for instance, implies that a simple communality of personal meanings evolves among the several actors in a social system, which works to homogenize their world views and facilitate their interactions.

The literature is replete with examples of this kind of homogenization for demographic characteristics that contribute to diversity. For example, a widely accepted framework for explaining social patterns between nations has been proposed by researchers and identified

four separate stylistic dimensions among employees in various countries. Likewise, in the case of gender, numerous studies have drawn attention to a variety of identifiable gender-specific behavioral patterns including entrepreneurial values, leadership styles and achievement motivation, to name a few [5, 6]. Understanding the empirical properties of such context-specific behavior patterns and, by inference, the individual cognitive models on which they are based, provides a conceptual framework for drawing inferences about how other context-specific dimensions operate. Thus, as individuals increase their capacity for empathy within one context, they develop skills that can be readily applied to other contexts.

### **Emotion Intelligence and Culture**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a set of abilities which includes the abilities to perceive emotions in the self and in others, use emotions to facilitate performance, understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and regulate emotions in the self and in others [7, 8, 9]. Moreover, these abilities can be learned, and are likely to be shaped by aspects of a national culture. Thus, just as individuals are socialized to acquire the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role, they can also come to improve their cross-cultural EI, often the result of an increased understanding of the behavioral tendencies and value orientations that exist among other cultures. As an example, in a recent study, cultural empathy was revealed to be a primary determinant of expatriate cross-cultural adjustment [8]. Given that individuals tend to share universally the assumption that everyone else sees the world from the same perspective they do, the challenge of cross-cultural EI is likely to represent an uphill battle. Based on the previous studies conducted, 15 cultural variables should be considered by business professionals when engaged in cross-cultural exchanges. A

critical question, then, is to what extent individuals understand and are empathetic to these distinctions when interacting with someone from a different culture. Clearly, such cultural variations have the potential to impact the quality of decision-making activity at the individual, group and organizational levels. To that end, it is readily apparent that EI could play a vitally important role in our understanding of the relationship between international business communications and firm performance.

EI is culturally oriented, in a culturally diverse environment effectively supplements cultural awareness to predict superior performance through its dimensions of empathy and social skills. With a heightened sensitivity and awareness to the mind-set of culturally diverse groups, obstacles to cross-cultural communication are minimized thereby increasing the probability of success in the world marketplace [13]. As indicated by Cote and Miners, there has been limited research investigating the relationship between emotion intelligence and job performance [1]. Moreover, much of this research has been limited to the exploration of EI's "main effects". Of particular interest in this study, however, is to what extent EI might be considered a moderator in the diversity-group performance relationship. For example, looking at average GPA scores for groups of executive MBA students, researchers found that improvements in EI among diverse groups had a greater impact on group performance than it did for homogeneous groups. Such a finding is likely to have significant implications for the ability of individuals to interact within culturally diverse groups. Accordingly, this study is an attempt to extend previous research on EI, providing a focus that helps to illuminate our understanding about how to leverage these skills and apply them to a firm's global network of operations.

## CONCLUSION

Operating in a different country means that individuals must work with people of diverse cultures and values. Strong pressures for responsiveness to these differences emerge when beliefs and values differ significantly between countries, as they may for historic or cultural reasons. Adjusting to these differences has sometimes proven to be a difficult task. In fact, several studies have suggested that a major reason why international assignments fail is due to an expatriate's inability to adapt to a different cultural environment. In a recent study of cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates in Japan, the personality traits of emotional stability and cultural empathy were shown to have a positive influence on cross-cultural adjustment [14]. Based on the results of the present study, one might speculate that those who are high in EI are also more likely to perceive context-driven emotion patterns and are therefore better able to adapt to these situations than their low EI counterparts [11, 12]. Under these circumstances, EI serves to effectively inoculate oneself against misreading context-related norms and allow for a more effective exchange between members with divergent stylistic tendencies. From a practical point of view, the identification of factors which influence the performance of diverse groups has relevance in a number of applied contexts. Within the realm of international business communications, managing a workforce comprised an eclectic mix of individuals (e.g. different countries, backgrounds, genders, languages, shared experiences, etc.) would be greatly enhanced by an increased comprehension level of the emotional dynamics that is at play. Moreover, in light of the global nature of today's economy, the cross-cultural aspect of EI takes on an added level of significance. Research to advance concepts developed here might take several directions. First, a broader definition of diversity, which takes into

account different national contexts, would strengthen our supposition about the impact of EI on cross-cultural communications. Undoubtedly, additional within-group variations (e.g. race, age, national origin, etc.) could provide a more valid index of the heterogeneous mix that might characterize international exchanges. Second, additional comparative studies would provide a larger sample from which more robust inferences could be drawn [10]. Finally, future research could include other measures of group performance that might do a better job of illuminating competency in business communications. At a minimum, however, the results of this exploratory study open a promising new line of inquiry into the connection between manifestations of context-based norms and the ability to attend to, understand and regulate emotions.

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