

## CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG MIDDLE MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES IN A FOOTWEAR COMPANY IN CHINA

R. DELECTA JENIFER<sup>1</sup> & G. P. RAMAN<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi  
Viswa Mahavidyalaya University, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>2</sup>Controller of Examinations, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi  
Viswa Mahavidyalaya University, Tamil Nadu, India

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Cultural competence is defined as a set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that help organizations and staff work effectively with people of different cultures. Many international business failures have been ascribed to a lack of cross-cultural competence on the part of business practitioners.

**Objective:** This study aimed to assess the cultural competence among middle management employees from Footwear Company in China.

**Methods:** This study design is a cross sectional survey using data collected from May 1 to May 15, 2017 among 30 employees.

**Results:** Out of 30 participants, 60% were aged 36 to 45 years old, 56.7% were females and 73.3% were managers. Around 70% had more than 15 years of work experience and 73.3% had an annual salary ranged from 4 to 10 thousands RMB. The work experience was positively correlated with annual income ( $r=0.402$ ,  $P=0.028$ ) and cultural adaptability ( $r=0.382$ ,  $P=0.037$ ). The annual income was also positively correlated with the determination ( $r=0.420$ ,  $P=0.021$ ), engagement ( $r=0.399$ ,  $P=0.029$ ) and overall cultural competence ( $r=0.363$ ,  $P=0.049$ ).

**Conclusion:** The employees work experience and income were identified as motivated factors and more actions, including employees cultural training should be done in footwear company in China. In addition, the definition of vision and goals of cultural competence and cultural audit could help for a culturally competent organization.

**KEYWORDS:** Business, China Middle Management, Cross Cultural Competence, Employees, Organization

### INTRODUCTION

Cultural competence has been defined by numerous scholars and organizations. Although no universally accepted definition exists, many of the definitions address common themes. Cultural competence is defined as a set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that help organizations and staff work effectively with people of different cultures (Matsumoto and Hwang, 2013). A previous study defined the cultural competence as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together as a system, that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The word "culture" is used, because it implies the integrated pattern of human thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. The word competence is used, because it implies having a capacity to function effectively (Cross et al., 1989). The concept of cultural competence has been

documented in several studies done in the healthcare field. Cultural competence of healthcare professionals (HCPs) is recognized as a strategy to reduce cultural disparities in health care (Bernhard et al., 2015). A previous study done in the United States among medical professional reported that cultural competence training can improve the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of medical trainees for better management of patients (Jernigan et al., 2016). Another study done among nurse found that cross-cultural competence of nurses has a positive impact on nursing intellectual capital (Lin, 2016).

In social work, many international business failures have been ascribed to a lack of cross-cultural competence on the part of business practitioners (Johnson et al., 2006). Cultural tensions caused by cultural similarities and differences among social workers, clients, organizations, and society are multifaceted. Social workers, however, are always at the center of the tensions (Yan, 2008). In current times of great conflict and clashes between different cultures and worldviews, cultural competencies should be a well embedded feature of social work education. The development of cultural competencies through continuing and lifelong learning for social workers should implement in the workplace (Sousa and Almeida, 2016).

China is a unitary sovereign state in East Asia and the world's most populous country, with a population of over 1.381 billion and a large diversity of culture. A study done in 2009 in China pointed out the cultural differences and suggested that the success of cross-cultural communication is possible through the foreign culture acquisition and the ways of culture training (Dong, 2009). Therefore, it is important for all companies to integrate the cross cultural training for better management of their human resource. This study aimed to assess the cultural competence among middle management employees from Footwear Company in China.

## **METHODS**

### **Study Design, Setting, and Population**

This study design is a cross sectional survey using data collected from Footwear Company in China. The population of this study were employees of Footwear Company in China. All of the employees were adults aged 25 years and more. This study recruited 30 employees. Participants were eligible for inclusion in the study if they are employees from the same company. Participants were excluded if they did not meet the inclusion criteria

### **Instruments Of Study**

This study used previous study (Thornson, 2010) instruments to assess the cross cultural competence among employees from a Footwear Company in China. The instruments of this study include three parts such as (i) participants' demographic characteristics; (ii) human resource development practices and (iii) the cross cultural competence assessment. Part 1 is related to subject's socio demographic background, including gender, age, education, profession, department, experience in the work, annual income. Part 2 assessed the human resource development (HRD) practices of the footwear company through one item using like scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree). Total score of human resource development (HRD) practices ranges from 1 to 5. The higher score means better practices related to human resource development. Part 3 explored the cross cultural competence assessment. This part has seven subgroups such as cultural adaptability, determination, tolerance of uncertainty, self-presentation, mission focus, engagement and lie scale. The cultural adaptability, determination, self-presentation, mission focus, engagement and lie scale was assessed through 18 items, 6 items, 4 items, 7 items, 11 items and 5 items respectively, and using the following like scale design (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree). While a reverse coding was

used for tolerance of uncertainty with 11 items (5=strongly disagree, 4=disagree, 3= neutral, 2=agree, and 1=strongly agree). The minimum and maximum scores of cultural adaptability, determination, self-presentation, mission focus, engagement and lie scale were 18-90; 6-30; 4-20; 7-35; 11-55 and 5-25 respectively. The higher score means better cultural adaptability, determination, self-presentation, mission focus, engagement and being more honest. In terms of tolerance of uncertainty, the minimum and maximum scores were 11 and 55. A higher score means higher intolerance of uncertainty.

### **Data Collection Plan**

Face to face interviews were conducted in English. The data collections were made on the basis of our study sample, but also with workers agreement. The questionnaire was submitted in an interview format to workers after explaining the objectives of the survey. Data were collected by well-trained managers. At the end of each interview the questionnaire was revised to ensure that all items completed. The data were then compiled by the investigator for results analysis. Interviews were conducted from May 1 to May 15, 2017 in China

### **Data analysis**

The SPSS (version 22.0) (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used for data analyses. The data analysis included some descriptive statistics to establish the frequency, range, mean, and standard deviation of demographic factors and others variables. Range, mean, and standard deviation were used for continuous variables. Percentage and frequency were used for categorical variables. Correlation test was used to determine the relationship between continuous variables. The significance level considered was set at  $P < 0.05$ .

## **RESULTS**

### **Participants' Socio-Demographics**

Out of 30 participants, 60% were aged 36 to 45 years old and 56.7% were females. In terms of education level, 66.7% had high school level, 10% hold a diploma and 23.3% had a bachelor degree. The employees worked in different departments. Around 33% worked in manufacturing, service, 40% worked in the administrative office and the remained employees were from technical service (10%), purchase (6.7%), corporate service (6.7%) and human resource office (3.3%). All of the employees were managers. Around one quarter were senior managers (26.7%) while others as managers were around 73.3%. Regarding their work experience, 30% had 9 to 15 years work experience and 70% had more than 15 years of work experience. In terms of the annual income, around 73.3% had a salary ranged from 4 to 10 thousands RMB. The participants' socio-demographics characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Participants Socio-Demographics Characteristics, n=30**

	Frequency	Percentage		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age (Years )</b>			<b>Department</b>		
25-35	8	26.7	Manufacturing	10	33.3
36-45	18	60	Technical Service	3	10
46-60	4	13.3	Human Resource	1	3.3
<b>Sex</b>			Administration	12	40
Male	13	43.3	Purchase	2	6.7
Female	17	56.7	Corporate social	2	6.7
<b>Education</b>			<b>Work experience (years, M±SD)</b>	18.9±6.1	
High School	20	66.7	15-Sep	9	30
Diploma	3	10	16-20	10	33.3
Bachelor	7	23.3	21-35	11	36.7
<b>Profession</b>			<b>Income (x thousands RMB, M±SD)*</b>	9.8±5.5	
Senior Manger	8	26.7	10-Apr	22	73.3
Junior Manager	22	73.3	25-Nov	8	26.7

### Mean Score of Cross Cultural Competence Variables

The mean scores of cross cultural competence variables were reported in table 2. The mean score of human resource development, cultural adaptability, determination, tolerance of uncertainty, self-presentation, mission focus, engagement and lie scale was 4.33 (0.66; 43.70 (3.64; 20.00 (2.97; 25.30 (4.29; 10.60 (2.28; 27.13 (2.86; 38.10 (2.82 and 12.83 (2.43 respectively. The total score of cross cultural competence ranged from 153 to 192 with a mean score as 177.67 (9.81. )

**Table 2: Mean Score of Cross Cultural Competence Variables**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Human resource development	2	5	4.33	0.66
Cultural Adaptability	36	51	43.7	3.64
Determination	14	25	20	2.97
Tolerance of Uncertainty	18	36	25.3	4.29
Self-Presentation	6	15	10.6	2.28
Mission Focus	23	35	27.13	2.86
Engagement	33	45	38.1	2.82
Lie scale	7	17	12.83	2.43
Cross Cultural Competence	153	192	177.67	9.81
1 RMB = 0.1452011035 USD				

### Correlations between Demographics Factors and Cross Cultural Competences Variables

Several correlations were observed between demographics and cross cultural competence variables (Table 3). The work experience was positively correlated with annual income ( $r=0.402$ ,  $P=0.028$ ) and cultural adaptability ( $r=0.382$ ,  $P=0.037$ ). The annual income was also positively correlated with the determination ( $r=0.420$ ,  $P=0.021$ ), engagement ( $r=0.399$ ,  $P=0.029$ ) and overall cultural competence ( $r=0.363$ ,  $P=0.049$ ). Except tolerance of uncertainty and self-presentation, positive correlation was observed between cross-cultural competences variables. A negative correlation ( $r=-0.392$ ,  $P=0.032$ ) was observed between the determination and tolerance of uncertainty. A similarity as a negative correlation was observed between the engagement and tolerance of uncertainty ( $r=-0.450$ ,  $P=0.013$ ). In addition, a negative correlation was observed between self-presentation and lie scale ( $r=-0.459$ ,  $P=0.011$ ).

**Table 3: Correlations between Demographics and Outcomes Variables**

Work experience	Annual Income#	Human resource development	Cultural Adaptability	Determination	Tolerance of Uncertainty	Self-Presentation	Mission Focus	Engagement	Lie Scale	Cross Cultural Competence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1	1										
2	.402*	1									
3	0.114	0.346	1								
4	.382*	0.338	0.287	1							
5	0.063	.420*	0.316	0.338	1						
6	-0.31	-0.338	-0.194	-0.261	-.392*	1					
7	-0.342	0.186	0.137	0.118	.407*	-0.037	1				
8	0.145	0.176	0.34	.424*	.600***	-0.203	0.267	1			
9	0.029	.399*	0.333	.473**	.687***	-.450*	.429*	.455*	1		
10	0.325	0.198	-0.221	0.049	0.033	-0.114	-.459*	-0.199	0.053	1	
11	0.077	.363*	0.289	.658***	.732***	-0.003	.471**	.686***	.720***	0.08	1

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001, #1 RMB = 0.1452011035 USD

**DISCUSSIONS**

The cross-cultural competence is not an end in itself, but is a set of variables that contribute to intercultural effectiveness. This study explores the impact of participants’ demographic characteristics in promoting employees’ cross-cultural competence (CCC) development in international business. As in the previous study (Barrera, 2010), the findings of this study could not be generalized to other employees in this company. An assessment of cross-cultural competence was an initial step to understanding where the cross-cultural competence levels could be improved for the better management of business in Footwear Company. This study reported that a positive correlation was observed between the work experience and cultural adaptability. A previous study done with the main goal to assess the impact of business study abroad programs on cultural awareness and personal development observed a similarity with our study. The previous study reported that personal development or experience was associated with cultural awareness (Black and Duhon, 2006). Another previous study supported our findings and reported that of the skills, knowledge and attributes have been identified as necessary for cultural competencies (Johnson et al, 2006). The work experience required the improvement of skills by getting more knowledge with a positive attitude. In the field of international business management, the concept of cross-cultural competence is still viewed as the skill or ability of providing effective cross-cultural interactions and the ability of the business to function effectively in another culture (Nana, 2016). In this study, the participant’s income was also positively correlated with their determination, engagement and the acquisition of cultural competence. Managers play an important role in organizations. The link between income and workers’ determination was reported in previous study done among managers in which they found a significant association between income as work motivation and burn out or intention to leave (Qureshi, 2013). A previous study identified a measurable link between personal developmental experiences such as employee income or skills and work performance (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012). The developmental cross-cultural experiences occur through both work-related and non-work activities (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012). This study pointed out also a positive link between cross cultural competence with cultural adaptability, determination, mission focus and engagement. The cultural competence seems to be a good approach for the improvement of business in the company. A similarity was found in different field where the findings of study observed that providers and staff with greater cultural competence and preparedness have more positive expectations of community health worker interventions to reduce health care disparities (Mobula et al., 2015).

## CONCLUSIONS

The cross cultural competencies were pointed out as a best approach or a strategy to reduce the disparities among employees and improve the company outcomes. The employees work experience and income were identified as motivated factors for the cross cultural competencies. Based on these findings, more interventions or actions, including employees cultural training should be done in business industries as Footwear Company in China. In addition, to enhance the cultural competence, each business industry should define their vision and goals for cultural competence. Furthermore, a cultural audit, including nationality, native language, race, religion or beliefs, educational level and work performance should be done to build a culturally competent organization.

## REFERENCES

1. Barrera JC. An Examination of Cross Cultural Competence in International Business: The Case of the Subsidiaries. *International Business & Economics Research Journal* 2010, 9 (1): 41-55
2. Bernhard G, Knibbe RA2, von Wolff A1, Dingoyan D1, Schulz H1, Mösko M. Development and Psychometric Evaluation of an Instrument to Assess Cross-Cultural Competence of Health Care Professionals (CCCHP). *PLoS One*. 2015 Dec 7;10 (12): e0144049. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0144049. eCollection 2015.
3. Black HT, Duhon DL. Assessing the Impact of Business Study Abroad Programs on Cultural Awareness and Personal Development. *Journal of Education for Business*, 2006, v81 n3 p140-144
4. Caligiuri P, Tarique I. Dynamic cross-cultural competencies and global leadership effectiveness. *Journal of World Business* 2012, doi:10.1016/j.jwb.2012.01.014
5. Cross TL, Bazron BJ, Dennis KW, IsaacsMR. *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care: Vol I*. Washington, DC: National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Georgetown University Child Development Center; 1989.
6. Dong X. Cultural Differences and Cultivation of Cross-cultural Communicative Competence in Chinese FLT. *International Education Studies* 2009 2 (2): 22-25
7. Jernigan VB, Hearod JB, Tran K, Norris KC, Buchwald D. An Examination of Cultural Competence Training in US Medical Education Guided by the Tool for Assessing Cultural Competence Training. *J Health Dispar Res Pract*. 2016 Fall; 9 (3): 150-167.
8. Johnson JP, Lenartowicz T, Salvador A. Cross-cultural Competence in International Business: Toward a Definition and a Model. *Journal of International Business Studies* 2006, 37 (4): pp. 525-543
9. Matsumoto D, Hwang HC. Assessing Cross-Cultural Competence: A Review of Available Tests. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2013, 44 (6) 849–873
10. Lin HC. Impact of nurses' cross-cultural competence on nursing intellectual capital from a social cognitive theory perspective. *J Adv Nurs*. 2016 May; 72 (5): 1144-54. doi: 10.1111/jan.12901. Epub 2016 Jan 20.
11. Mobula, L. M., Okoye, M. T., Ebony Boulware, L., Carson, K. A., Marsteller, J. A., & Cooper, L. A. Cultural competence and perceptions of community health workers' effectiveness for reducing health care disparities. *Journal of Primary Care and Community Health*, 2015, 6 (1), 10-15.

12. Nana OB. Discourse Analysis of Cross-Cultural Competencies in International Business Management. European Scientific Journal August 2016 edition vol.12, No.22 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431
13. Qureshi S. The Relationship between Work Motivation, Burnout and Intention to Leave for the Top Level Managers of Garment Industry (A Case Study of Indian Garment Industry). Journal of Human Resource Studies 2013, 3 (4) 128-143
14. Sousa P, Almeida JL. Culturally sensitive social work: promoting cultural competence. European Journal of Social Work 2016, 19 (4) 537-555
15. Yan MC. Exploring cultural tensions in cross-cultural social work practice. Soc Work. 2008 Oct; 53 (4): 317-28.

