Study the Effect of Intercultural Communication Competence on Academic Achievement and Career Success of Students

Sahar Nikmaram,
Ph.D. Student in Media Management, International University of Imam Reza
Masood Kousari
Associate Professor of Social Communications, Faculty of social science, Tehran University

Abstract
There is consensus about it that in culturally diverse society like our country, success in achieving the goals pre-determined for a person depends on understanding the cultures and subcultures, the differences and the effect of these differences on relationships between individuals. In this regard, it is attempted to answer the question specifically whether intercultural communication competence of individuals affect the academic success and their career success. This study is descriptive-comparative. Accordingly, the data was collected using simple random sampling among master's and PhD students of Imam Reza University and then analyzed using PLS software. The results show that intercultural communication competence has a direct effect on students' academic achievement. As well as, the results show that intercultural communication competence has a direct effect on career success of students. It is also showed that student's academic achievement does not affect their career success which its reason searched in disaffiliation between the field of study and the students’ job.
Key words: Intercultural Communication Competence; Subjective Career Success; Academic Achievement.

Introduction
Today's, organizations provide their goods and raw materials easily from other organizations and even other countries and the only resource that is not tradable in its ideal form easily is skilled and talented workforce. If the evaluation and perception of this skilled power from career life is positive and desirable, it may also be useful for organization (Mohebbat, Nissi, Arshadi, 2010, 1). Academic success is also one of the common objectives between individuals and organizations. What is, rapidly revealing is that success in achieving common goals depends on improving the understanding of cultures, their differences and the effects of these differences on communications. Often when participants have little experiences from traveling or have no experience in this field and are from similar cultural backgrounds, they are unaware of the effects of their culture on their views. Cage Painting metaphor is created to clarify the meaning of these effects (Alagic and Nagata, 2009, 40). Intercultural communication competence is a relatively new issue that can affect academic achievement and career success of individual, particularly in multicultural environments. This issue doubles the importance of subject for a multi-ethnic country and with diverse subcultures, like our country. The presence and life of different ethnic groups such as Persians, Turks, Kurds, Baluchis, Turkmens, Arabs, Lors together and speaking in different languages and different accents in some languages is other aspect of cultural diversity in today's Iran. However, it seems still this society does not have required knowledge and multicultural values (Sadeghi, 2013, 112). Therefore, in this study, it is tried to investigate the relationship between these three variables and their effect on each other.

Intercultural Communication Competence
The existence of different groups: religious, ethnic in the country- according to their neighbors with similar groups in neighboring countries reveals the importance of intercultural communication more than ever. Hence, neglect or negligence in this regard can have dire consequences in terms of political and cultural. (Razi, 1998, 163) Intercultural competence is knowledge and ability of individual in successful dealing
with intercultural encounters. Such knowledge and ability are essential tools in our society, because people are widely involved in cultural change through their everyday interactions. People who develop their sensitivity and knowledge about cultures other than their own culture, over time, gain the essential knowledge, attitudes and skills for effective communication in various intercultural encounters. Therefore, cultural sensitivity is associated with more potential to enable intercultural competence. This means that a person culturally is sensitive and has the ability of identifying, knowledge, respect and consideration of cultural differences and is considered culturally competent (Matveev and Merz, 2014, 124) The definition of intercultural competence is a complex task. There is readiness of people to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures at the heart of intercultural competence (Sinicrope et al., 2012, 4). As a result, understanding culture is an integral element of intercultural competence. Although there is no consensus on a definition for intercultural competence, but there is common axis that are appearing from the research literature (Moeller and Nugent, 2014, 3). Communications competence is generally specified as communicative behavior that is both effective and appropriate. A competent communicator in his ability is appropriate to achieve its objectives and to provide a behavior that in a given situation is accepted expectedly. Needless to say that behavior accepted and expected depends on communication/culture content and therefore, these factors to be considered when defining the competence of communication for the fields of intercultural is expanded (Arsaratnam, 2009, 1) According to Lustig and Koester, intercultural communication competence refers to a process of text, exchange, interpretation and symbolic where from different cultures create shared meanings or at least try to create these common meanings (Laopongharn and Sercombe, 2009, 60). Intercultural communication competence is the thinking, recognizing differences, internalizing diverse cultural sets, managing experiences appropriately and creating effective communication in the most appropriate way with people from different cultures in intercultural environment. Intercultural communication competence affects intercultural interactions where people deserve better intercultural communication provide greater ability to learn foreign languages and norms or values of other cultures. They are able to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Gunesht and Ahmad, 2015, 54) Matins Gibson argues that if cultural information not to be considered as part of the communications competence, it may not happen perfect relationship (Nakagawa, 2014, 13). Individuals and groups who show intercultural competence in a given situation can find "a common goal through communication bilateral coordinated among cultures and languages" (Salisbury, 2011, 26). Intercultural communication competence by having the right mindset, skill and sensitivity when required is dealing with management of intercultural situations (Gunesht and Ahmad, 2015, 52) Chen and Starosta argue that intercultural competence needs appropriate and effective interaction with people who have multi-cultural identities. Therefore, intercultural competence is a process of cultural learning and included behavioral, effective and cognitive learning processes (Matveev and Merz, 2014, 124) and there is general consensus that can be specified with the three dimensions (Arsaratnam, 2009, 1).

**Cognitive dimension:** Understanding the thinking, attitudes and people's interpretations. Cognitive dimension seems to play a particularly important role in intercultural competency (Matveev Merz, 2014, 124).

**Effective dimension:** Effective dimension is a person's ability to connect emotionally with people from a different culture (Arsaratnam, 2009, 3).

**Behavioral dimension:** It is behavior about action and social exchange. Behavior is a major component of intercultural competence (Mato and Merz, 2014, 124). Behavioral dimension is to assess an individual's ability to engage in behaviors (such as search (track) intention of interact with people from other cultures, adapting behaviors or changing communication model according to other cultures and conflict in friendships with people from other cultures) that is related with intercultural competence as well as interpersonal competence. (Arsaratnam, 2009, 3) Accordingly, Byram considers three dimensions of intercultural communication competence as the following: (knowledge, attitudes of intercultural), (skills to interpret and retell and skills of discovery and interaction) and (basic cultural awareness).

- **Knowledge:** the degree which individual understands his own culture and also the culture of the world.
- **Skills to interpret and retell:** the purpose is to mediate the conflicting values in an intercultural content.
• Skills of discovery and interaction: skills of discovery and interaction can be promoted with interaction with cultural parties.
• Intercultural attitudes: curiosity and openness of intercultural attitudes are important.
• Basic cultural awareness: the ability to evaluate basically ((views, actions, products) in their own culture and other cultures). Intercultural competent spokesman should be able to evaluate cultural differences between one's culture and other cultures by comparing. So determining intercultural competence with a general measure is unlikely because it included a variety of intercultural communication competence. (Wu, 2013, 2) According to research of Lustig and Koester, most people not take care of other ethnic backgrounds from different cultures and tend to internalize their own behavioral norms that are related with proper cultural aspects (of their choice). So, interactions to reduce any possible conflict due to lack of perceived similarities in the behavioral norms are necessary. People with less intercultural communication competence likely feel less comfortable and provide weak correspondence in the face of intercultural services compared to those with higher levels of competence intercultural communication (Gunesh and Ahmad, 2015, 54).
A number of practical reasons for the need for intercultural communication competence have been noted that include:
• The need for cross-cultural communication competence in commerce and tourism as a precondition for success in these areas;
• Readiness to live, work and travel in other countries;
• Recognition of change in many societies towards multicultural communities;
• More interesting and more fun of lessons;
• And motivate students by providing real life situations (Lazar, 2003, 20).
Researchers have found that diversity of experiences and activities of university such as: life on campus, groups of friends from different races, ethnic workshops, leadership training, etc., can have a positive effect on intercultural competence (Salsebry, 2011, 33) and in this way affect academic and career success of people.

Career Success
Career success is the favorite subject of individuals and organizations. Sense of career success is related with life satisfaction and mental health of individuals and also largely consistent with organizational success. Dee and Alen mention that the only use of objective criteria to determine the success can be caused ignorance and neglect of important information. For example, a group of researchers found that managers who were successful in terms of status and income not had sense of accomplishment or pride from their progresses. Investigating assessment of the individuals from job and career successes is very important and essential, because the perceptions affect their progress and career development (Mohabat, Nissi, Arshadi, 2010, p. 6). Although in the past, a career traditionally has been limited on progress in the organizational hierarchy; today its focus is on the mental and the objective aspects. In addition, in the careers without border, people not just try to climb the ladder but they try for life career that included personal and professional life satisfaction. Despite the fact that in career literature not found a common ground to define and operate career success, objective / subjective dichotomy is widely accepted in career literature. (Cesinger, 2011, 3) The importance of career success for individuals and organizations is well documented, and accordingly, it has attracted the interest of researchers of career and managerial actors. There are several definitions of the concept. The career success is progresses or consequences related to work and positive psychological that person as a result of work experiences achieves it (Abele and Spurk, 2009, 804), career success is the outcome of experiences of person career and may be defined as full implications of desirable work in any part of the work experience of person over time (Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom, 2005, 179). Thus, career success is the positive accumulated work and psychological consequences that are derived from business or individual experiences. As noted earlier, researchers have proposed two kinds of career success: subjective career success and objective career success. Objective career success is specified by verifiable indicators, measurable and visible, such as: salary, promotion, management level and as it. In
contrast, subjective career success refers to the reaction of people to experiences of the obvious career. Subjective career success is the understanding of people about how much they have achieved their career goals based on an assessment from past career experiences and predicting career-related improvements using their own criteria. (Pan and Zhou, 2015, 47) Deeper understanding and a more complete picture of career success can be created by quality identification of what people define in their own concept from outstanding and common career success. The literature suggests that personal concepts of career success for some people may be similarly linked with both internal and external standards. (Lee, Lirio and Karakas, 2006) Depending on the standard of comparison i.e. self in front of others, subjective success can be conceptualized as subjective success of self-referral or as subjective success of other-referral. In determining the subjective success of self-referral, individual compares his career with standards and personal aspirations. Subjective career success of self-referral is usually measured as a satisfying career or job satisfaction. To determine the success of other-referral, individual compares his career with an international standard for example a group of reference or a person of reference. (Abele and Spurk, 2009, 804)Objective success can be a basis for subjective assessment from success. Many writers express this effect and some even assume that the subjective perception from success is the secondary product of objective success (Abele and Spurk, 2009, 804). In contrast to this view, the other view states that the subjective experience from success leads to more objective success. (Abele and Spurk, 2009, 805)

Academic Achievements
Academic achievement depends on many factors such as personal, social, educational and psychological factors. Review these factors and determine the contribution of each in academic achievement leads to determine ways to identify factors affecting academic achievement and academic failure. (Raesiyon et al., 2014, 238) Career success can partly be associated with academic achievement. The issue of success or failure in the education is the most important concerns of any educational system. Academic achievement in every society reflects the educational system's success in targeting and focusing on the individual needs. So the education system can be efficient and successful when academic achievement of students in different courses has the largest and highest level (Tamannaiyfar and Gandomi, 2011, 16) In other words, community and specially education systems are interested and concerned to the fate of individual, growth and his successful development and position in the community and expect the person to be developed in various aspects, including cognitive dimensions and skill and ability, as well as the personality dimensions, emotional and behavioral. (Tamannaiyfar, Salami Mohammad Abadi, Dashblanazadeh, 2011, 47) Thus, identifying factors and variables influencing the academic achievement of students is very important. Academic achievement depends on a set of complex factors that breakdown and examination of each of these factors requires a lot of investigations.

Intercultural communication competence, academic achievement and career success
Increasingly, employers consider intercultural communication competence as a valuable skill, especially for graduates and leadership and management roles (Carroll, 2014, 177). To overcome intercultural challenges, students try to be adapted to new social cultural environment and communication is the central axis of this process of compliance (Hong, Sariyo and Kondow, 2015) Due to today's turbulent and competitive environment, many organizations are multicultural. Intercultural communication competence is the most important tool that can be used to deal effectively with multicultural situations. This competency helps to be expressed with rapid and accurate understanding of the various cultural components, behavioral fit with each of them. On the one hand, globalization has made vital the intercultural communication competence. Contact with other cultures specifies business, class and community. (Gitimu, 2010, 2) Intercultural communication competence in any field is an important career, therefore, knowledge of how to communicate with other cultures should be a skill that to be focused and emphasized. (Gitimu, 2010, 2) Changing world of work requires that the multicultural competence to be considered as a full feature of career development. In order to equip young people for future work environment, career planning should be included preparedness to work with people from other cultures and other countries (Arthur, 2000, 213).
Penbek and colleagues in a study have investigated related literature related to the ICC and have provided the following model. (Penbek, 2009, 3)

Based on what was said, we explain the research hypotheses as follows:
- Intercultural communication competence affects career success of students.
- Intercultural communication competence affects academic achievement of students.
- Academic achievement affects their career success.

Thus, the theoretical framework of the study is shown as follows:

Research Methodology
In this descriptive-comparative study, master and PhD students of University of Imam Reza (AS) have been considered as a population. By increasing employment opportunity in national and international collections, PhD students have to be prepared for international work on the basis of their professional expertise. Learning language alone cannot be sufficient in intercultural communication and must be equipped with competence beyond it. Accordingly, in this study, this group was considered as the research population. The population was 300 people that using the formula of limited sampling, sample size was 168 people, but to increase the generalizability, 180 questionnaires were distributed. Among them, 170 questionnaires were collected and analyzed.

\[ n = \frac{Nz^2pq}{z^2pq + (N-1)d^2} = \frac{300*1.96*0.5}{(1.96*0.5) + (2.99*0.0025)} = 167.7342 \]

The sample size of this research at confidence level 95% and accuracy of 5% is calculated. Data collection for variable of intercultural communication competence was done using the questionnaire of Arasaratnam containing 15 items. Also for measuring variable of career success, Pan and Zhou questionnaire was used containing 10 items. Often in different studies to measure the academic achievement, the indicator of
average is used, in this study average of different academic levels were used. Eventually a 29-item questionnaire was developed and distributed among master's and PhD students. In this study, structural equation modeling technique is used to analyze structural relationships. This technique is built based on two patterns of measuring and structure. Measurement pattern refers to the way of collection of measuring variables in theoretical framework, which means that it investigates the issues related to validity and reliability of structures. The structural pattern also shows the comparative relationships between the structures (latent variables) and the power of explaining them. Investigating reliability of research tool: To assess the reliability of questionnaire, composite reliability coefficients (CR> .7) and Cronbach's alpha (Alpha > .7) is used, that in the case of appropriateness of these coefficients can be said that research questionnaire is reliable. The results of assessing the reliability of the questionnaire are in table 1. As evidenced the results indicate that research tool is reliable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Investigating reliability of research tool</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural communication competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career success</td>
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<tr>
<td>academic achievement</td>
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Investigating the total fit of the path analysis model: to calculate the index of model fit in the model PLS, can be used the following formula:

$$GoF = \sqrt{\text{communality} \times R^2}$$

In PLS model that is based on the variance, the geometric mean of the two indices as an indicator of goodness of total fit of the model is used. To perform this test, two indicators are used 1. Mean of cumulative index and 2. The mean of square of the correlation coefficients between structures. If the value GoF is equal to or greater than 0.36, it can be said that the model is meaningful and acceptable totally. In the model of research, this value is calculated as follows:

$$GoF = \sqrt{0.39 \times 0.682} = 0.515$$

Since the amount of GoF is equal to 0.515, it can be said that the model totally has model fit. Figure 1 shows the coefficients of paths in research model in standard mode. In standard mode, numerical comparison of model coefficients is possible.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 3. The coefficients of the research model in standard mode

Figure 3 shows the significance of paths in path analysis. In significant mode at 95% can be made decision based on amount of T on the significance of the coefficients of paths. If the value of T is larger than 1.96, it is significant, otherwise it is not significant.
Based on the path analysis in the mode of standardized coefficients and significance of hypotheses in Table 2 have been studied.

Table 2. Investigating hypotheses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path coefficient</th>
<th>t statistic</th>
<th>Test result</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural communication competence affects career success of students.</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural communication competence affects academic achievement of students.</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement affects their career success.</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of paying attention to the values obtained, it can be concluded that in 95% considering that the t-statistic is larger than 1.96, intercultural communication competence directly affects career success and academic achievement of students. Also according to the coefficient obtained from the relationship between academic achievement and career success (0.19) as well as t-statistic related them (1.83) at 95 percent, it can be concluded that academic achievement of students is not effective in their career success and because the t-statistic is less than 1.96 so this coefficient is not significant.

Conclusion

Iran is a multi-ethnic country with diverse cultures for kinds of ethnicities that these people from different cultures on campus and work environment together interact with each other. University is an environment where people from diverse cultures accept to continue studying. In the interaction between students from different cultures, the importance of intercultural communication competence is appeared more than ever. Thus, in this study attempted to examine the effect of intercultural communication competence on career success and academic achievement of students as well. According to the results of structural equation modeling and focus on values obtained, it can be concluded that at 95%, considering that the amount of t-statistic was obtained greater than 1.96, intercultural communication competence directly affects career success and academic achievement of students. Also according to the coefficient derived from the relationship between academic achievement and career success (0.19) and t-statistics related to them (1.83) at 95 percent, it can be concluded that academic achievement of students is not effective in the success of career because t-statistic is less than 1.96 so this factor is not significant. Therefore, the results of research indicate that academic achievement has no direct effect on their career success that seems that the reason for this is disconnect between work and the educational field of students. Considering the direct effect of intercultural communication competence on career success and academic achievement of students, the importance of this competence is clear and proven. In this regard, universities and institutions should do the necessary measures to strengthen the competence among students. Following this, students will be more successful in the workplace using this competence and very conducive environment for people of different cultures in our country will be created.
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