Organizational communication in Malaysia organizations

Incorporating cultural values in communication scale

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Abstract

Purpose – Research on organizational communication has shown significant associations with many important outcomes. Although these researches are appealing, there have been criticisms and suggestions for improvement of the organizational communication scales, developed in Western organization settings, to make them applicable to collectivist culture-based organizations. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to access the organizational communication construct through the development and validation of an organizational communication measure for Malaysian organizations.

Design/methodology/approach – Item analysis for Malaysian organizational communication scale involves survey of 250 university employees, followed by construct and criterion-related validation using 346 employees, representing three organizations in Malaysia, resulting in a Malaysian organizational communication scale.

Findings – Through the validation of a Malaysian organizational communication measure, support was found for the proposition that Malaysian organizations are composed of information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, and communication structure, as well as new dimensions, namely, the group bond and respect.

Research limitations/implications – One of the weaknesses of the study was the size of sample used for the focus group. Another weakness was the organizations involved in the validation segment of the study, which were service-related organizations. Finally, current investigations limit themselves to job satisfaction. These results have to be handled carefully.

Practical implications – The paper shows that group bond and mutual respect are salient work relationships in Malaysian organizations.

Originality/value – The emergence of group bond and respect dimensions in the Malaysian organizational communication construct is consistent with the examination of organizational behavior.

Keywords Malaysia, Organizations, Corporate communications, Employees communications, Organizational communication, Communication structure, Communication climate, Scale development

Paper type Research paper

One of the most difficult challenges for the field of organizational communication is the applying of theories and models developed in one part of the world and to understand a phenomenon that occurs in another part of the world. Hofstede (2003) and House *et al.* (2004) believe that management theories are not universal and that they have been

influenced by national culture. Thus, culture has an important influence on approaches to managing people especially in the way managers behave and communicate towards their subordinates (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2009; Asma and Lim, 2001; Gupta *et al.*, 2002; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; House *et al.*, 2004; Lim, 2001; Vipin *et al.*, 2002). Studies indicate that successful management depends heavily on ways in which managers adapt to the local culture and work situation. Thus, knowledge of national culture is important, particularly on the organizational communication setting because it gives a clear picture about how overall organizational communicative behavior might be effective (Yu and Miller, 2003). To date however, this aspect has received little attention in the organizational communication literature (Denison *et al.*, 2004). In particular, cross-cultural researchers have suggested that scholars seek a deeper understanding regarding the applicability of organizational concepts and constructs in specific cultural context (see Bosch *et al.*, 2004).

Research has shown significant associations between organizational communication and many important outcomes. For example, organizational communication is positively correlated to organizational commitment (Varona, 1996), job satisfaction and organizational climate satisfaction (Muchinsky, 1977; Mueller and Lee, 2002). Even so, studies on organizational communication constructs usually only offer the overall results rather than the applicability of the organizational communication's specific dimensions (Koring and de Jong, 2007; Gray and Laidlaw, 2004). Studies have also revealed that certain dimensions of organizational communication are not applicable in non-western organizational context. For example, a study of Guatemalan organizations indicated that not all the dimensions of organizational communication constructs were applicable to Guatemalan organizations (Varona, 1996). Similar situations were also found in Malaysian organizations in which dimensions of communication patterns in supervisor-subordinate relationships differed extensively in Malaysian organization when compared to US (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2007). Another study in Malaysian organizations by Nasrudin *et al.* (2006), indicated that organizational structure and climate constructs failed to be replicated in Malaysian organization settings. These findings point to the need for more valid and reliable measures of organizational communication in Malaysian organization settings. As noted by Schaffer and Riordan (2003) this problem exists due to certain cultural values contexts that are not incorporated in the existing construct.

Thus, the main purpose of this current research is to assess organizational communication constructs in Malaysian organization. This is accomplished by attempting to develop and validate a psychometrically sound measure for organizational communication scale in Malaysian organization that incorporates Malaysia's cultural values. We will contribute to the literature in two ways. First, we address cultural conditions as a necessary next step to extend our understanding about organizational communication constructs. Specifically, whereas previous researchers have suggested specific organizational communication dimensions, we contend that not all of these dimensions are applicable to non-western organization; thus new organizational communication dimensions might emerge in non-western context. Second, this study is probably the first to test psychometrically, to what extent organizational communication concepts which are developed in western setting are applicable in a collectivist culture setting such as in Malaysia.

Review of literature

Existing organizational communication constructs

Existing organizational communication instruments are based on western context and these instruments tend to measure the overall organizational communication effectiveness. The instruments are from Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) who provided the organizational communication questionnaire (OCQ), Wiio and Helsila (1974) who publicized the LTT communication audit questionnaire (LTT), Downs and Hazen who developed the communication satisfaction questionnaire (CSQ), and Goldhaber and Rogers (1979) who developed communication audit survey questionnaire (CAS).

Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) indicated that the OCQ was designed to compare communication across organizations. The dimensions selected to measure communication include 13 communication variables and three communication-related variables. The communication variables are: desire for interaction, directionality upward, directionality downward, directionality lateral, accuracy, summarization frequency, gate keeping, overload, satisfaction, and the four modalities of written, face-to-face, telephone, and other channels of communication. The communication-related variables are: trust in superior, influence of superior, and mobility aspirations.

The CSQ, developed by Downs and Hazen (1977), consists of 51 questions in which four of the items focus on the end-product variables of employee satisfaction and productivity. Two open-ended questions ask respondents to comment on the changes needed to improve their job satisfaction and productivity. Five items deal with demographic information while the remaining 40 questions, divided into eight dimensions, are the heart and soul of CSQ, and under the grid of the theoretical foundation of communication satisfaction construct.

The organizational communication scholars of the International Communication Association originally developed the ICA audit questionnaire to assess communication systems in organizations. The ICA audit questionnaire consists of 122 items in 13 dimensions, which are intended to measure respondents' attitudes and perceptions about communication sources, messages, channels, and receiver. The OCA questionnaire was developed by Osmo A. Wiio and his colleagues at the Helsinki Research Institute; it measures 12 dimension and 76 items of communication in organizational contexts. Table I summarizes the dimensions of organizational communication derived from the literature.

Furthermore, from the above discussion, the following characteristics are evident across the existing organizational communication constructs: communication climate; information flow; message characteristics; and communication structure. However, these studies did not investigate or interpret the cultural norms and values in the development of organizational communication constructs. Based on this evidence therefore, it is salient to include cultural values in organizational communication construct, especially in a collectivist context organization.

Within the framework of existing organizational communication on Malaysian organization context, studies have demonstrated the link between organizational communication and organizational outcome. For example, the Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) organizational communication questionnaire (OCQ) was significantly related to performance feedback (Milliman *et al.*, 2002); overall communication effectiveness (Limaye and Victor, 1991) and communication in workplace (Salleh, 2005). However, in these studies only directionality downward and directionality lateral dimensions

Organizational communication questionnaire by Roberts and O'Reilly (1974)	Communication satisfaction questionnaire by Downs and Hazen (1977)	Communication audit survey by Goldhaber and Rogers (1979)	Organizational communication audit questionnaire by Wiio and Helsila (1974)
Desire for interactions	Communication climate	Information accessibility	Overall communication satisfaction
Directionality upward	Supervisory communication	Information adequacy	Amount of information received from different source – now
Directionality downward	Organization integration	Communication satisfaction	Amount of information received from different source – ideal
Directionality lateral	Media quality	Clarity	Amount of information received about specific job items – now
Information accuracy	Co-workers communication	Accuracy	Amount of information received about specific job items – ideal
Communication frequency	Corporate information	Utility	Area of communication that need improvement
Gate keeping	Personal feedback	Appropriateness	Job satisfaction
Overload	Subordinate communication	Timeliness	Availability of computer information system
Satisfaction		Communication relationship	Allocation of time in a working day
Modalities of communication		Communication outcome	Respondent's general communication behavior
			Organization specific questions
			Information seeking patterns

Source: This list was derived from the excellent overviews of organizational communication scale examined in communication research (see Greenbaum and Clampitt, 1988; Gray and Laidlaw, 2004)

Table I.
Organizational communication dimensions

related significantly with organization outcomes. Furthermore, these studies did not investigate and interpret Malaysia cultural values. Another study in Malaysia organization context based Downs and Hazen (1977) communication satisfaction questionnaire (CSQ), shows that only the supervisory communication and subordinate communication dimensions are related to organizational citizenship behavior (Kandlosi *et al.*, 2010); affective commitment (Ahmad, 2004) and workplace structure (Tan, 1998). These findings point to the need for more valid and reliable measures of organizational communication in Malaysian organization settings. Furthermore, current investigation of organizational communication in Malaysia organization failed to incorporate Malaysia cultural values in their investigations.

Malaysia cultural values
Malaysian society comprises primarily by three large ethnic groups, Bumiputra (or Malay) (65.1 percent), Chinese (26.0 percent) and Indians (7.7 percent) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2001). Each of these ethnic groups maintains its own strong ethnic identity, with its own cultural customs, practices, language, values and beliefs (Abdul Rashid and Ho, 2003). However, unlike western heterogeneous societies, where liberal values are applied to regulate cultural and workplace ethics (e.g. consider workplace diversity discourses, equal opportunity laws, diversity hiring goals, and so on), Malaysian society is still ingrained with traditional values and historical practices. Such unique heterogeneity helps highlight the complexity of cultural norms in workplace in contrast to culturally heterogeneous western societies.

Generally, Malaysians tend to value harmonious relationships, respect elders, religion, believe in face-saving and emphasize the importance of group work and performance (Abdul Rashid and Ho, 2003; Abdul Rashid and Sambasivan, 2004; Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2009; Karande *et al.*, 2002; Kennedy, 2002; Lim, 2001). Studies based on Hofested and GLOBE cultural dimensions indicate that, Malaysian employees are: collectivism in nature and they emphasize on the importance of the group; high power distance emphasizes the importance of the leader and his or her status and power difference in respect of the group; and group-based rewards emphasize the importance of group work and performance (Hofstede, 2003; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Ashkanasy, 2002; Kennedy, 2002). We argue that these cultural norms and conditions affect organizational members' behavior and form conditions in the organizational environments. In the Malaysian organizational context, social cultural norms dictate employee's behavior in workplace settings (Shephard, 2001). These cultural norms therefore, are essential to be included in an organizational communication construct for Malaysian organization setting.

Methods
Our approach in evaluating the organizational communication construct was to develop a scale designed to assess different aspects of organizational communication in different culture setting. We followed an accepted approach to scale development outlined by DeVellis (1991) and Hinkin (1995). This approach involved four stages. First, items were generated from the understanding of the organizational communication literature, as well as from reports of individual's experiences from the work setting. Second, items were validated for content. Third, items that survived from content validation were sent to a large and diverse sample of employees, and again, several weeks later, to generate

re-test data. Finally, items that had survived the analyses were then administered to employees from three organizations. In addition, one validation variable was collected in these organizations. This approach of scale development was designed to assess the construct and criterion-related validity of the new organizational communication scale. The following are the details of process undertaken.

Item generation
Based on the dimensions of organizational communication identified in the literature, we generated an initial set of 296 items. These items focused on the information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, and communication structure as indicated in the studies of Roberts and O'Reilly (1974), Wiio and Helsila (1974), Downs and Hazen (1977) and Goldhaber and Rogers (1979). Additionally, focus group interviews were conducted with individuals from a top management group (20 people); middle management group (25 people); and supporting group (15 people), taken from three organizations in Malaysia. These samples were reasonably diverse in terms of gender (60 percent male and 40 percent female), age (M = 31.5, ranging from 23 to 44) and represented both public and private organizations in Malaysia. The participants were asked about the kinds of communication they had in their organization and to give specific examples about how the communication was going. The reasons to having the focus group interviews was to determine the applicability of the organizational communication constructs that have been identified and to find out any new communication dimensions that have not been captured in the literature. Participants' descriptions of communication included the information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, and communication structure as identified by Roberts and O'Reilly (1974), Wiio and Helsila (1974), Downs and Hazen (1977), and Goldhaber and Rogers (1979). Some participants also identified group bond and mutual respect as being critical in organizational communication constructs for Malaysian organization setting.

Based on the focus group interviews, group bond was defined as "the degree of togetherness among organizational members as reflected through discussion in the work group". Mutual respect was defined as "the perception of the degree to which members of the organization's views were valued by the top management and the ability of the leader in group decisions". To reflect group bond and mutual respect, we wrote 60 additional items with the focus group responses serving as guidelines. In addition, we also generated another 30 items with the interview responses from other Malaysian scholars who are familiar with Malaysia's workplace culture (Abdul Aziz, 1999; Abdul Rashid and Ho, 2003; Abdullah, 1992). Therefore, total numbers of 386 pool items were generated to reflect organization communication in Malaysia organization.

Content validation
Content validation of the 386 generated items was performed in two phases. First, eight faculty members, specializing in organizational communication in public universities in Malaysia, served as expert judges; they were asked to identify which of the six defined dimensions together with 386 items that was intended to be captured for organizational communication construct in Malaysia. This approach allowed us to drop, change, or add items, and mark unclear items. In addition, comparisons of judgments across the judges for each of the items were also made. Based on the comments from the judges, and from a high degree of inconsistency in identifying

particular items with one of the dimensions, 150 items were dropped from the item pool, thus only 236 items were retained (DeVellis, 1991; Hinkin, 1995).

Second, four faculty members and six PhD students of organizational communication from three prominent universities in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia, served as a second set of expert judges for content validation for the remaining 236 items. The main reason for the second experts' judgment was for selecting items to be retained and to determine the items that belonged to a specific dimension. Items that reflected agreement of information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect from at least nine out of ten judges were retained. Based on the expert judgment 149 items were dropped and only 87 items survived the second content validation. Because of lack of theoretical delineation of the group bond dimension, we wrote additional six items for this dimension, as a step to ensure an adequate chance of being represented after further validation procedures. As a result 93 pool items were generated to reflect organization communication in Malaysia organization.

Finally, the authors visited these 93 items for theoretical content adequacy prior to submitting them for empirical analysis. The content adequacy evaluation aim in this stage was to find out whether or not these items reflected the defined dimensions of organizational communication. This approach helped us in ensuring that the items retained for empirical analysis clearly reflected organizational communication in Malaysian organizations and the underlying theoretical dimensions of organizational communication (Ballard and Seibold, 2004). Each item was then reviewed for an indication of communication in organization namely the information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, and communication structure, for consistency. As a result, 36 items were dropped from further scale consideration.

Therefore 57 items were retained and the dimension distributions of the items were: ten items for information flow, nine items for communication climate, nine items for message characteristics, ten items for communication structure, nine items for group bond and ten items for mutual respect. All items responses were scaled from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5. In order to gain some insight into the relevance of the items to the theoretical and Malaysian organizational context, the next stage will involve quantitative analysis, which includes convergent, discriminant and criterion-related validity analysis.

Participants

Data was collected from the employees of three organizations. Initial items were conducted among 250 university employees, while the convergent; discriminant and criterion-related validity were assessed with employees from the samples of the three organizations. For all respondents, participation was voluntary and confidentiality of responses was assured. Participants from the university's employees were from one public university in Northern Peninsular of Malaysia. The demographic breakdown of the 250 university employees was: 57 percent male (142); 43 percent female (108); 60 percent Malay (150); 30 percent Chinese (76); 5 percent Indian (12) and 5 percent others (12); mean age of 30 years (SD = 7.2); and a mean of 7.8 years of working experience (SD = 6.1). 125 employees received a questionnaire that included 57 organizational items, demographic items and job satisfactions scales. Of the 250 university employees, 125 received a follow-up questionnaire 8-10 weeks after the first questionnaire, which

included the same organizational communication items. This questionnaire was administered for the purpose of assessing test-retest reliability.

The organizational employees' samples consisted of full-time employees from three public organizations that were surveyed as part of a larger project. All of 150 regional development authority employees; 130 economic development corporation employees; and 200 state secretary office employees were invited to participate in the study. A total of 110 regional development authority employees (response rate of 75 percent); 76 state economic development corporation employees (response rate 60 percent) and 160 state secretary office employees (80 percent response rate) participated and completed the survey. All the participants represented multiple work groups. The demographic breakdown of the full-time working sample was: 65 percent male; 35 percent female; 70 percent Malay; 25 percent Chinese and 5 percent Indian. The mean age of this sample was approximately 45.6 years. The average length of tenure with the organizations was 8 years and 6 months.

Measures

All employees responded to the 57 items that survived the initial phases of scale development. In addition, social desirable response bias was assessed from the participants of the university employees (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960). Other measures were as well employed to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the resulting new scale. These included employee's job satisfaction (Schriesheim and Tsui, 1980). The job satisfaction scale was also included for the purposes of establishing convergent validity, as well as to determine incremental validity of the new scale of Malaysian organizational context. The decision to include the job satisfaction measurement was due to the fact that the job satisfaction construct provides employee attitudes about the work itself and is widely used in scale development studies (see Schriesheim and Tsui, 1980).

Job satisfaction. To measure employees' job satisfaction, we used Schriesheim and Tsui (1980) six-items ($\alpha = 0.79$).

Data analysis overview. Data analysis was conducted in four phases. Given the size and diversity of the sample, we performed item selection analyses using the sample of university employees, while the sample of organizational employees was utilized for confirmation and validation of the resulting scale. First, items that had little or no variance, or were significantly correlated with social desirability, were eliminated. Second, exploratory factor analysis was used to guide the selection of a reduced set of items. Third, confirmatory factor analysis was used with the organizational samples to assess the goodness of fit of the selected items with the proposed dimensions. Finally, to further examine the new scale, differences among the organizational communication dimensions, with respect to relations with outcome variable, were assessed.

Procedures

A total of 57 items appeared in a questionnaire containing a subset of the above described scales and demographic items. Paper and pencil survey sessions were conducted with the help of the human resources department. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was assured.

Test-retest data collection. To assess item stability over time, 57 organizational communication items generated for this study were administered to the participants

from the three organizations at two separate times, approximately eight and ten weeks apart respectively. Of the 480 potential participants (150 regional development authority employees; 130 economic development corporation employees; and 200 state secretary office employees) for the retest portion of the study, 346 (110 regional development authority employees; 76 state economic development corporation employees and 160 state secretary office employees) (72 percent) responded to a follow-up questionnaire containing the 57 organizational communication items. Missing data on 30 follow-up questionnaires resulted in a final sample size of 316 for the test-retest analyses. At the completion of data collection, a detailed written debriefing of the entire scale development effort, along with an explanation of test-retest reliability, was provided to participants.

Results
All of the initial item analyses, as well as exploratory factor analyses, were conducted using the university employees' samples.

Tests of item variance and social desirability response sets
The first step in analyzing the data was to calculate the variance on each of the 57 items. Items showing little variability would not be much of a value and therefore would be removed from use in scale development. Although no established criterion for adequate variability exists, a standard deviation of 1.0 was chosen as representing an adequate amount of variability for usefulness as an item (Cooper and Schindler, 2000; Liden and Maslyn, 1998). All 57 items had standard deviations exceeding 1.0 with a range from 1.45 to 2.67, and thus no items were removed for lack of variability.

Next, all items were correlated with social desirability scale ($n = 150$). Seven items that correlated significantly with social desirability scale were removed. These seven significant correlations ranged in size from 0.25 to 0.31 (all $p < 0.05$). At this point, 50 items remained for consideration in scale development (Arnold and Feldman, 1981; Avolio *et al.*, 1991).

Factor analyses
Using data collected from the sample of 250 university employees, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis using principal components with unspecified number of factors. The magnitude and scree plot of the eigenvalues indicated six factors. In the next factor analysis, we set the number of factors to six and interpreted factor loadings based on the pattern matrix, which was produced from oblique rotation (Allen *et al.*, 2009; Hair *et al.*, 1998). Oblique rotation was appropriate because of the anticipated relation among factors (Allen *et al.*, 2009). Analysis of the 57 items resulted in six factors which explained 65.2 percent of the variance. Based on the oblique factor pattern, each factor clearly reflected one of the six priori dimensions. Subsequent iterations were performed following deletion of cross-loaded items based on .50 as our cut-off criteria or items that were theoretically inconsistent with their factor. The resulting solution consisted of 48 items, explaining 78.5 percent of the variance. The breakdown of these items was information flow (eight items), communication climate (eight items), message characteristics (eight items), communication structure (eight items), group bond (seven items) and mutual respect (nine items). The rotated factor loadings for these 48 items appear in Table II.

Item	Information flow	Communication climate	Message characteristics	Communication structure	Group bound	Mutual respect
Information about my progress in my job	0.74	0.02	−0.01	0.12	0.03	0.01
Information about company policies and goals	0.73	0.11	−0.02	0.02	0.05	0.13
Information about how performance	0.63	−0.09	−0.06	−0.05	−0.07	0.13
Information about departmental policies and goals	0.76	0.00	0.05	0.22	−0.10	0.06
Information about the requirements of the job	0.77	−0.09	−0.03	−0.14	0.07	03
Information about government action affecting the organization	0.68	−0.07	0.05	0.04	−0.07	0.32
Information about changes in the organization	0.75	−0.09	−0.06	−0.08	0.01	0.00
Information about employees benefits and pay	0.05	−0.07	0.09	0.05	0.10	−0.07
Information about company profits and financial standing	0.63	−0.10	−0.06	0.07	−0.02	0.04
Information about accomplishments and/or failures of the company	0.71	−0.09	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.18
Recognition from the management	0.01	0.55	0.11	−0.08	0.09	0.00
Organization communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals	0.12	0.69	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.01
Feedback valued by the management	0.05	0.70	−0.02	0.05	0.07	0.03
Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the company are basically healthy	−0.07	0.51	0.11	−0.02	0.00	0.00
Sincerity in communication	0.01	0.63	0.22	−0.05	0.01	0.11
Indirect instructions	−0.09	0.76	0.03	0.17	0.13	0.06
Humbleness in giving instructions	0.07	0.77	0.04	0.02	0.07	0.03
Extent to which organization communication reduce conflicts	0.08	0.68	0.14	0.27	0.01	0.00
Extent to which supervisor understand workers for better communication	−0.03	0.75	0.01	0.24	0.03	−0.01
Extent to which grapevine are active in organization	0.07	0.19	0.61	0.09	−0.01	0.00
Successful in overcoming information restrictions	0.04	−0.08	0.56	0.21	0.02	0.12
Amount of available information in the organization	0.01	0.04	0.63	0.00	−0.09	0.03
Information than efficiently use in this organization	0.00	−0.13	0.66	0.02	0.00	−0.01
Time spend receiving information at work	0.02	0.00	0.68	0.05	0.08	0.00
Extent of distortion upward information in organization	0.09	0.01	0.72	0.03	−0.18	0.03
Extent of information accuracy	0.11	−0.07	0.78	0.04	0.02	0.08
Information at specific places	0.08	0.02	0.67	−0.01	0.00	0.15
Language of instructions	0.02	0.00	0.58	−0.23	0.01	0.00
Extent to which formal communication is active and accurate	0.09	−0.01	0.00	0.69	0.08	−0.15

(*continued*)

Table II.
Exploratory factor analysis of the organizational communication items: oblique rotation, pattern matrix

Item	Information flow	Communication climate	Message characteristics	Communication structure	Group bound	Mutual respect
Horizontal communication is accurate and free-flowing	0.01	0.00	0.13	0.66	−0.03	0.01
Amount of communication in the company is about right	0.08	0.01	0.03	0.68	0.02	0.00
Extent to which the management know and understand the problems faced by employees	−0.05	−0.08	0.01	0.60	0.09	0.03
Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it	0.17	0.07	0.03	0.72	0.00	0.01
Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas	−0.23	0.03	−0.01	0.71	0.00	0.07
Extent to which informal communication is active and accurate	0.01	0.27	0.01	0.71	0.03	0.09
Extent to which supervisor listens and pay attention	−0.06	0.07	0.19	0.77	0.05	0.07
Communication practices are adaptable to emergencies	0.08	0.03	−0.18	0.62	0.03	0.02
Meetings are well organized	0.07	0.01	0.00	0.59	0.00	0.06
Discussions in executing specific tasks	0.05	−0.01	0.00	0.15	0.73	0.05
Compromise in work	0.03	0.00	−0.09	0.03	0.70	0.01
Seek helps from group member	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.03	0.72	0.07
Emphasize on discussions	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.08	0.73	0.02
Provides views during group discussions	0.07	0.09	−0.01	0.00	0.71	0.03
The organization emphasize work as family	−0.11	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.77	0.08
People in the organization share views	0.09	−0.04	0.01	0.00	0.74	0.05
Casual interactions in the work group	0.03	0.00	−0.09	0.03	0.76	0.00
Gain input thru information conversations	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.00	0.75	0.08
Group affiliation emphasize through communication	0.00	0.09	−0.01	0.00	0.78	0.10
Fell respected if given appropriate information	0.00	0.01	0.07	0.02	0.03	0.70
Instructions reflect supervisor knowledge	−0.17	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.01	0.69
Acknowledgment from supervisor shows his/her respect to me	0.00	0.08	0.02	−0.13	0.08	0.78
Feel respect when supervisor seeks view	0.08	0.11	0.12	0.06	0.02	0.68
Feedbacks shows the knowledge	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.66
In this organization people seeks help rather than giving instructions	0.06	0.01	0.07	0.04	0.06	0.73
Language used by the supervisor shows respect to the employees	0.21	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.00	0.72
Extent of respects through openness in communication	0.01	0.00	0.07	0.03	0.03	0.86
Respect reduce conflict	0.00	0.01	−0.17	0.08	0.03	0.32
Respect each other	0.00	0.09	−0.01	0.00	−0.15	0.68

Table II.

Confirmatory factor analyses

Item selection was executed with the university employee samples, but all confirmatory analyses were conducted exclusively with the data collected from the 346 organizational participants. As in previous uses of confirmatory factor analysis in assessing construct dimensionality (Liden and Maslyn, 1998; Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001; Meyer *et al.*, 1993), the models were tested with correlated factors and uncorrelated error. The six-factor, or hypothesized model, reflected the six dimensions of information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect, and was defined by the original categories from the 48 chosen items.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine whether the organizational communication dimensions in Malaysian organization settings were empirically distinct from each other based on fit indices of RMSEA, CFI and TLI. We compared the fit of our measurement model, in which information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect were expected to load on their respective factors based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) cut off criteria. CFA was conducted to determine the validity of our measurement. The chi-square and fit indices for each constructs are presented in Table III, and factor loading for items are presented in Table IV. The items for information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect, fitted statistically significant into their respective factors.

The results provided evidence for the distinctiveness of the constructs of organizational communication in this study, and suggested that common method variance was not responsible for the relationships between the constructs (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The breakdown of these items after CFA was information flow (six items), communication climate (eight items), message characteristics (four items), communication structure (7 items), group bond (six items) and mutual respect (seven items). The internal consistency reliabilities were acceptable for the information flow, communication climate, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect, but low for the message characteristics. Coefficient alphas were 0.77, 0.76, 0.67, 0.83, 0.76 and 0.78 for information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and respect.

Criterion-related

Another way to assess the validity of our new measure of organizational communication for Malaysian organization setting is to determine whether the six dimensions are differentially related to outcome variables consistent with theory and research. There are expectations of positive relationships between organizational

Model	df	χ^2(p)	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
Six-Factor (Hypothesized)	28	784.703 (0.063)	0.09	0.98	0.94

Note: RMSEA=Root mean square error for approximation, CFI=Comparative fit index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis Index; $^*p < 0.01$

Indicator	Factor loading
Organizational communication	
Information flow ($\alpha = 0.77$)	
Information about my progress in my job	0.76*
Information about company policies and goals	0.70*
Information about how performance	0.73*
Information about departmental policies and goals	0.20
Information about the requirements of the job	0.70*
Information about government action affecting the organization	0.83*
Information about changes in the organization	0.27
Information about employees benefits and pay	0.10
Information about company profits and financial standing	0.21
Information about accomplishments and/or failures of the company	0.76*
Communication climate ($\alpha = 0.76$)	
Recognition from the management	0.64*
Organization communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals	0.63*
Feedback valued by the management	0.70*
Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the company are basically healthy	0.73*
Sincerity in communication	0.61*
Indirect instructions	0.20
Humbleness in giving instructions	0.67*
Extent to which organization communication reduce conflicts	0.68*
Extent to which supervisor understand workers for better communication	0.77*
Message characteristics ($\alpha = 0.67$)	
Extent to which grapevine are active in organization	0.10
Successful in overcoming information restrictions	0.76*
Amount of available information in the organization	0.34
Information than efficiently use in this organization	0.75*
Time spend receiving information at work	0.30
Extent of distortion upward information in organization	0.65*
Extent of information accuracy	0.19
Information at specific places	0.84*
Language of instructions	0.18
Communication structure ($\alpha = 0.83$)	
Extent to which formal communication is active and accurate	0.84*
Horizontal communication is accurate and free-flowing	0.76*
Amount of communication in the company is about right	0.25
Extent to which the management know and understand the problems faced by employees	0.68*
Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it	0.75*
Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas	0.72*
Extent to which informal communication is active and accurate	0.63*
Extent to which supervisor listens and pay attention	0.88*
Communication practices are adaptable to emergencies	0.13
Meetings are well organized	0.22
	(*continued*)

Table IV.
Standardized factor
loadings for the
constructs

Indicator	Factor loading
Group bond ($\alpha = 0.76$)	
Discussions in executing specific tasks	0.71*
Compromise in work	0.18
Seek helps from group member	0.14
Emphasize on discussions	0.74*
Provides views during group discussions	0.70*
The organization emphasize work as family	0.68*
People in the organization share views	0.30
Casual interactions in the work group	0.72*
Gain input thru information conversations	0.21
Group affiliation emphasize through communication	0.73*
Respect ($\alpha = 0.78$)	
Fell respected if given appropriate information	0.21
Instructions reflect supervisor knowledge	0.67*
Acknowledgment from supervisor shows his/her respect to me	0.65*
Feel respect when supervisor seeks view	0.60*
Feedbacks shows the knowledge	0.71*
In this organization people seeks help rather than giving instructions	0.78*
Language used by the supervisor shows respect to the employees	0.68*
Extent of respects through openness in communication	0.55*
Respect reduce conflict	0.38
Respect each other	0.34

Table IV.   **Note:** All factor loadings are significant at $p < 0.001$

communication dimensions on organizational commitment (Varona, 1996) and satisfactions (Mueller and Lee, 2002), and the same may be done for the new Malaysian organizational communication dimensions. A global outcome of job satisfaction is expected to be positively related to information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, and communication structure, as well as to the new dimensions, namely, the group bond and mutual respect. The more a member believes that the organization practices good information flow, healthy communication climate, better message characteristics and communication structure, and more emphasis on group bond and mutual respect, the more that member of organization should be expected to be satisfied with their job.

Latent composite structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the correlation between information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect and job satisfaction model. This approach was preferred over a suggested regression because SEM approach allowed for the estimation of measurement error (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Model fit was assessed with fit indices recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). Prior to the model testing means, standard deviations and correlations for all variables appear in Table V. Data was also run for tests for normality for each of the survey items, as well as the constructs that were created by computing individual items. Tests for normality included kurtosis measures, skewness measures, and visual inspection of histograms. The majority of the items appear to be within normality.

Table VI shows the fit indices for the structural model between information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond, mutual respect and job satisfaction. Figure 1 shows the significant direct effect of: information flow ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$), communication climate ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), message characteristics ($\beta = 0.10$, $p > 0.01$), communication structure ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$), group bound ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$) and respect ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$) on job satisfaction. In the model, 25.7 percent of variance in job satisfaction was accounted for by information flow, communication climate, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect.

Discussion

In this current study, we developed and tested Malaysian organizational communication measures. Exploratory factor analyses provided support for six organization communication construct in Malaysian organizational settings, namely the information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, and communication structure, as well as to the new dimensions, namely the group bond and respect thus, providing evidence of construct validity. The resulting six-dimension scale consisted of 38 items (information flow (six items), communication climate (eight items), message characteristics (four items), communication structure (seven items), group bond (six items) and mutual respect (seven items). Providing further support for the validity of the scale, organizational communication explained the incremental variance in employee's job satisfaction.

Organizational communication researchers such as Ballard and Seibold (2004) and Stohl (1995) suggest that organizational communication can represent and help a social system in organizations through linking formal and informal information, as well as vertical and horizontal relationships at work group. Currently, research on organizational

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Information flow	4.20	0.46	–						
2. Communication climate	4.14	0.40	0.66*	–					
3. Message characteristics	3.73	0.70	0.39*	0.28*	–				
4. Communication structure	4.20	0.41	0.62*	0.25*	0.28*	–			
5. Group bond	4.09	0.45	0.63*	0.74*	0.71*	0.71*	–		
6. Respect	4.12	0.42	0.60*	0.72*	0.63*	0.63*	0.63*	–	
7. Job satisfaction	3.92	0.59	0.30*	0.27*	0.28*	0.28*	0.29*	0.26*	–

Note: *$p < 0.05$

Table V.
Means, standard deviations and correlations

Model	df	χ^2(p)	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
Information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond, respect and job satisfaction	15	195.007 (0.085)	0.08	0.96	0.97

Notes: RMSEA=Root mean square error for approximation, CFI=Comparative fit index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis Index; *$p < 0.01$

Table VI.
Fit indexes for information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond, respect and job satisfaction
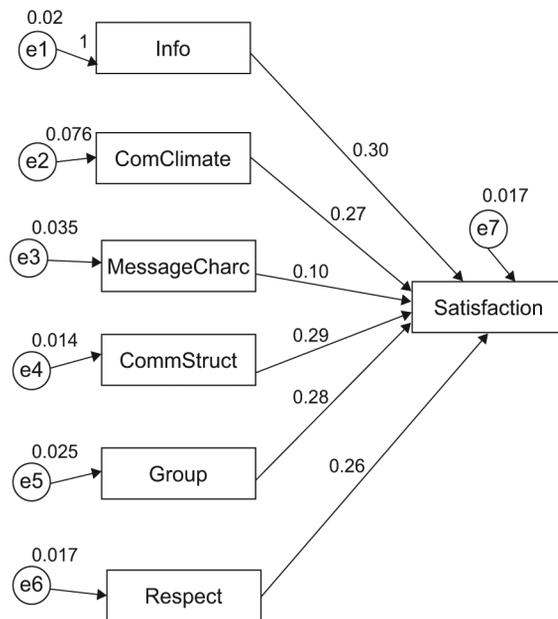
Figure 1.
Path coefficient for
structural model

Note: Path coefficients are standardized regression
coefficients; $*p < 0.01$

communication constructs mainly focuses on identifying correlations with various
organizational outcomes such as satisfaction and commitment (Mueller and Lee, 2002;
Varona, 1996). For example, Mueller and Lee (2002) and Sias (2005) examined
communication satisfaction questionnaire on employees' job satisfaction. These studies
indicated that organizational communication remained as a significant predictor,
suggesting employee job satisfaction is likely driven primarily by the communicative
activities within the organization. However, none of these studies have explicitly
examined the organizational cultural context as we did in this study. In this study, we
took a step forward by addressing the cultural context issue through our exploration of
the role of communication in workplace in an attempt to understand the antecedents and
consequences effects organizational communication processes in Malaysia organizations.
Our results add to the body of research on communication in organizations by revealing
that the Malaysian organizational communication construct is related to job satisfaction.

These results indicated that organizational communication scale for Malaysian
organization holds promise as a framework for understanding how organizational
communication influence the attitudes and behaviors of Malaysian employees.
However, further scale development is needed for the message characteristics
dimension to add additional items and to increase reliability. With respect to validity,
all items for Malaysian organizational communication scale were shown to be
unrelated to social desirability response. Further support for the Malaysian
organizational communication scale was provided by the structural model showing
that each organizational communication dimensions contributed differently in the
explanation of variance in job satisfaction.

In summary, support for the Malaysian organizational communication construct was provided by a consistent set of results:

· factor loadings from exploratory factor analysis provided support for six separate dimensions;

· the confirmatory factor analyses results showed the six dimensions of organizational communication in Malaysia;

· the six dimensions of organizational communication in Malaysian organization were correlated with job satisfaction; and

· the structural equation modeling results indicated that different organizational communication dimensions were significant in the explanation of the variance in job satisfaction.

The emergence of group bond and respect in our focus group and critical incident interviews were also consistent with the examination of organizational behavior. Based on theory (Kennedy, 2002) and empirical results (Karande *et al.*, 2002; Pearson and Entrekin, 1998), these two dimensions are a crucial components in organizational communication in Malaysia (Abdul Rashid and Sambasivan, 2004; Lim, 2001) and were confirmed by finding group bond and mutual respect in work relationships to be salient dimensions in an investigation involving three diverse organizations in Malaysia. Results of the current investigation also support the description of Malaysian respondents in the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (Kennedy, 2002). In the GLOBE study, it was noted that Malaysian employees prefer to work as a group rather than individually and place a high value on interpersonal communication and relationships. In addition the value of respect among Malaysian employees is reflected in both daily verbal and nonverbal communication including language and paralinguistic practices (Abdullah *et al.*, 2001).

One weaknesses of this study was the size of sample used for the focus group and interviews, which was designed to determine the relevance of information flow, communication climate, message structure and communication structure, and to identify other possible dimensions of organizational communication in Malaysian organization settings. Although a sample larger than 24 would be preferred, this step in item generation is skipped in this study. Another weakness was that the organizations involved in the validation segment of the study which were service-related organizations. To extend generalizability, the new scale needs to be used in a wide variety of public and private organizations in Malaysia. Perhaps the main weakness of the study was the outcome variable used in this study. Current investigations limit themselves to job satisfaction. Thus, we do not know if the newly developed organizational communication scale for Malaysian organization will correlate significantly with other outcome variables such as organizational commitment or individual performance in organization. It would be desirable for future studies to combine commitment to organization with other outcome variables such as performance.

The reliability for the message characteristics dimensions was unacceptable. Despite writing 30 items from the interviews and existing literature, only four items survived. Many of the items dealing with organizational member perceptions of message characteristics in a Malaysian organization reflecting the organization message structure did not survive content validation. Others tended to cross-load other dimensions such as

information flow and communication structure. An additional issue related to reliability was that it would be preferable for the message characteristics to consist of 7 to 8 items as is true of other organizational dimensions in Malaysian organization settings. This is especially important for the use of the scale involving structural equations modeling. It has been recommended that in multiple indicator models each latent variable should have at least five indicators (Hair *et al.*, 1998). Another weakness of this study was the lack of comparison between established measures of organizational communication. It would be preferable to validate the current scale of Malaysian organizational communication scale with an existing organizational communication scale such as organizational communication questionnaire (Roberts and O'Reilly, 1974) or organizational communication satisfaction (Downs *et al.*, 1995).

Main strengths of this investigation was the thorough process used in creating the item pool. Many items were based on interviews designed expressly for this study. The focus group and interview process used in this study helped find the group bond and mutual respect dimensions. Previous organizational communication studies had not recognized the importance of these dimensions and assumed that they were applicable across culture. Also, improving upon previous organizational communication development efforts (Goldhaber *et al.*, 1978; Roberts and O'Reilly, 1974) was the rigorous content validation procedure involving faculty members and doctoral students, and the evaluation of all items and scales for the social desirability set. Finding six dimensions that matched a priori dimensions using the conservative approach of exploratory factor analysis with the unspecified number of dimensions provided strong support for the hypothesized organizational communication dimensions in Malaysian organization (DeVellis, 1991). Lastly, the scales developed for the Malaysian organizational communication from organizational employees were validated using CFA through data collected from three diverse organizations.

Practical implications
Results of our study suggest that the organizational communication construct may enhance job satisfaction for Malaysian employees. In addition, our finding indicates that information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect may inspire employees' job satisfaction in Malaysian organization. When managers in an organization embrace high quality of information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect, he/she may succeed in nurturing and developing his/her employees' job satisfaction. In Malaysia, organizations seeking to create a positive climate atmosphere should be careful to select mangers who have not only good communication skills, but also the ability to develop a work group bond and mutual respect among employees. Doing so involves conscious efforts in getting to know the Malaysian cultural context and values. Indeed, results of the current investigation revealed a relationship between information flow, communication climate, message characteristics, communication structure, group bond and mutual respect dimensions that help employees' satisfaction towards their work.

Implications for future research
The value of identifying multiple dimensions of organizational communication in Malaysia lies in understanding when and how these dimensions relate to the issue of

applicability of western-based organizational communication in specific culture settings, and their impact in the prediction of organizational outcomes. For example, many researches have addressed the relationship between organizational communication with commitment or satisfaction, and have used organizational communication satisfaction (CSQ) or organizational communication questionnaire (OCQ), however all those studies failed to consider the culture of the country (Greenbaum and Clampitt, 1988; Varona, 1996). In comparing dimensions, the results of the current study suggested that information flow, communication climate, communication structure, group bond and respect, but not message characteristics, explained a significant percentage of variance in job satisfaction. One immediate need for research attention is to revise the message characteristics scale so that it meets the accepted standards for reliability. As part of this effort, more items should be added so that the scale is suitable for use in multiple indicator structural equation models. Creative item-writing will be necessary so as to capture organizational message characteristics without suffering from biases.

The greatest need for further research using the Malaysian organizational communication scale is longitudinal research on the organizational communication process because the results of the six dimensions of organizational communication may differ between developing and established organizations in Malaysia. Perhaps group bond takes a longer time to develop than mutual respect in work relationship. Or perhaps, organizations that are based in central, southern Peninsular Malaysia or East Malaysia have different focus of organizational communication dimensions. Research examining differences in the relative importance of organizational communication dimensions of new and current organizational members within the organization is also needed. Only longitudinal tests of the six dimensions can address such causal issues.

In conclusion, the current research provides support for the new organizational communication construct in Malaysian organization settings. The results also provide psychometric support for the Malaysian organizational communication measures. Use of the Malaysian organizational communication measure may enrich organizational communication literature through an exploration of the different components of the construct in Malaysian organizations.

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