



Conference Abstract

# Influence of Majority Expatriate National Cultures on the Organizational Culture in the UAE Healthcare Sector

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## Abstract

Organizational culture is understood to emanate from the management philosophy & leadership vision, along with workforce national culture, individual member's background, beliefs, aspirations, perceptions & external interactions (Žarkic-Joksimovic and Marinkovic 2018). The workforce composition seen across the Middle East presents a unique scenario deviating from the assumption of a singular core national culture in organizations. Figures available on the public domain indicate 99% expatriate employment in UAE private sector (Kapiszewski 2004) bringing about an amalgamation of cultural traits. The researcher, an HR practitioner, has made observations that expat national groups tend to respond differently on organizational stimuli, leading to investigation of nationality-based affiliation among workforce as well as existence of parallel cultural groups within the organization, focusing on healthcare sector.

The research objectives are to review if majority expat national groups deviate from established country specific identifiers, the assessment of majority group behaviour on organizational cultural markers, review of the moderating effect of expat tenure & professional identity on the national cultural values, and to review whether large organizations in the UAE succeed in maintaining a unique organizational cultural identity across facilities, irrespective of employing varied expatriate majorities. Hofstede's Culture Onion Model (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005) is assumed as the base for investigating the

research problem. This model ties together the concepts of National & Organizational Culture by linking the Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede 1980) & the Multi-Focus Model on Organizational Culture (Hofstede 1997). Following a quantitative research design undertaken as a cross-sectional study, data collected is analysed for causal relationships. An adapted questionnaire is used, merging the elements of Hofstede's Values Survey Module (Hofstede and Minkov 2013) & the organizational cultural values questionnaire (Hofstede et al. 1990). A pilot study testing internal validity & reliability of the survey tool returned a score of 0.736 establishing acceptable range of internal consistency.

The target population of around 2400 employees are considered from two tertiary care hospitals in Abu Dhabi, with different majority expat nationality mix. Sample size of 331 at 95% confidence is assumed using the Krejcie & Morgan table (Krejcie and Morgan 1970). Probability sampling is used to select the sample, with stratified random sampling method to ensure nationality representation proportional to the percentage strength in target population. Survey data generated an aggregate reliability score of 0.836. Hypotheses testing is performed & results further substantiated using Hofstede's formulae for national cultural dimensions (Hofstede and Minkov 2013). A follow-up study on an independent sample from an acquired business of the entity, is conducted to exalt credibility to the outcomes and establish universality across a wider population.

Significant differences among the majority nationalities were observed on multiple national and organizational cultural variables as well as behaviour of varying tenure groups. Majority groups seem to stay true to their nationality behavior irrespective of professional association. The cultural identity at different business units of the organization is observed to align to the majority expatriate nationality mix. Due to low to moderate correlation in hypothesis test results, the researcher has furthered the review of the data by quantifying the national & organizational cultural dimension scores to arrive at inferences. The follow-up study generated results closely aligning with the main study giving a peek into the multinational workforce behavior in a small-scale business.

Hofstede's culture onion model places organizational culture as a set of cultural dimensions which are evolved from the national cultural values, influenced by other factors unique to the organization. Prior studies have reviewed the organizational behavioural identity assuming a uniform core of same nationality workforce. This study was undertaken as a deviation analysis, reviewing how the organizational cultural dimensions would behave on Hofstede's model, when the original construct is altered with multiple nationality groups at the core. The findings substantiate the criticality of acknowledging nationality based cultural variations present within a majority expat workforce. It reiterates the importance of a concerted management effort to define & develop a unique cultural identity for the organization, as well as the significance of cultural assimilation of expatriates. The results highlight how the organizational culture can be fragmented with the presence of multiple majority nationalities. The study generated valuable insights on the current organizational cultural identity. Increased talent mobility is resulting in workforces around the world soaring in mixed nationality staffing. While existing literature seem to lack in depth review of the cultural imbalances brought about by such workforce changes, the

current study offers a unique perspective of how the nationality specific cultural traits are influencing the workforce group behaviour in organizational setting.

## Keywords

National Culture, Organizational Culture, Expatriate Employment, Middle East Workforce, Healthcare

## Presenting author

Jophy Devasia, a DBA scholar with Ascencia Business School and a human resources practitioner with over 18 years of experience managing multi-cultural workforce across industries in India and the MENA region.

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## Hosting institution

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## Ethics and security

The research has followed the code of ethics prescribed by Ascencia Business School, College de Paris.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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