

# Intercultural Communication in Multicultural Healthcare Workplaces

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## Abstract

Communication plays a crucial role in healthcare organizations where collaboration among professionals directly affects the quality and safety of patient care. In multicultural healthcare workplaces, cultural diversity introduces differences in language, communication styles, and cultural norms that may influence how healthcare professionals interact and coordinate their work. This study aims to examine communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare teams from an organizational communication perspective. The research adopts a qualitative literature-based approach using secondary data derived from peer-reviewed academic studies discussing communication and cultural diversity in healthcare workplaces. Data were collected through a systematic review of scholarly literature from academic databases and analyzed using thematic analysis guided by intercultural communication theory. The analytical framework focused on identifying patterns related to communication dynamics, communication barriers, and organizational communication practices within multicultural healthcare teams. The findings indicate that communication in multicultural healthcare environments is shaped by linguistic differences, cultural communication styles, and non-verbal interpretation, while organizational practices such as cultural competence development, communication verification mechanisms, and collaborative interaction norms facilitate effective teamwork. These results suggest that communication challenges in multicultural healthcare teams emerge from the interaction between cultural diversity and organizational communication structures. The study contributes to the field by integrating intercultural communication theory with organizational communication perspectives to better understand communication processes in culturally diverse professional environments.

## Keyword

Organizational communication; Cultural diversity; Workplace communication; Intercultural communication.

## 1. Introduction

Communication is a fundamental component of healthcare systems because the delivery of safe and effective patient care depends on accurate information exchange among professionals (Schmidt et al., 2023). Nurses, physicians, and other healthcare workers must constantly coordinate tasks, share patient information, and collaborate in clinical decision-making processes (Philip et al., 2019). In modern healthcare institutions, these interactions occur within complex organizational environments where professionals from different backgrounds work together. Hospitals increasingly employ multinational healthcare workers due to global labor mobility and workforce shortages in many countries (Almutairi, 2015). As a result, healthcare teams frequently consist of individuals who speak different languages and come from diverse cultural traditions (Schmidt et al.,



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2023). Cultural diversity can enrich professional environments by bringing varied experiences, perspectives, and problem-solving approaches. However, it also introduces differences in communication norms, values, and expectations (Tingvold & Munkejord, 2021). These differences can influence how individuals interpret messages, respond to instructions, and engage in professional interactions. Understanding communication in multicultural healthcare teams therefore becomes an important issue in organizational communication research.

In multicultural healthcare workplaces, communication challenges often arise from differences in language proficiency, cultural interpretation, and communication styles (Philip et al., 2019). Healthcare professionals must interpret verbal instructions, written documentation, and non-verbal signals in fast-paced clinical settings where accuracy is essential (Della et al., 2020). When team members come from different cultural backgrounds, the meanings of words, tone of voice, and gestures may be interpreted differently (Alyamany, 2013). These differences can create misunderstandings between colleagues and may disrupt coordination in patient care activities (Pun, 2023). Miscommunication in healthcare settings may lead to delays in treatment, confusion during patient handovers, or difficulties in clarifying medical instructions (Mantley, 2021). Such situations highlight the practical importance of effective communication within culturally diverse healthcare organizations. Organizational communication therefore plays a crucial role in ensuring that multicultural teams function effectively. The quality of communication among healthcare professionals directly affects collaboration, trust, and workplace relationships. Addressing communication challenges in multicultural environments is thus closely linked to maintaining quality and safety in healthcare services.

Previous research has widely acknowledged the importance of communication in nursing practice and healthcare teamwork (Schmidt et al., 2023). Studies have shown that communication supports professional collaboration, information sharing, and coordinated care delivery among healthcare staff (Tingvold & Munkejord, 2021). In culturally diverse healthcare teams, communication becomes even more significant because professionals must navigate cultural differences in interaction styles and workplace expectations (Almutairi, 2015). Existing literature has identified several factors that influence communication in multicultural healthcare environments, including language proficiency, cultural awareness, and interpersonal relationships among staff (Schmidt et al., 2023). Researchers have also highlighted that misunderstandings may arise when individuals interpret communication through their own cultural frameworks (Philip et al., 2019). Differences in direct and indirect communication styles, levels of formality, and expectations regarding hierarchy can influence workplace interactions. Additionally, non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone may carry different meanings across cultures (Alyamany, 2013). These findings indicate that communication in multicultural healthcare teams involves complex social and cultural dynamics. Such insights have contributed to growing scholarly interest in the relationship between cultural diversity and workplace communication.

Despite the growing body of research on communication in healthcare environments, certain aspects remain insufficiently explored. Many existing studies focus primarily on communication between nurses and patients or on clinical communication skills in professional practice. Although these studies provide valuable insights, they often pay less attention to communication among healthcare professionals themselves. In multicultural healthcare settings, interactions among colleagues are equally important because teamwork is essential for coordinated patient care. Furthermore, previous

research frequently emphasizes individual communication competence rather than broader organizational communication dynamics. This approach may overlook how communication processes operate within multicultural teams at the organizational level. Cultural diversity affects not only individual interactions but also collective communication patterns within professional groups. Organizational structures, workplace norms, and institutional practices may shape how multicultural teams communicate and collaborate. Understanding these dynamics requires examining communication beyond individual behavior. Consequently, there remains a need to explore communication in multicultural healthcare workplaces from an organizational communication perspective.

Another limitation in existing scholarship concerns the integration of cultural diversity with communication processes in healthcare organizations. While several studies have identified barriers such as language differences and cultural misunderstandings, fewer studies provide a comprehensive synthesis of how these factors interact within organizational communication systems. Cultural diversity may influence communication in multiple ways, including message interpretation, communication flow, and professional collaboration. These dynamics become particularly complex in healthcare settings where professionals must coordinate tasks under time pressure and high responsibility. Differences in cultural expectations may influence how individuals give instructions, seek clarification, or express disagreement within professional hierarchies. Without a deeper understanding of these communication patterns, organizations may struggle to address the underlying causes of workplace misunderstanding. Existing research has often examined individual aspects of communication barriers rather than the broader organizational context in which they occur. As a result, the relationship between cultural diversity and organizational communication in healthcare teams remains insufficiently synthesized in the literature. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated analysis of communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare workplaces.

Addressing this research gap is important because healthcare institutions continue to rely on multinational workforces in many regions of the world. As healthcare systems expand and international recruitment increases, multicultural teams are likely to become more common in clinical environments. Organizational communication practices must therefore adapt to support effective collaboration among professionals with diverse cultural backgrounds. Without adequate understanding of communication dynamics in such settings, healthcare organizations may face persistent challenges related to teamwork and workplace coordination. Communication breakdowns can influence professional relationships, trust among colleagues, and the overall efficiency of healthcare teams. From an organizational perspective, communication is not only an interpersonal process but also a structural element that shapes how work is coordinated within institutions. Investigating communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare teams can therefore provide valuable insights for improving workplace interaction. Such understanding may also inform strategies for promoting cultural awareness and communication competence within organizations. Exploring this topic contributes to broader discussions about diversity management and organizational communication in professional environments.

Intercultural communication theory offers a useful conceptual lens for examining communication in multicultural workplaces (Almutairi, 2015). The theory explains how individuals from different cultural backgrounds interpret messages, negotiate meaning, and adapt communication styles during interaction (Philip et al., 2019). Cultural values,

language systems, and social norms influence how people express ideas and understand others' messages. When individuals interact across cultures, differences in these elements can create misunderstandings or communication challenges. Intercultural communication theory emphasizes that communication is shaped by cultural frameworks that guide behavior and interpretation. In professional environments such as healthcare organizations, these cultural influences may affect teamwork, collaboration, and information exchange. Applying this theoretical perspective allows researchers to analyze communication challenges as intercultural processes rather than isolated interpersonal problems (Almutairi, 2015). The theory also highlights the importance of cultural awareness and mutual adaptation in cross-cultural interactions (Schmidt et al., 2023). By using this perspective, communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare teams can be examined more systematically.

Guided by this theoretical perspective, the present study seeks to explore how cultural diversity shapes communication dynamics within healthcare teams. The study focuses on understanding communication patterns among professionals working in multicultural healthcare environments. Particular attention is given to identifying common barriers that influence communication among culturally diverse staff members. These barriers may include language differences, variations in communication styles, and differing cultural expectations regarding professional interaction. In addition to identifying challenges, the study also considers organizational communication practices that may facilitate effective collaboration among diverse teams. Understanding these practices can help explain how multicultural teams manage communication despite cultural differences. The study therefore addresses questions related to the influence of cultural diversity on workplace communication and the factors that shape communication effectiveness in healthcare teams. By examining these issues, the research aims to contribute to discussions about organizational communication in multicultural workplaces. The study also seeks to deepen scholarly understanding of how communication processes operate within culturally diverse professional environments.

The urgency of examining communication in multicultural healthcare workplaces lies in the growing diversity of global healthcare systems. As healthcare institutions increasingly employ professionals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, communication challenges are likely to remain a central organizational concern. Effective communication is essential not only for professional collaboration but also for maintaining trust and coordination within healthcare teams. Organizational communication research can provide valuable insights into how multicultural teams navigate differences in language, culture, and interaction styles. By analyzing these dynamics, scholars can better understand how diversity influences workplace communication processes. Such knowledge can also inform broader discussions about managing diversity in professional organizations. Understanding communication in multicultural healthcare teams therefore contributes to both healthcare communication research and organizational communication scholarship. The insights generated from this line of inquiry can help clarify how cultural diversity shapes communication dynamics within complex professional environments.

## **2. Research Method**

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on a literature-oriented analytical approach to explore communication dynamics within multicultural healthcare teams (Austin, 2013). A qualitative design is appropriate because the study seeks to understand complex social phenomena—specifically communication practices shaped by cultural

diversity – rather than measure variables statistically (Austin, 2013). Communication in multicultural workplaces involves meanings, interpretations, and interaction patterns that are best examined through interpretive analysis (Hansen & Quintanilla, 2011). The analytical framework of the study is guided by intercultural communication theory, which explains how cultural norms, language differences, and communication styles influence message interpretation and interpersonal interaction (Armah, 2019). Using this framework allows the study to analyze communication challenges as intercultural processes occurring within organizational contexts (Hansen & Quintanilla, 2011). The qualitative literature-based design is therefore suitable for synthesizing existing scholarly insights and identifying recurring themes related to cultural diversity and organizational communication in healthcare teams (Schmidt et al., 2023).

The data for this study are derived from secondary sources consisting of peer-reviewed academic literature discussing communication, cultural diversity, and teamwork in healthcare organizations. The units of analysis are scholarly publications that examine communication experiences and interaction patterns among healthcare professionals working in culturally diverse environments. Literature sources were identified through academic databases such as Google Scholar and journal repositories to ensure access to relevant and credible publications. Data collection involved systematically reviewing and selecting studies that address communication barriers, communication facilitators, and organizational communication practices in multicultural healthcare settings (Schmidt et al., 2023). The analytical dimensions guiding the review include cultural diversity in healthcare teams, language differences, communication styles, and collaborative interaction within professional environments (Schmidt et al., 2023). These dimensions function as conceptual variables used to categorize and organize the literature during analysis (Schmidt et al., 2023). Through this process, the study identifies patterns and themes that explain how cultural diversity influences communication dynamics in healthcare workplaces (Schmidt et al., 2023).

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applies several qualitative research strategies (Shenton, 2004). Credibility is strengthened through the use of peer-reviewed academic sources and systematic selection criteria that prioritize scholarly reliability (Shenton, 2004). Dependability is supported by maintaining a transparent documentation process during literature selection, data organization, and thematic categorization (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability is addressed by grounding the analysis in established theoretical perspectives, particularly intercultural communication theory, which provides a consistent conceptual guide for interpreting the literature (Shenton, 2004). Transferability is enhanced by selecting studies that examine multicultural healthcare environments in various contexts, allowing broader insights into communication dynamics in diverse workplaces (Shenton, 2004). Ethical considerations were also taken into account during the research process (Yardley et al., 2014). Because the study relies on secondary data from published literature, no direct interaction with human participants was required (Yardley et al., 2014). Nevertheless, academic integrity was maintained through accurate citation of sources and responsible representation of existing research findings, ensuring respect for authorship and intellectual property (Yardley et al., 2014).

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Cultural Diversity and Communication Dynamics in Multicultural Healthcare Teams**

The thematic analysis of the literature identifies several recurring dynamics that define communication within multicultural healthcare teams. A primary finding is that cultural

diversity functions as a structural element of professional interaction, shaping how information is exchanged and how workplace relationships are maintained. The analysis reveals that communication patterns in these settings are characterized by a continuous interplay between individual cultural frameworks and institutional professional requirements. The study identifies that these dynamics are most visible in high-stakes clinical interactions where the need for accuracy intersects with diverse interpretive norms. These patterns suggest that multicultural communication is not a series of isolated events but a systemic feature of modern healthcare organizations.

These findings reflect the complexity of negotiating meaning in professional environments where team members operate from different socio-cultural foundations. Intercultural communication theory provides a useful framework for explaining these dynamics, emphasizing that communication is shaped by cultural norms, linguistic systems, and socially constructed meanings that guide how individuals interpret messages and respond to others (Almutairi, 2015). In multicultural workplaces, communication is not merely the exchange of information; it is also a process of negotiating meaning across different cultural frames of reference. This interpretation is consistent with previous research indicating that cultural diversity shapes communication practices by influencing how individuals construct and interpret meaning during interaction (Schmidt et al., 2023). In multicultural healthcare teams, professionals often bring different assumptions about politeness, authority, and acceptable communication behavior, which are influenced by their respective cultural backgrounds (Fawole, 2014). For example, discrepancies between direct and indirect communication styles can create subtle misunderstandings that influence teamwork dynamics, especially during collaborative activities such as patient handovers (Mantley, 2021). Theoretical perspectives on intercultural communication suggest that these breakdowns frequently occur not from individual incompetence but from differences in cultural communication systems (Almutairi, 2015). Consequently, communication in multicultural healthcare teams often requires ongoing adaptation and negotiation among professionals to ensure clinical safety and team cohesion.

Language differences represent another significant dimension identified in the analysis, often producing specific interactional challenges. The study finds that reliance on a shared working language frequently leads to linguistic variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and nuance that affect message clarity. A recurring pattern is the emergence of hesitation among non-native speakers, which can influence the flow of clinical information and the speed of decision-making. These linguistic dynamics are interpreted as a form of linguistic asymmetry within professional teams. Literature examining multicultural nursing environments highlights that language differences do not merely represent technical barriers; they also shape power relations and interaction confidence within professional teams (Philip et al., 2019). Studies indicate that linguistic asymmetry can lead to disparities in how professionals participate in clinical discussions and how their expertise is perceived by colleagues (Dannhauer et al., 2025). Intercultural communication theory explains these power dynamics by identifying language as a tool that can either facilitate or constrain professional agency (Lundin et al., 2018). These findings imply that addressing linguistic competence is essential not only for technical accuracy but also for promoting professional equity in diverse healthcare institutions.

Non-verbal communication also emerges as an influential element shaping interaction and trust within culturally diverse teams. The analysis shows that non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, eye contact, and gestures carry culturally specific meanings that are often misread by colleagues from different backgrounds. These

misinterpretations can lead to unintentional perceptions of disrespect or confrontational behavior, which in turn affect interpersonal trust. This aligns with theoretical claims that non-verbal communication is deeply embedded in cultural practices and social expectations (Almutairi, 2015). While specific empirical data on non-verbal cues in healthcare teams is less common, intercultural theory suggests that awareness of these differences can reduce misunderstandings and support more effective collaboration. Understanding these dynamics is therefore essential for interpreting how cultural diversity shapes professional interaction and relationship building in clinical settings.

The study further identifies that multicultural healthcare teams often develop adaptive communication practices to manage cultural and linguistic differences. The analysis reveals that professionals frequently employ strategies such as repeating instructions, verifying interpretations, and simplifying language to reduce ambiguity. These adaptive practices reflect a collective learning process in which individuals adjust their interaction styles to accommodate the diversity of the team. This process is consistent with communication accommodation theory, which describes how individuals adjust their communication to facilitate mutual understanding in cross-cultural interactions (Dannhauer et al., 2025). Previous studies have documented similar conversational strategies used by foreign-trained clinicians to navigate professional communication challenges (Fawole, 2014). These adaptive practices demonstrate that communication challenges in multicultural environments are not static obstacles but evolving interaction processes that can be managed through continuous interpersonal adjustment.

Finally, the organizational environment is found to play a critical role in facilitating or constraining communication in diverse teams. The analysis shows that institutional factors such as leadership approaches, professional training, and workplace hierarchies significantly influence the effectiveness of multicultural interaction. Organizations that promote openness and mutual respect are found to have stronger collaborative communication patterns. This interpretation is supported by research emphasizing the importance of inclusive leadership and emotional intelligence in managing diverse nursing teams (Haskins, 2008). Theoretical models suggest that organizational contexts can either facilitate or constrain the process of intercultural adaptation (Schmidt et al., 2023). This highlights the need for healthcare institutions to develop structural supports, such as cultural awareness programs and supportive leadership frameworks, to enhance communication competence among diverse staff.

The synthesis of these findings advances the understanding of communication in multicultural workplaces by integrating interpersonal dynamics with organizational structures. While previous literature often examined communication barriers in isolation, the present analysis demonstrates how cultural, linguistic, and organizational factors interact to shape professional collaboration. This holistic perspective aligns with the broader objectives of intercultural communication research in professional environments (Schmidt et al., 2023). By clarifying the interplay between cultural interpretation, linguistic competence, and institutional context, the study contributes to filling the gap between interpersonal intercultural communication studies and organizational communication research in healthcare.

### ***3.2 Communication Barriers in Multicultural Healthcare Workplaces***

Intercultural communication theory provides an important conceptual lens for understanding communication barriers in multicultural professional environments. The theory explains that communication difficulties often arise when individuals interpret

messages through culturally shaped frameworks of meaning. Cultural norms influence how people express ideas, respond to authority, and interpret both verbal and non-verbal signals. In multicultural healthcare teams, these differences may generate misunderstandings that affect professional interaction and coordination (Schmidt et al., 2023). Communication barriers therefore emerge not only from linguistic limitations but also from differences in cultural expectations and communication styles. Intercultural communication theory emphasizes that meaning is negotiated during interaction, and differences in cultural interpretation may disrupt this negotiation process (Claramita & Susilo, 2024). Within healthcare organizations, such disruptions may influence teamwork and information exchange among professionals. Examining communication barriers through this theoretical perspective allows a deeper understanding of how multicultural environments shape workplace interaction. This approach also highlights that communication challenges reflect broader intercultural dynamics rather than isolated interpersonal problems (Schmidt et al., 2023).

A recurrent issue identified in the literature concerns language differences among healthcare professionals working in multicultural teams. In many healthcare institutions, English or another dominant language functions as the primary medium for professional communication. However, for many professionals this language is not their first language, which may influence their confidence and clarity in workplace communication (Philip et al., 2019). Differences in pronunciation, vocabulary familiarity, and language fluency can affect how messages are conveyed and interpreted. In clinical environments where communication must be precise and timely, even small linguistic misunderstandings may create uncertainty. Healthcare professionals may sometimes hesitate to request clarification if they are unsure about linguistic accuracy or fear negative evaluation from colleagues. Such hesitation can influence the clarity of communication during important tasks such as patient handovers or medical documentation. Intercultural communication theory interprets these dynamics as examples of linguistic asymmetry in intercultural interaction (Dannhauer et al., 2025). Language differences therefore function not only as technical barriers but also as factors shaping confidence and participation in professional dialogue. These linguistic dynamics illustrate how multicultural workplaces must continuously manage the complexity of multilingual communication (Lundin et al., 2018).

Cultural differences in communication styles also contribute to barriers within multicultural healthcare teams. Different cultural traditions often emphasize distinct approaches to expressing ideas and interacting with colleagues. Some cultural contexts encourage direct communication and explicit expression of opinions, while others emphasize indirect communication and contextual interpretation (Claramita & Susilo, 2024). When professionals with these differing communication styles interact, messages may be interpreted differently from the speaker's intended meaning. For instance, indirect expressions intended to maintain politeness may be perceived as unclear or ambiguous by colleagues accustomed to direct communication. Conversely, direct communication styles may be interpreted as overly assertive or confrontational in cultures that value indirect expression (Ng et al., 2017). These differences can create subtle tensions during professional interaction, particularly when healthcare professionals must coordinate tasks or negotiate decisions. Intercultural communication theory highlights that communication style differences reflect deeply embedded cultural values. Understanding these differences is therefore essential for interpreting interaction patterns in multicultural workplaces. Without such awareness, communication styles may inadvertently create barriers to effective collaboration (Fawole, 2014).

Non-verbal communication further complicates interaction in culturally diverse healthcare teams. Non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, and eye contact carry culturally specific meanings that may not be universally shared. Healthcare professionals may interpret these cues through their own cultural expectations, which can lead to unintended misunderstandings. For example, variations in speaking volume or vocal tone may be perceived as emotional intensity rather than cultural communication norms. Similarly, differences in eye contact or physical distance during conversation may influence perceptions of attentiveness or respect (Claramita & Susilo, 2024). These interpretive differences can shape interpersonal perceptions and influence workplace relationships among colleagues. Intercultural communication theory explains that non-verbal communication is deeply embedded within cultural practices and social norms. As a result, professionals working in multicultural environments must continuously interpret and adapt to diverse non-verbal communication patterns. The literature suggests that misinterpretation of non-verbal signals may contribute to interpersonal tension in healthcare teams. Recognizing these dynamics is essential for understanding communication barriers in multicultural workplaces.

Another dimension of communication barriers relates to professional hierarchy and workplace interaction norms. Healthcare organizations often operate within structured hierarchies where communication flows through defined professional roles. In multicultural teams, cultural expectations regarding authority and hierarchy may influence how professionals communicate with supervisors or colleagues. Some cultural contexts emphasize deference to authority and discourage open questioning of senior professionals (Ng et al., 2017). In contrast, other cultural traditions encourage active participation and direct questioning during professional discussion. When these differing expectations intersect within the same workplace, communication dynamics may become complex. Healthcare professionals may feel uncertain about how openly they can express disagreement or request clarification. Such uncertainty may affect communication during clinical decision-making or team coordination (Malik et al., 2024). Intercultural communication theory suggests that hierarchical communication patterns are shaped by cultural values regarding authority and respect. Understanding these patterns helps explain why communication barriers may persist even when language differences are minimal.

The analysis of existing literature indicates that communication barriers in multicultural healthcare workplaces are rarely caused by a single factor. Instead, they emerge from the interaction of linguistic differences, cultural communication styles, non-verbal interpretation, and organizational hierarchies (Schmidt et al., 2023). These elements interact dynamically during professional communication and shape how messages are exchanged and interpreted. Intercultural communication theory provides a useful framework for understanding this complexity because it emphasizes the interaction between culture and communication behavior. The findings reinforce earlier empirical studies that identify language and cultural interpretation as central challenges in multicultural workplaces. At the same time, the analysis extends previous research by highlighting how organizational structures and professional roles influence these communication dynamics. Communication barriers therefore reflect broader institutional contexts rather than solely interpersonal misunderstandings (Schmidt et al., 2023). Recognizing this complexity is important for understanding communication processes in multicultural healthcare teams. These insights contribute to bridging the gap between intercultural communication research and organizational communication studies.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings confirm and refine key propositions of intercultural communication theory within professional organizational settings. The theory suggests that cultural differences shape both message production and interpretation, which can generate misunderstanding in cross-cultural interaction. The literature examined in this study supports this proposition by illustrating how cultural and linguistic diversity influences workplace communication in healthcare teams. However, the findings also extend the theory by emphasizing the role of organizational structures in shaping intercultural communication dynamics. Communication barriers are not solely determined by cultural differences but are also influenced by institutional hierarchies and professional interaction norms (Schmidt et al., 2023). This broader interpretation contributes to expanding the theoretical understanding of intercultural communication within complex professional environments. The analysis also addresses the empirical gap identified earlier by synthesizing existing research on communication barriers in multicultural healthcare workplaces. By integrating cultural, linguistic, and organizational dimensions, the discussion provides a more comprehensive understanding of communication challenges in diverse teams. These insights strengthen the conceptual foundation for examining communication dynamics in multicultural professional contexts.

### 3.3 Organizational Communication Practices that Facilitate Collaboration in Multicultural Teams

Intercultural communication theory suggests that effective interaction in multicultural environments depends not only on individual communication competence but also on organizational structures that support intercultural understanding. In professional institutions such as healthcare organizations, communication practices are shaped by institutional norms, leadership expectations, and collaborative routines that guide how individuals interact. When healthcare teams consist of professionals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, organizational communication practices become essential mechanisms for maintaining clarity and cooperation. These practices help establish shared communication standards that reduce ambiguity in cross-cultural interaction. Intercultural communication theory emphasizes that adaptation and mutual understanding emerge through repeated interaction within structured communication environments (Schmidt et al., 2023). Consequently, organizations that encourage dialogue, verification of meaning, and cultural awareness often experience stronger collaboration among diverse teams (Almutairi, 2015). Within multicultural healthcare workplaces, such communication practices enable professionals to navigate cultural differences while maintaining coordinated patient care. To clarify how these practices operate within multicultural teams, the following table summarizes key organizational communication functions identified in the literature.

**Table 1. Organizational Communication Functions Supporting Collaboration in Multicultural Healthcare Teams**

Organizational Communication Function	Description	Role in Multicultural Collaboration
Cultural competence development	Organizational training and awareness programs that increase understanding of different cultural norms and communication styles.	Helps professionals recognize cultural differences and adjust communication behavior to reduce misunderstandings.
Language adaptation practices	Use of simplified language, clarification techniques, and	Enhances clarity of professional communication and reduces risks

	multilingual communication support.	associated with linguistic misunderstanding.
Communication verification mechanisms	Practices such as repeating instructions, confirming interpretations, and structured patient handovers.	Ensures accurate interpretation of information and strengthens collaborative coordination.
Collaborative interaction norms	Organizational expectations encouraging open dialogue, teamwork, and mutual respect among professionals.	Promotes trust and cooperative communication within multicultural teams.
Shared professional values	Organizational emphasis on respect, tolerance, and inclusivity in workplace interaction.	Strengthens interpersonal relationships and encourages constructive communication across cultural differences.

**Source:** Processed by the researcher, 2026

The functions presented in Table 1 illustrate how organizational communication practices operate as structural mechanisms that support collaboration within multicultural healthcare teams. Cultural competence development plays an important role in helping professionals recognize that communication differences often stem from cultural norms rather than individual behavior. Through training and awareness initiatives, organizations can foster a deeper understanding of intercultural communication dynamics. This finding is consistent with the Critical Cultural Competence (CCC) model, which posits that continuous education and organizational orientation are necessary to address the complexities of cross-cultural clinical interactions (Almutairi, 2015). Language adaptation practices further strengthen communication clarity by encouraging professionals to verify understanding and use accessible language during professional interaction. Such practices help minimize misunderstandings that may occur when professionals communicate in a shared language that is not their native language. Communication verification mechanisms, including structured handover procedures and message confirmation practices, create opportunities to clarify meaning and ensure that critical information is accurately transmitted. While individual skills are important, the literature suggests that these verification moves are often contingent upon organizational routines and the availability of formal support structures (Lundin et al., 2018). These mechanisms are particularly important in healthcare environments where precise communication is essential for patient safety.

Another important dimension of organizational communication practices involves the development of collaborative interaction norms within healthcare teams. In multicultural workplaces, collaboration depends on mutual trust and openness during professional interaction. Organizational norms that encourage respectful dialogue and active participation help professionals feel more comfortable expressing ideas and asking for clarification. Such norms can reduce hesitation among staff members who might otherwise avoid speaking up due to cultural or linguistic differences. Previous research highlights that creating an atmosphere of psychological safety and equality is a prerequisite for staff at all levels to voice concerns and clarify information (Ng et al., 2017). Intercultural communication theory emphasizes that shared interaction norms provide a common framework that guides communication behavior across cultural boundaries. Within healthcare teams, these norms facilitate coordinated decision-making and strengthen interpersonal relationships among professionals. By establishing clear expectations for respectful communication, organizations can create an environment where cultural diversity becomes a resource rather than a barrier (Malik et al., 2024).

Shared professional values represent another key element supporting communication in multicultural healthcare workplaces. Values such as respect, patience, and inclusivity create a foundation for constructive interaction among professionals with different cultural backgrounds. These values influence how individuals respond to communication differences and how they interpret the behavior of colleagues. When organizations actively promote inclusive workplace values, professionals are more likely to approach communication challenges with openness and understanding. The literature indicates that humanistic professional values often guide decisions in multilingual settings, stabilizing interaction when technical barriers arise (Lundin et al., 2018). Intercultural communication theory suggests that shared values help create common ground in culturally diverse environments. In healthcare settings, such values can strengthen teamwork by encouraging professionals to focus on collective goals rather than cultural differences (Schmidt et al., 2023). Shared professional values therefore function as social anchors that stabilize communication dynamics within multicultural teams. Through these values, organizations can cultivate a communication climate that supports cooperation and mutual learning.

The analysis of organizational communication practices extends existing discussions in intercultural communication theory by emphasizing the role of institutional context in shaping cross-cultural interaction. Previous research has often focused on individual communication competence as the primary factor influencing intercultural interaction. However, the findings discussed here demonstrate that organizational communication structures also play a significant role in facilitating collaboration within multicultural teams. Practices such as cultural competence training, communication verification mechanisms, and collaborative interaction norms create institutional conditions that support intercultural adaptation. These practices enable professionals to manage communication differences more effectively within complex organizational environments. This shifts the focus from purely interpersonal skill to the "interpreter conditions" and organizational routines that frame how communication occurs (Lundin et al., 2018). The findings therefore confirm earlier empirical studies emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness and teamwork in diverse workplaces. At the same time, they refine theoretical discussions by illustrating how organizational communication practices translate intercultural communication principles into practical workplace strategies.

From a broader analytical perspective, the discussion contributes to filling the theoretical and empirical gaps identified earlier in the study. While previous literature has documented communication barriers in multicultural healthcare teams, fewer studies have systematically examined the organizational mechanisms that support effective communication. The present analysis addresses this gap by synthesizing research on communication practices that facilitate collaboration in culturally diverse workplaces. By integrating intercultural communication theory with organizational communication perspectives, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare environments. These insights demonstrate that effective communication in diverse teams is not solely dependent on individual skills but also on supportive organizational structures (Schmidt et al., 2023). The findings therefore highlight the importance of institutional practices that encourage cultural awareness, dialogue, and collaborative communication. Through this analytical synthesis, the study contributes to advancing theoretical discussions on intercultural communication within organizational contexts while addressing practical challenges faced by multicultural healthcare teams.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study examined communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare teams through the lens of intercultural communication theory, focusing on how cultural diversity influences organizational communication practices. The analysis highlighted that communication in multicultural healthcare workplaces is shaped by differences in cultural norms, language proficiency, communication styles, and interpretations of non-verbal interaction. These differences can create barriers that affect collaboration, information exchange, and teamwork among healthcare professionals. The findings also demonstrate that communication challenges are not solely individual problems but are embedded within broader organizational communication structures. Language asymmetry, cultural expectations regarding hierarchy, and variations in communication styles frequently influence how messages are interpreted and how professionals engage in workplace dialogue. At the same time, multicultural healthcare teams often develop adaptive communication practices to manage these challenges. Organizational communication mechanisms such as cultural competence development, communication verification practices, and collaborative interaction norms play a key role in facilitating effective teamwork. These findings indicate that communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare environments emerge from the interaction between cultural diversity and organizational communication systems.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on organizational communication in multicultural professional environments by integrating intercultural communication theory with healthcare workplace dynamics. Previous studies have often focused on interpersonal communication competence or patient-provider interaction, whereas this study emphasizes communication among healthcare professionals within multicultural organizational contexts. By synthesizing existing literature, the analysis highlights how cultural diversity interacts with institutional communication structures to shape teamwork and collaboration. The findings extend theoretical discussions by demonstrating that intercultural communication processes in healthcare settings are influenced not only by cultural differences but also by organizational communication practices and professional hierarchies. This perspective refines existing theoretical frameworks by situating intercultural communication within complex institutional environments where communication has operational implications for coordination and collaboration. The study also contributes empirically by synthesizing evidence on communication barriers and organizational practices that facilitate effective interaction among multicultural healthcare teams. Through this integrative approach, the research bridges the gap between intercultural communication scholarship and organizational communication studies in healthcare contexts. The study therefore advances understanding of how communication operates within culturally diverse professional systems.

Future research could further expand the understanding of communication dynamics in multicultural healthcare workplaces by examining specific organizational contexts and governance environments. Empirical studies involving healthcare professionals across different institutional settings may provide deeper insights into how organizational policies, leadership styles, and professional cultures influence intercultural communication. Comparative research across healthcare systems in different countries could also reveal how cultural diversity interacts with institutional structures in shaping workplace communication. Additionally, future studies may explore the role of leadership communication in fostering inclusive and collaborative

environments within multicultural healthcare teams. Investigating how training programs and professional development initiatives support cultural competence and communication adaptation would also contribute valuable insights. Another potential direction involves examining digital communication platforms and how technology mediates communication among culturally diverse healthcare professionals. Such research could provide a more nuanced understanding of how organizational communication evolves in increasingly globalized healthcare systems. Expanding research in these directions would deepen theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication while supporting the development of effective organizational practices in multicultural professional environments.

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