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**Applying an Asiacentric Communication model to
explore the experiences of Indian skilled migrants in
New Zealand workplaces.**

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A thesis submitted to Massey University in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Business

2023

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Abstract

Globalisation is the norm in the 21st century with global citizens moving around the world for a range of reasons such as work, education, and better opportunities. A significant change in demographics has meant that intercultural communication is no longer an option but has become a crucial component of interactions between people from different cultures. This change is not reflected in the communication frameworks that inform education, workplaces and policymakers which are predominantly US/Eurocentric frameworks. While this has been mentioned and acknowledged, real efforts to build alternate communication frameworks have been limited. In recent years Asiatic communication research has developed due to the works for scholars such as Chen and Starosta 2003; Chen and Miike 2003; Chen 2006; Gunaratne 2008, Miike 2002, 2006, 2007, 2016, 2017, 2019; Miike & Yin 2022. This study aims to add to Asiatic communication research by researching the experiences of Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces through the lens of an Asiatic communication model, Sadharanikaran, an Indian model of communication.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect detailed accounts of participant experiences. Reflective Thematic Analysis was used along with the Sadharanikaran communication model for analysis of data. Themes regarding the barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces were identified from the data. The themes are maintaining harmony, indirect Indian 'can't say no' and Indirect New Zealander 'too polite', quiet at first – voice, management intercultural communication competence, and racism. Analysis of skilled migrant experiences using the Sadharanikaran communication model allowed for the Asian communicator and Asian practices to be at the centre of inquiry. The findings aligned with the Asiatic communication model, this shows that all the communication behaviours found although very different from US/Eurocentric communication was well within the scope of competent Asiatic communication.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Table of Figures.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	6
1. Introduction	7
1.1 Research background.....	7
1.2 Skilled migrants and the New Zealand context	8
1.3 Indian Skilled migrants.....	9
1.4 Current Covid background	11
Research questions	12
1.5 Structure of the thesis	13
1.6 Summary	13
2. Literature Review	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 US/Eurocentrism in Communication Studies.....	14
2.3 Asiacentricity in Communication studies.....	17
2.4 Sadharanikaran Communication Model	19
2.5 Communication barriers for Indian Skilled migrant in New Zealand workplaces.....	22
2.5.1 Passive/Quiet	22
2.5.2 Language norms.....	23
2.5.3 Racism	24
2.6 Other barriers.....	24
2.6.1 Employment experience and education.....	24
2.6.2 Adaptation and Integration of skilled migrants	25
2.6.3 Management/Organisation Intercultural communication competence	26
2.7 Conclusion.....	27
3. Research Methods	28
3.1 Introduction	28
3.2 Research Paradigm	28
3.3 Research method	31
3.4 Data Collection.....	32
3.5 Data Analysis.....	33
3.6 Sample.....	34
3.7 Ethical considerations	35

3.8 Methods of achieving reliability and validity	36
3.9 Summary	37
4. Findings and Discussion	38
4.1 Introduction	38
4.2 Maintaining harmony.....	39
4.3 Indirect Indian ‘Can’t say no’ and Indirect New Zealander ‘Too polite’	42
4.3.1 <i>Indians ‘can’t say no’</i>	42
4.3.2 New Zealander’s too polite	43
4.4 Quiet at first - Voice	44
4.5 Adapting to ‘the New Zealand way’ of communicating.....	47
4.6 Management intercultural communication competence.....	50
4.7 Racism	53
4.8 Answering the research questions.....	56
4.9 Implications of findings and recommendations	57
4.10 Summary	58
5. Conclusion.....	59
5.1 Overview of the study.....	59
5.2 Key findings	59
5.3 Research contributions	61
5.4 Research limitations.....	62
5.5 Areas for future research.....	62
5.6 Summary	62
6. References	63
Appendix A – Massey University Ethics Low Risk Notification Letter.....	70
Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet	71
Appendix C – Participant Consent Form	73
Appendix D – Interview Questions Schedule.....	74
Appendix E – Authority for The Release of Transcripts	75

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment – Approved Indian skilled migrant work visas.....	9
Figure 2 Sadharanikaran Communication Model (Adhikary, 2008).....	21
Figure 3 US/Eurocentric Research Paradigms (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill, 2011)	29
Figure 4 Chinese Communication Paradigm (Chen & An, 2009, p. 204)	30
Figure 5 Participant list	35

Acknowledgements

I am ever grateful to:

Dr Yoshitaka Miike for boldly developing the field of Asiaticity providing a field for research that is both exciting and important.

My supervisor Dr Franco Vaccarino for his forbearance with me as I grappled with understanding Asiaticity in Communication studies.

My family Nadia and Jerry for continuous cheerleading.

1. Introduction

“Communication, it is said, is the lifeblood of society. It is vital to the functioning of human social order. Communication is constitutive of culture. No culture can breathe without communication.”

(Dissanayake, 2003 p. 17)

1.1 Research background

The world we live in today is vastly globalised and national boundaries are ever decreasing. The global workplace is dynamic, and communication is influenced by cultural, economic, and historical tensions (Martin & Nakayama, 2015). In this environment intercultural communication is no longer optional, it occurs whether we like it or not. Intercultural communication can be defined as communication between individuals from different cultures. Culture can be defined as a set of shared meanings, symbols, and norms (Dissanayake, 2003; Croucher et al., 2015). Frey & Kreps (2000) define communication as the process by which verbal and nonverbal messages are used to create and share meaning.

Despite the above reality, communication models taught and applied in schools, universities, and workplaces all over the world are predominantly US/Eurocentric. This means that many cultures and their styles of communication are constantly in the peripheral (Miike, 2002; 2003). For many years scholars have highlighted issues of accepting the US/Eurocentric communication models as being universally applicable (Nordstorm, 1983; Chu, 1986; Kincaid, 1987; Dissanayake, 1986 as cited in Miike, 2003). However, little has been done about this in terms of developing alternate communication models that are readily available for application.

Within the bicultural context in New Zealand, research that values different lenses, perspectives, and worldviews is important and crucial. Currently in New Zealand, Kaupapa Māori allows for research on the Māori perspective to grow in a meaningful way (Walker et al., 2006). Likewise, there is a movement towards developing indigenous frameworks across the world. Asante (1998 as cited in Miike, 2003) has done ground-breaking work on Afrocentricity considering communication through an African lens and in the last three decades significant progress has also been made in developing an Asiatic perspective of communication (Chen & Miike, 2003; Gunaratne, 2008; Dissanayake, 2009).

Both western and non-western scholars alike agree that it would be hugely beneficial to the field if communication models from non-Western societies are included in the mainstream understanding of communication (Miike, 2002; 2006; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014; Croucher et al. 2015). Gordon (2007) put it this way:

We need Asian scholars, looking through new lenses, to explore the idea of 'communication' and its practices within cultures from around the world ... The world needs Asian scholars who, in at least some of their scholarly endeavours, dare to pursue fresh topics, questions, concepts, perspectives, and methods ... We need young Asian scholars who will energetically explore and develop fresh alternative paradigms and atypical approaches ... have an abiding respect for the wisdom from the past, and a serious concern for the future. (pp. 53-54).

This study aims to do just that, the goal is to consider the experiences with a focus on communication barriers, faced by Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces through the lens of an Asiacentric communication model.

1.2 Skilled migrants and the New Zealand context

Skilled migrants are highly educated people and have become an important part of the global workforce (Nandan, 2005; van Tonder & Soontiens, 2013; Shirmohammadi et al., 2019). Governments have been accessing skilled migrants by creating immigration policies that attract them to make up for skill shortages in their countries. Research reports that skilled migrants contribute to the advancement of the economy of host countries in terms of innovation, research, technological progress, business creation, increased productivity and are a source of competitive advantage for organisations (Syed, 2008; Zikic, 2015; Rajendran et al., 2017). Khadria (2001) states that much of the skill-based development the world experienced was directly influenced by skilled migrants in the west. Research reports that in the current competitive global economy countries and organisations that are able to attract and retain skilled migrants are likely to be the ones that will be most successful (Coates & Carr, 2005).

New Zealand, like many other countries has restructured immigration policies to facilitate not only permanent migration but also temporary migration and student migration (Hugo, 2008; Iqbal, 2017). The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (NZMBIE) indicated in 2014 that the role of immigration is to attract and retain skilled migrants by providing pathways to permanent residency (Watts & Trilin, 2000; Joseph, 2016). New Zealand is combating a shortage of skilled labour and relies on skilled migrants to fill in the gaps. This shortage is likely to increase as the population ages (Iqbal, 2017). However, literature reports that skilled migrants face several difficulties and barriers in their transition in a host country (Tharenou & Kulik 2020).

There are two types of skilled migrants who migrate to New Zealand, skilled professionals, and students (Ho & Bedford, 2008; Khadria, 2001). Post-graduate students are considered to be ideal skilled migrants as they will have local education and work experience before joining the professional

workforce (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012). Skilled migrants migrate for a host of reasons including economic advancement, quality of life, relaxed pace – work/life balance, professional development, increasing competitiveness both nationally and internationally, opportunities for continuing education, the environment, better future for children, love of travel, self-actualisation, to name a few (Alonso-Garbayo & Maben, 2009; Tabor et al. 2015; Kōu & Bailey, 2014; Yates, 2015).

International migration has changed over the last few decades in the early 1990’s people migrated once and stayed in the new country permanently but in recent years this trend of mobility has changed. Skilled migrants are now very mobile, moving from country to country to enhance their professional experience (Hugo, 2008). Skilled migrants also retain strong connections with their home country, and many choose to return to their home country after a period of time abroad (Khadira, 2001; Siar, 2014). China and India contribute four out of ten people in the world and are the largest contributors of skilled migrants (Kōu & Bailey, 2014). The next section will focus on Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand.

1.3 Indian Skilled migrants

Indians have been migrating to New Zealand for over a century (Friesen, 2008). For many skilled Indians international migration is considered a natural pathway for acquiring knowledge (Kōu & Bailey, 2014). Initially the United Kingdom was the main destination for Indian migrants, then then the United States of America began to welcome Indian skilled migrants. This was then followed by Canada, Germany, France, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Ireland, Korea, and Singapore (Khadria, 2001). New Zealand was marketed as a friendly, welcoming, English-speaking, cricket-loving country with quality education, developed infrastructure and breath-taking scenery on offer (Friesen, 2008). According to NZMBIE, India is the largest source country for migrants approved for

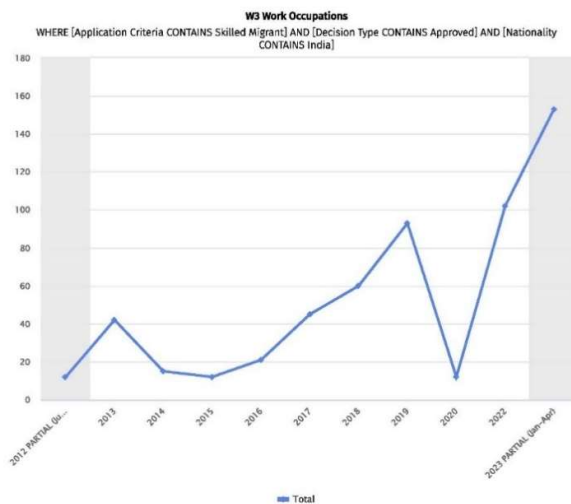


Figure 1: Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment – Approved Indian skilled migrant work visas

residence in New Zealand (Joseph, 2016). See the graph on Figure 1 showing the number of Indian skilled migrants approved to work in New Zealand over the last decade.

Usually, the decision to migrate is one that is made and supported by the parents and the extended family as it has implications for the whole family. Sometimes one spouse may migrate to find a job and settle in the host country while the other spouse remains at the home country. Other times a couple may migrate leaving children behind with their parents or other extended family, or adult children might migrate as students and the parents might join them in the future. These families are referred to as 'transnational family' wherein a family is deliberately living in different countries for better opportunities in education or employment (Ho, & Bedford, 2008; Joseph, 2016, Nandan, 2005). Tabor et al. (2015) refers to migration as a multigenerational and multinational process. Research by Joseph (2016) showed that immigrants' efforts to move to New Zealand were influenced not only by their families but also larger networks such as friends, schoolmates, community, social networks, and other transnational networks (Percot & Rajan, 2007; Kōu & Bailey, 2014). Despite living in a different culture, Indians tend to continue to hold on to the collectivist orientations wherein the extended family and community still have a lot of involvement in the migration of people (Nandan, 2005).

There is a trend in India of migrating to Gulf countries in large numbers particularly within the health sector. Reasons for migrating to Gulf countries included economic growth, opportunities to work in modern facilities with access to cutting edge technologies and better working conditions in comparison to India (Alonso-Garbayo & Maben, 2009). However, majority of the skilled migrants then remigrate to other countries even when their economic needs are met in the Gulf countries, thus confirming that economic gain is not the only reason skilled migrants migrate. Reasons for remigrating out of Gulf countries include racism, legislations where migrants have no rights for example, they cannot buy a home or live there permanently. Similarly, Indian skilled migrants who migrated to the United Kingdom, despite having better immigration policies in comparison to Gulf Countries, have also remigrated due to poor working conditions, unfair pay and poor work-life balance (Percot & Rajan, 2007).

The global economy has created endless opportunities for skilled migrants making them extremely mobile. As high-income countries discovered India as a talent source with the added bonus of being an English-speaking country, immigration policies have been created to attract Indian skilled migrants (Nandan, 2005). Initially skilled migration was profession-specific such as doctors, engineers, IT professionals, but in recent times skilled migration has extended to more generic skills. This has resulted in mass migration from India and was referred to as 'brain drain' in Indian literature (Gill, 2011). However, this changed over time and skilled migration is now referred to as 'brain gain' or

'brain bank' in literature due to the economic and political benefits that skilled migrants recentre to their home country as emigrants have brought back technological advancement and global work experiences when they returned home (Khadria, 2001).

In such a competitive environment retaining skill in India has been a struggle in many sectors (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014; Chhugani & James, 2017). Reasons identified in literature for emigration include poor working conditions, workload challenges, work demands, work stress, workplace harassment, short-staffed workplaces, lack of work-life balance and lack of job satisfaction to name a few (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014). Strong political commitment is required to address these issues head on in order to combat the shortage of skilled labour in India (Gill, 2011).

Rajendran et al. (2017) are of the view that in order to be a competitive location for skilled migrants, New Zealand's immigration strategy needs to move from being a plan to a policy that ensures that migrants are valued by both the public and private organisations. Canada for instance has established partnerships among policymakers, employers, and immigrant communities specifically for removing barriers in the workplace to skilled migrants. They have also invested in educating locals to alleviate intercultural barriers for skilled migrants (Zikic, 2015). In this study the intercultural communication experiences faced by Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces will be considered using an Asiatic communication model. The next section addresses the current backdrop in which this study is being conducted.

1.4 Current Covid background

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the ongoing global pandemic. With the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in December 2019 there have been blocked borders, physical distancing that extended into societies, and divisions among cultures have escalated globally (Mangla, 2021).

The pandemic has had an intensely adverse effect on transnational families including skilled migrants as borders became strictly closed by most nations as the virus spread in 2020. Families were separated for indefinite periods of time, spouses were separated from each other, and children from parents. Digital communication became the only contact with families and the stress of long-distance relationships had adverse effects on the wellbeing and of all effected including skilled migrants (Skovgaard-Smith, 2021).

Participants for this study were affected by this too. Here are some quotes from them:

P3: *"Because of COVID and immigration rules, my wife is stuck in India".*

P4: *"So many groups started like 'split migrant families'. As migrants we are happy to follow whatever government says ... but still they are not understanding the real pain".*

P11: *“Because of COVID and being away from family there were mental struggles”.*

P15: *“I have a newborn who is nearly two years old, and I have not seen him yet due to border restrictions. I don’t think there are clear rights for migrants in New Zealand”.*

From a workplace perspective in the wake of the pandemic face to face communication moved to the virtual space and this has made intercultural communication even harder (Dumitraşcu-Băldău & Dumitraşcu, 2019). See quote by participant 14:

“When you are making your coffee, someone else comes in, they're making their cup of tea. You start talking - that interaction produces intercultural communication as simple as that. But working from home you only talk to people within a work meeting setting, and this makes it harder”.

Challenges within the virtual environment include reduced trust, lesser collaboration, and limited intercultural interaction. Research reports that it is likely the nature of work going forward is going to be more dynamic and virtual. Therefore, intercultural communication competence would then be crucial to ensure that multicultural groups perform well (Mangla, 2021).

Svtačová (2021) opines that in the wake of the pandemic intercultural communication is going to be one of the ways for developing global cooperation. Therefore, developing indigenous communication frameworks to expand the understanding of human communication is now urgent particularly in areas of national identity, international cooperation, and intercultural communication (Kulich et al., 2021). This study aims to add to this understanding by using an Asiacentric communication model, more details on the research aims are below.

Research questions

The main aim of this study is to examine intercultural communication experiences of Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces from a non-US/Eurocentric perspective, to change lenses and use an Asiacentric perspective. For this an Indian model of communication called Sadharanikaran will be used.

The research questions are:

- 1) What are the intercultural communication barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants in the workplace?
- 2) How can these barriers be understood from an Asiacentric perspective using Sadharanikaran communication model?

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This report is made up of five sections. The first section, the introduction has outlined the context in which this study is being conducted. The New Zealand context was discussed, along with skilled migrants and the current COVID backdrop.

The second section, the literature review provides the theoretical framework for the study. Literature on the topics of Eurocentrism in communication studies, the development of Asiatic communication including Sadharanikaran communication model are discussed. This is followed by a consideration of intercultural communication barriers that skilled migrants face in New Zealand. This includes consideration of skilled migrant adaptation, along with organisation and manager impact.

Section three is the research method used in this study; and this section outlines and discusses the research. Ethical considerations, limitations, reliability, and validity are also discussed.

Section four is the findings and discussion section. In this sections the emergent themes are outlined, discussed, and examined in the light of the theoretical framework and the literature review. The last section, the conclusion includes the summary of the study along with key findings, research contributions and ideas for future research.

1.6 Summary

In this section the research background is provided wherein the field of intercultural communication is being expanded to include non-US/Eurocentric communication models for understanding human communication. For this study the intercultural communication experiences of Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces are being considered. The New Zealand context along with details on Indian skilled migrants and the current COVID backdrop have been discussed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous section discussed Indian skilled migrants within the New Zealand context. It also provided the background and outline for this study. In this section I aim to establish the theoretical premise for the study.

To set the scene, the first part of this section includes a study of literature on US/Eurocentrism in communication studies and highlights some of the issues with this approach. This is followed by an exploratory study of literature into the concept of Asiaticity in communication studies, this part highlights the work of Yoshitaka Miike, a pioneer in developing the field. Following this is an in-depth look at one Asiatic communication model called Sadharanikaran communication model. It is relevant for this study as it is an Indian framework and will help in providing insight to the experiences of Indian skilled migrants. The objective of this study is to have an Asiatic lens while considering any intercultural communication barriers experienced by Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand.

The second part of the literature review focuses on communication barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand. Some of the other barriers faced by skilled migrants are also considered such as recognition of overseas study and work experiences, adaptation for integration into the workplace and the impact of manager/organisation intercultural communication competence. Literature that explores communication experiences from a non-US/Eurocentric perspective is limited in mainstream literature. However, it is an exciting time as there is an increase of scholarly activity in the area of developing indigenous frameworks, and it appears to be all over the world (Asante, 1998; Miike, 2002; Adhikary, 2003; Walker et al., 2006). This section ends with placing the aim of this study within the frame of existing literature.

2.2 US/Eurocentrism in Communication Studies

Asante (1998) observed that the ideology of US/Eurocentrism had permeated every field of study and area of life. US/Eurocentric theories and models have dominated the field of communication and continues to do so even in this postcolonial, postmodern age. From the beginning the work of scholars such as Shannon and Weaver, Laswell, Schramm, Berlo and Lerner has directed the field (Dissanayake, 2009). These works are based on Western contexts and for years have been uncritically accepted both in the West and the rest of the world as being universally applicable (Miike, 2006; Ishii, 2007; Gunaratne, 2010). US/Eurocentric dominance in communication studies means that Western contexts and frameworks are dominant in academic literature, policies, education, and the workplaces. Despite good intentions it highlights western agenda, while non-western cultures are pushed to the periphery (Gunaratne, 2010; R'Boul, 2021).

While the major influence on existing communication paradigms has been postmodern thought, the influence of orientalism and colonialism still lingers (Dissanayake, 2003; 2009). This refers to paradigms where Western cultures, languages and values are considered to be superior to those of the East; and the East is viewed as being a source of raw materials rather than thought (Wang & Shen, 2000; Gunaratne, 2010). In fact, it has been so established that the flow of learning goes from the West to the East that many Asian scholars, being utterly captivated by Western paradigms and models, have embraced it, imported it to Asia, applied it and taught it without critique of its contextual relevance (Miike, 2006; Gunaratne, 2010). According to Miike (2019) this has resulted in Asians being peripheral objects of data analysis rather than actors in their own realities.

Western paradigms, theories and models of communication have been known to be whitecentred, based on the Cartesian philosophy of dualism, of being predominantly positivist assuming linear progression, functionalist, centred around the individual and messenger focused (Dissanayake, 1986; 2003; Miike, 2002, 2007; Ishii, 2007; Adhikary, 2008; Chen, 2011). From an Asiatic perspective Miike (2007) highlights the following biases that exist in the values that US/Eurocentric communication theory is built on: 1) Communication is based on individuality and independence whereas in Asiaticism communication is a reminder of interdependence and interrelatedness. 2) Communication is self-centred and for self-improvement whereas from an Asiatic perspective it is a process of reducing the self and being other centred. 3) Communication is based on reason and rationality whereas from an Asiatic perspective communication is based on emotional sense and sensibility. 4) Communication is based on rights and freedom whereas from an Asiatic perspective communication is a process of receiving and returning our debts to one another. 5) Communication is pragmatic whereas from an Asiatic perspective it is used to bring morality and harmony in the universe.

The above sections highlights the difference in values that impact communication in US/Eurocentric perspective in comparison with an Asiatic perspective. There are several issues with assuming communication theories developed within a specific context as being universally applicable. Chen reports that the dominance of US/Eurocentrism in communication studies “eventually led to marginalisation, suppression, silence, exclusion” of other paradigms (2011, p. 2). Even cross-cultural communication studies have been criticised as they result in a monolithic understanding of human behaviours due to the US/Eurocentric lens used for investigating communication (Chen, 2006; Dissanayake, 2003). Ishii (2007) pointed out that most communication scholars both in the West and in Asia uncritically accepted US/Eurocentric work and neglected the centuries of Asian communication practices.

A one-sided understanding of complex intercultural interactions can result in ethnocentrism where the 'other' is viewed as deficient while in fact they could be responding in a way considered as appropriate within their own culture (Miike, 2006; Martin & Nakayama, 2015; R'Boul, 2021). Studies show that ethnocentrism is a barrier to good intercultural communication and can result in people relying on readily available stereotypes. This can lead to miscommunication, animosity, or more adverse reactions such as discrimination, racism, or fear (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015). For instance, in the medical field there can be misdiagnosing when cultural differences in communication are not accounted for or understood (Croucher et al. 2015; Campbell, 2016). Or another outcome is people from underrepresented contexts might be expected to culturally adjust to the western understanding of communication practices (R'Boul, 2021). Ethnocentrism also leads to hostility and discrimination towards the 'other' (Croucher et al. 2015; Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015). Li (2020) reports that intercultural divisions have widened due to ethnocentrism; and racism towards migrants is a common issue.

The need for communication literature to be 'de-westernised' (this refers to the end of absent minded following of western thought), is widely accepted by Western and non-Western scholars alike (Miike, 2002; 2006; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014; Croucher et al. 2015). Asian countries such as India, Japan, China, Korea have existed for centuries and have rich and established systems of communication that can greatly contribute to the present understanding of human communication (Dissanayake, 2003). On this quest, it is important to bear in mind that neither the East nor the West are homogenous units; this view undermines the complexity and diversity within these regions (Wang & Shen, 2000; Dissanayake, 2009). However, this should not deter inquiry, as diversity does not negate the fact that there are several common traditions across these regions (Miike, 2002). It is also important to be mindful that it would be impossible to access purely Asian thought as there has been interactions between Western and Eastern cultures for centuries. India for example is a multicultural, multilingual, multireligious country that was colonised by the British for many years (Dissanayake, 2003; Gunaratne, 2010). Ishii (2007) summarises the cause well, suggesting that it is important to pay attention to non-ethnocentric paradigms as it is every person's responsibility to *"develop a harmonious, peaceful and sustainable world order not by means of mass-devastating militaristic or terroristic violence but through intercultural, interethnic, international, interreligious and intercivilisational communication..."* (p. 113).

Asiacentric scholars implore that it is time for Asian researchers to stop criticising US/Eurocentric domination and to engage with the complexities of Asian communication practices and add to the expansion of the understanding of human communication (Chen & Miike, 2003; Dissanayake, 2003; Miike, 2006; Chen, 2007; Gunaratne, 2010).

Asiacentric research should not be considered as undermining the existing western paradigm but rather it should become common practice for communication models to consider different cultural perspectives in understanding intercultural communication (Li, 2020). Within the bicultural context in New Zealand for example, Kaupapa Māori has been set up for this very reason. Kaupapa Māori allows for research focused on Māori knowledge or Māori people on the Māori perspective to grow in a meaningful way. The act of centring a culture causes scholars to take into account all the complexities of that culture, it is not romanticism or ethnocentrism but rather a genuine post-colonial capture of culture (Walker et al., 2006, Miike, 2017). Miike (2002, 2006) is of the view that being culturally grounded enables communication to move away from imitation to encourage intercultural communication to be a process of contributing to humanity and that is the goal of Asiacentric communication research. Asiaticity is discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.3 Asiaticity in Communication studies

Globalisation instigated the questioning of the dominance of US/Eurocentrism (Chen, 2011). Asiatic theoretical work first emerged in the 1980s with the work of Nordstorm 1983, Kincaid 1987, Dissanayake 1986 (Miike, 2003). In the last two decades work in Asiatic communication studies has progressed significantly with the works of Chen and Starosta (2003), Chen and Miike (2003), Chen (2006), Gunaratne (2008), Miike (2002, 2006, 2007, 2016, 2017, 2019), Miike and Yin (2022). Despite strides being made in the field of Asiatic communication there is still not enough Asiatic theories and models readily available in mainstream literature to educators or students alike (Miike & Yin, 2022).

Asiaticity is a non-ethnocentric, non-essentialist paradigm wherein Asian languages, religions, philosophies, historical struggles, cultural heritage, and cumulative wisdom are at the centre of inquiry. It is research that is centred on Asian people, ideas, and ideals engaging with the complexity of the Asian experience (Miike, 2006, 2016, 2017). Asiatic research is not intended to replace the traditional understanding of intercultural communication, quite the contrary it seeks to complement it, as the field of communication has been established as a discipline with significant contributions over the years (Dissanayake, 2003; Ishii, 2007; Miike, 2009). The task is to re-examine existing theories from different non-western perspectives and initiate discourse that results in a deeper understanding of the complexities of communication (Miike, 2002; 2006; Dissanayake, 2003). This can be achieved by understanding indigenous cultural traditions and forming theories and models of communication that reflects local social realities (Ishii, 2007; Croucher et al. 2015; R'Boul, 2021).

Miike (2002) has identified the following insightful core assumptions of Asiatic communication:

1) communication occurs amidst multiple relationships within a context namely, analysis cannot be

based on an individual but would rather need to take into account political systems, religious beliefs, historical events and philosophical thoughts that form the culture in order to understand communication. 2) the communicator is both perceptually and behaviourally active and passive depending on the context, again the perceptions and behaviour are not based on the individual only but rather the context as well. And 3) mutual adaptation is a requirement for harmonious communication, this is because Asiatic communication is other-directed, and harmony focused.

There is a theme of nonlinear circular interconnectedness in the Asiatic paradigm – everything and everyone are connected across space and time. Humans do not exist independently but rather are impacted by relationships with others, political systems, economic power, history, religious beliefs, and the natural physical environment. The meaning to everyone and everything is gained in the context of relationships to others. Finally, harmony is the core that enables everyone and everything to survive (Miike, 2002, 2007; Chen, 2006; Ishii, 2007; Edmondson, 2009; Gunaratne, 2010; Li, 2020).

The Asiatic research agenda is to add to the existing body of communication knowledge by carrying out rigorous research and developing theories from various Asian contexts. Dissanayake (2009) suggests that ancient texts, classical traditions, rituals, and current practices should inform the formulation of Asiatic communication theories. Miike (2002; 2006) proposes that Asiatic communication should have its concepts rooted in Asian knowledge and should address linguistic, religious-philosophical, and historical dimensions. Miike (2003) has also suggested that Asiatic researchers should systematically build theory from Asian cultures, expand the geographical areas studied, compare and contrast Asian cultures with each other, develop multiple theories within historical contexts and develop indigenous methodology. It is imperative that inquiry goes beyond comparative works with US/Eurocentrism. Miike and Yin (2022) suggest that constantly comparing to US/Eurocentric intellect inadvertently assumes that they set the global standard. Uncritically assuming this needs to change, Ishii (2006) is of the view that it is important to promote two-way east to west intercultural communication activities.

Some researchers suggest that in today's globalised environment region-centric research is counter-productive and would treat Asia as a homogenous group (Wang & Shen, 2009; Eguchi, 2013; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014; Croucher et al. 2015). Miike (2019) disagrees with this view because Asiaticity is non-ethnocentric, as it does not claim that the Asian worldview is universally applicable. Also Asiaticity does not have a monolithic view of Asian cultures but rather appreciates the diversity of Asia (Miike, 2002). It only opposes the marginalisation of Asian cultural contexts and is therefore a worthy endeavour (Miike, 2019).

Therefore continuous effort is needed to build a solid Asiacentric paradigm. Local and culturally specific theories need to be generated reflecting local realities in order to address social issues all across Asia, and only then, Asiacentric research will enrich the existing US/Eurocentric knowledge (Miike, 2006; Chen, 2006; Dissanayake 2009). Asiacentric research should embrace the heterogeneity and homogeneity in Asia and treat both differences and similarities as being equally important (Chen & Starosta, 2003) and researchers should be wary of having an essentialist view of Asian culture, that is, viewing culture as being fixed or unchanging (Dissanayake, 2009).

Some examples of the work in the Asiacentric communication landscape includes Dissanayake's *apoha*, an Indian theory of differentiation (1983 as cited in Dissanayake, 2009), Korea's *uye-ri* complimentary and obligatory reciprocity (Yum, 1987 as cited in Chen, 2011), the Japanese communication concept of *amae* which refers to message expanding and message accepting needs (Miike, 2003), the Filipino concept of *kapwa* which is reciprocal being (Mendoza, 2004 as cited in Chen, 2011). Adhikary (2003, as cited in Adhikary, 2009) developed the Sadharanikaran an Indian communication model. This model will be used to provide the theoretical backbone for this study and is discussed in detail in the next section.

2.4 Sadharanikaran Communication Model

Sadharanikaran as a concept is rooted in Natyashastra, a classical Indian text on dance, drama and poetry written by Bharat Muni. It provides a perspective of the dramatist, the actor and the audience and thus provides a glimpse of communication systems (Kapadia-Kundu, 2013). The word Sadharanikaran comes from the Sanskrit word sadharan which means universally, generally, or simply, and relates to the concept of commonness or oneness (Adhikary, 2009; 2010). The Sadharanikaran Communication model has been developed by Adhikary (2003 as cited in Adhikary, 2009) as a communication model and provides a comprehensive framework to understand and analyse Indian communication. It is a popular Indian/Hindu model of communication that educational institutes in India are now using (Adhikary, 2008). Similar to other Eastern communication frameworks, the goal of communication, according to the Sadharanikaran communication model, is achieving harmony.

The communication process according to the Sadharanikaran communication model can be explained as follows (See figure 2 for graphic representation of the model):

The preshaka (sender) and prapaka (receiver) of messages are referred to as sahridayas (those with a common goal) engaging in two-way communication to achieve sahridayata (harmony). Sahridayata (harmony) enables people to communicate across complex hierarchies.

Bhavas (moods, emotions, thoughts) formed within the mental state causes the preshaka (sender) to initiate the process of communication. Bhavas can be perceived externally after going through the

levels of para (spiritual connection), pashyanti (indirect intuition), madhyama (mind/intellect) and finally vaikhari (external expression). It is at this stage that the bhava is manifested in a perceivable form.

Then the preshaka (sender) expresses messages non-verbally or verbally by abhivyanjana (encoding). A sanketa (code) is part abhivyanjana and provides meaning to bhavas (moods, emotions, thoughts). Gestures are an example of nonverbal sanketa (code), and language is an example of verbal sanketa (code).

The prapaka (receiver) must engage in rasawadana (decoding) to achieve rasa (aesthetic joy or understanding). When this is completed, sahridayata (harmony) is achieved, and communication is successful.

A sarani (channel) such as facial expressions or words are used to exchange sandesha (messages) across space and time. The mana (mind) and sharira (body) is considered as a sarani (channel) to accommodate the spiritual dimension of communication. A big part of the process of Sadharanikaran is internal as the mental life is considered to be superior to the physical. The physical life is not considered as ultimate but rather temporary as a sarani (channel) to achieve moksha (emancipation).

When Sadharanikaran is successful, it leads to universalisation or commonness (Adhikary, 2009). The communication process is not perfect and can be hindered by doshas (noises) that could lead to miscommunication. The meaning of messages is understood by the sandharba (context) in which communication occurs, the same words can have different meanings in different contexts.

Once a message has been sent via abhivyanjana (encoding) then pratikriya (feedback) is expected in order to keep the communication ongoing and therefore the prapaka (receiver) has an active role in communication (Adhikary, 2008, 2009; Shaw, 2019).

Similar to other Asiacentric communication models Sadharanikaran is non-linear, considers non-verbal communication, is not messenger focused, emphasises the importance of context, and allows for communication to be continuous as the receiver becomes the sender by providing feedback. It is broad enough to encompass the physical, mental, and spiritual stance of the communicator and is functional among hierarchies (Miike, 2002; Adhikary, 2009).

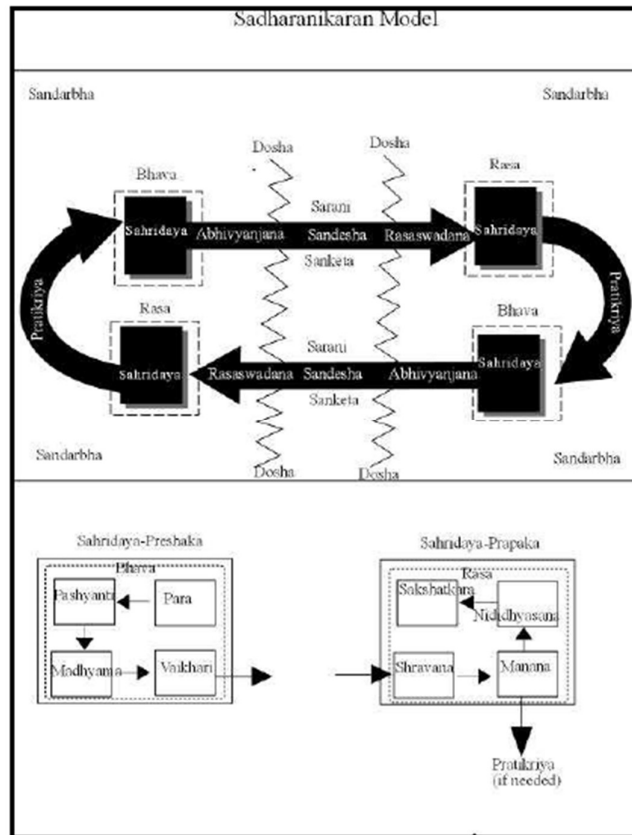


Figure 2 Sadharanikaran Communication Model (Adhikary, 2008)

Shaw (2019) conducted a comparison between Sadharanikaran and Shannon and Weaver’s Western perspective of Communication. Shannon and Weaver’s communication model includes an information source, who selects a message, the message is encoded, a channel is used to transmit the message, a receiver decodes the message, the message is then sent to its destination. There are noises that create external distortion that can cause miscommunication and signals that are unintended to be added to the message while transmitting. There are some similarities between the two communication perspectives. Difference are that Sadharanikaran as a model in non-linear and heavily reliant on the interactions between the sender and receive engaged in communication, whereas Shannon and Weaver’s framework is linear and is sender-focused and controlled by the sender.

The Western framework has no discussion of emotions but is rather technical, there is also no consideration of the context but is focussed on the message reaching the destination. The framework also does not account for feedback. In this comparison it is evident Shannon & Weavers model is not adequate in addressing the aspects of Asiatic communication as per Sadharanikaran communication model (Shaw, 2019).

Adhikary (2008) conducted a comparison of Sadharanikaran communication model with Aristotle's model of communication and found similar differences as above. Aristotle's model was linear, and messenger dominated which made it limited in terms of its suitability for understanding Indian communication practices, whereas Sadharanikaran is found to be non-linear and broad, thus making it more suitable for Asian cultures (Adhikary, 2008).

When people move from one part of the world that uses a specific communication style, to another part of the world that uses a different communication style there are bound to be barriers. For example, skilled migrants moving from India (where the Asiatic communication style is used) to New Zealand (where the Eurocentric communication style is used). The next section will look at literature on some communication barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants who have moved to New Zealand.

2.5 Communication barriers for Indian Skilled migrant in New Zealand workplaces

2.5.1 Passive/Quiet

From an Asiatic perspective the current traditional view of intercultural communication often tags the Asian communicator as being passive and therefore incompetent. This view does not account for the place of perceptive sensemaking, silence, harmony, and the effects of the context on the communication exchange (Miike, 2002). This is because intercultural communication studies have not understood the role that harmony plays in Asiatic communication (Miike, 2003).

Chen (2011) highlights that in Asiatic communication achieving harmony is the ultimate goal and to achieve this, communication has to be indirect, subtle, adaptive, consensual, and agreeable. Therefore, for communication to be considered competent it needs to be without conflict and be harmonious. Communicators continuously adjust messages in order to maintain harmony.

Tam (2006), in observing conflict regarding a community project in Asia, found that even though people had concerns, they remained silent in order to maintain harmony. This behaviour is particularly prominent when power relations are involved. Tam observed that from an Asiatic perspective communication is inseparable from power relations. Asian people seem to accept power distance (Lama, 2018), which Gudykunst (1971, cited in Singh, 1990) describes as the extent to which a society is comfortable with unequal distribution of power. In New Zealand society, on the other hand, egalitarianism is a strongly held value. It refers to a dislike of display of any power. This relates to what is referred to as the 'tall poppy syndrome' wherein anyone that raises above the accepted levels is clobbered. New Zealand has the lowest power distance in the world (Holmes et al., 2012). From an Asiatic perspective, communication interactions, particularly in the workplace include power

relations. Without an understanding of how this affects communication behaviours, might result in Asian communicators being viewed as passive or quiet more so to New Zealanders who are not familiar with power distance in the workplace.

Holmes (2008) conducted a study on the experiences of Asian students during a study exercise with local New Zealand students. Findings showed that the Chinese students structured their communication around maintaining harmony. The differences in communication styles were disruptive as New Zealand students were unable to understand facework, the place of listening or silence. These behaviours were not compatible with what New Zealand students considered as competent communication. Their style of communication is typically New Zealand/Eurocentric communication where they were direct in their communication and focused on the task at hand and were less mindful of relational aspects during the exercise. Holmes (2006) recommended that more culture specific know-how that takes into account power relations is required to improve intercultural communication experiences in multicultural classrooms in New Zealand.

2.5.2 Language norms

Another barrier that skilled migrants face when they first arrive in New Zealand is language proficiency and related nuances. This ranges from difficulty understanding different accents (Yates, 2015), and an inability to understand meaning in the 'New Zealand way of speaking'. This refers to the taken-for-granted unwritten nuances of language such as tone, slang, humour etc. (Dumitraşcu-Băldău & Dumitraşcu, 2019; Iqbal, 2017, Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014). There are also norms as to what is regarded as polite and appropriate workplace communication, Holmes et al. (2012) reports that speaking in English in the workplace is one such norm in New Zealand.

Holmes (2015) reports that typically skilled migrants are able to competently participate in work related communication and less comfortable in other scenarios. Unfamiliar communication styles and communicating in a second language often makes small talk, humour, ways of giving directives/requests, differences in politeness strategies, meaning of silence etc. harder to navigate (De Bres, 2009; Fujio, 2004; Marra, 2012). Holmes et al. (2012) reports that there are even differences between Māori and Pākehā¹ in this regard. Differences in language norms can result in low quality relationships with native colleagues which could result in exclusion, conflict, miscommunications, or skilled migrants reducing information seeking-behaviours (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020).

¹ Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand and Pākehā is the word used to refer to European New Zealanders.

2.5.3 Racism

Racism is another barrier faced by skilled migrants. Racism can be defined as the unfair treatment of people based on attributes not related to performance but rather their race (Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014). Studies show that racism is prevalent in New Zealand workplaces (Brunton & Cook, 2018; Brunton et al. 2020; Holmes, 2015; Iqbal, 2017). Syed (2008) reports that one in three skilled migrants get unfairly excluded during the recruitment process and are likely to receive lower remuneration or limited advancement opportunities (Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014).

While overt discrimination still occurs occasionally, majority of organisations have policies that address and mitigate this, but subtle covert layers of discrimination still exist (Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014; Rajendran et al., 2017). Research by Johnston et al., (2010) highlighted that despite New Zealand policies that encourage multicultural societies New Zealanders are still resistant towards immigrants and expect that people around them should not be too different from them. Racism, overt or subtle, if left unchecked is likely to have adverse effects on the mental health of skilled migrants (Pernice et al., 2000), or result in skilled migrants leaving the organisation or country which would be a loss to the New Zealand economy (Butcher et al., 2006).

Campbell (2016) is of the view that cultural sensitivity needs to be fostered among New Zealanders in order to bridge the gap between intentions and practice. Cultural sensitivity can be defined as the willingness to accept and respect cultural differences (Croucher et al. 2015; Campbell, 2016). Literature reports that skilled migrants also faced some other barriers in the workplace. These are discussed below.

2.6 Other barriers

2.6.1 Employment experience and education

One of the prominent barriers faced by skilled migrants is obtaining jobs matching their skill levels (Coates & Carr, 2005; Holmes, 2015; Rajendran et al., 2017; Shirmohammadi et al., 2019). As a result, many skilled migrants are underemployed which means they are employed in low skill jobs. Literature refers to this as 'brain waste'. This has often led to shock, surprise, and disappointment for skilled migrants considering that they have been granted entry into the country based on these very skills. This also leads to a loss of rich knowledge and underutilisation of valuable skills for New Zealand (Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014; Iqbal, 2017; Tharenou & Kulik, 2020).

Another barrier skilled migrants encounter is education and work experience from overseas not being recognised. This occurs due to a lack of local education or work experience or because of skilled migrants being deemed as 'overqualified' (Iqbal, 2017). Skilled migrants have difficulty in conveying their level of expertise and experience due to a lack of knowledge in the host country and their inability

to assess the intellectual capital the skilled migrants have to offer (Coates & Carr, 2005; Holmes & Riddiford, 2010). This results in a loss of productivity to the organisation and the economy (Zikic, 2015, Rajendran et al., 2017).

2.6.2 Adaptation and Integration of skilled migrants

There is agreement in literature that migration is a lengthy and psychologically challenging process (Shirmohammadi et al., 2019; Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). As people give up familiar places, jobs, family, and friends to move to a new country they are likely to encounter social, emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual obstacles. Resilience in skilled migrants assists them in navigating this process and facilitate integration in the new culture (Julca, 2011; Lee et. al, 2012; Hosseini et al. 2017). For skilled migrants it is not just a new workplace but a new culture as well and as skilled migrants relate to the new culture, their language, identities, cultural practices, and beliefs are often renegotiated and reconstructed. During this time there tends to be an initial phase of surprise, disappointment or even shock (Holmes, 2017). Spoonley (2003) records that New Zealand has a poor record in terms of skilled migrant settlement assistance.

Literature has referred to integration into a culture, among other things, commonly as assimilation and acculturation. Assimilation has been criticised in literature as it assumes that migrants willingly take on the new culture (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). Acculturation on the other hand refers to the process of how migrants adapt to the new culture they have come in contact with and the extent to which they maintain their own culture (Nandan, 2005). Adaptation does not mean migrants necessarily assimilate, but rather engage in a complex process of negotiating their relationality to the new culture while also impacting and adapting the culture they have joined. According to Varghese and Jankins (2009) Indian skilled migrants have tended to accept and change pragmatic values but still hold on to their core values.

Newcomers in an organisation go through a transition phase that literature refers to as acculturation or integration by which an outsider becomes an insider (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). This process involves a lot of learning about oneself, team members and the organisation. Most workplaces include formal induction programmes wherein organisational policies and other role-relevant training is provided to newcomers. There are also informal training initiatives such as peer mentoring and these are helpful in enabling skilled migrants to adjust and integrate into their workplaces. Research supports that high quality relationships with colleagues go a long way in assisting the integration process however it appears that skilled migrants build such relationships easily with other ethnic colleagues but have difficulty in developing the same quality relationships with native colleagues (Alonso-Garbayo & Maben, 2009). Skilled migrants who engage with the local culture and attempt to learn about the host

country and participate in social and cultural activities also assists in workplace integration (Rajendran et al. 2017).

Tharenou and Kulik (2020) recommend that organisations should aid skilled migrant integration by managing expectations, investing capital in overcoming communication barriers, and fostering an inclusive environment. Rajendran et al. (2017) report of organisations that have specific diversity programmes that work great at facilitating integration and limiting discrimination. This could include initiatives such as Human Resource professionals providing training and mentoring on host country cultures, work procedures and professional norms (Shirmohammadi et al. 2019) and creating greater cultural understanding for the whole team (Zikic, 2015). The responsibility for such initiatives over and above the minimum legally required would be reliant on the organisation and line managers and their intercultural communication competence (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012). This is explored in the next section.

2.6.3 Management/Organisation Intercultural communication competence

Today's interconnected global work environment demands an understanding of cultural diversity. Most teams are multicultural, and research supports that the ability for these teams to work well together impacts organisational success (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020; Matveev & Del Villar, 2014). Communication plays an important role in achieving this (Fujio, 2004), and culture has an impact on how people relate to each other as it shapes their values, worldviews, behaviour, language etc. These differences impact on intercultural communication in the workplace within multicultural teams therefore it is imperative that organisations develop communication processes and educate employees to be interculturally competent communicators (Dooly & Vallejo Rubinstein, 2018).

Organisational culture in terms of attitudes towards skilled migrants has a great impact on skilled migrant experiences as it reflects the values of top management (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). Implementing an environment that is inclusive requires resources and commitment from management (Zikic, 2015; Rajendran et al., 2017). According to Holmes and O'Neill (2012) this would also involve employers and employees evaluating stereotypes, working through confusion, and changing from evaluation of the cultural other to evaluation of oneself. In a study conducted by Vaccarino and Li (2018) among staff in a tertiary institute in New Zealand majority of participants reported a need for more intercultural support in the workplace.

Organisational policies at times act as barriers to skilled migrants in New Zealand (Zikic, 2015). At a policy level, organisations must go beyond legal compliance and develop policies that would remove barriers for migrants (Syed, 2008). Some organisations have a diversity committee, and this committee would be dedicated to influence intercultural awareness within the organisation by a variety of means

such as hosting intercultural events, educating employees on the significance of skilled migrants, providing intercultural communication training etc. By taking such an active approach, managers and co-workers are like to become culturally sensitive and competent and more tolerant of differences (Coates & Carr, 2005).

Line managers have the responsibility of enacting these values at a team level. This can be achieved by fostering an environment of inclusiveness by modelling inclusive behaviours such as encouraging diverse viewpoints and helping all team members to contribute (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). A manager that is culturally competent can establish good interpersonal relationships within the team across cultures, comprehend different types of behaviours both verbal and nonverbal, and increase the likelihood of a high performing team. Skilled migrants tend to thrive while working with inclusive managers, even more so when the managers themselves are migrants (Matveev & Nelson, 2004; Holmes & O'Neill, 2012). Syed (2008) however points out that even while organisations and managers can support skilled migrants, for there to be real change issues of discrimination would need to be addressed in a broader context.

The impact of political and social realities, the role of language, the impacts of historical experience particularly being exploited or disenfranchised by powerful dominant regimes, makes intercultural communication training in the workplace critical (Holmes, 2017). Unfortunately, most intercultural communication education and training is dominated by US/Eurocentric models. For instance, Hofstede's four dimensions of cultural difference i.e., power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance is still widely used in intercultural communication training despite numerous criticisms of its dualistic inadequacies (Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015). The traditional models of communication developed within the ethnocentric assumptions of the West cannot describe communication practices in countries like India (Adhikary, 2008). In today's multicultural, multilingual era there must be plurality in communication models used (Miike, 2007; Adhikary & Shukla, 2013).

2.7 Conclusion

The aim of this study is to investigate the intercultural communication experiences of the Indian skilled migrant from a completely Asiatic perspective. Therefore, adding to the literature that reflects the reality of the Asian in New Zealand workplaces. Sadharanikaran an Indian communication model will be used and so analysis will not be from a US/Eurocentric perspective.

In this sections I have aimed to provide the theoretical background for this study, and the next section will outline the details of how this study was conducted.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the method used to ensure that the voice of the 'Asian communicator' is moved from the periphery to the centre to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the intercultural communication barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants in the workplace? And 2) How can these barriers be understood from an Asiacentric perspective using Sadharanikaran communication model?

Firstly, the research paradigm of this study will be discussed. This is followed by details on the research method, data collection, data analysis, sample, ethical consideration, and the matter of reliability and validity of the study. I have outlined limitations of the methods used and efforts to mitigate these throughout. This section draws deeply on the works of Yoshitaka Miike in his efforts to lay foundations for the Asiacentric research paradigm, metatheory, and methods (Miike 2003, 2012, 2016; Miike & Yin, 2022).

3.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm refers to the overarching way in which the world is viewed and understood, this guides all aspects of research design. The research paradigm can be further understood as the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. Ontology refers to beliefs of what is viewed as reality and based on this, epistemology refers to what knowledge is comprised of, and axiology refers to the values that are held throughout the study (Saunders et al., 2012).

Figure 3 below is a helpful visual of common US/Eurocentric paradigms and it outlines how these paradigms then guides research design. While this is a useful depiction of different paradigms, in recent years scholars have deemed it more useful to hold a multi-dimensional view of paradigms. This would allow researchers to view their study within a continuum and thus make it more flexible (Saunders et al., 2012).

While this is a comprehensive framework and has been relied on for years, non-western scholars have criticized these paradigms as having inherent biases and being unsuitable for non-western research (Wong, 1995; Ishii, 2001; Miike 2002). The paradigms have been referred to as being white-centric, reluctant to accept non-western ways, depicting Asia in a homogenous way and treating Asian cultures as target of data analysis. However, despite these criticisms non-Western scholars have not challenged these paradigms (Miike, 2002; Miike & Yin 2022).

	Pragmatism	Positivism	Realism	Interpretivism
Ontology: the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being	External, multiple, view chosen to best enable answering of research question	External, objective and independent of social actors	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist), but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist)	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple
Epistemology: the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism). Alternatively, phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation (critical realism). Focus on explaining within a context or contexts	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details, subjective meanings motivating actions
Axiology: the researcher's view of the role of values in research	Values play a large role in interpreting results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view	Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance	Research is value laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing. These will impact on the research	Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective
Data collection techniques most often used	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but can use qualitative	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative

Figure 3 US/Eurocentric Research Paradigms (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill, 2011)

Miike (2003) has undertaken in-depth research and has developed assumptions of an Asiatic paradigm. He is of the view that while embracing the diversity of Asia, there are certain core traditions that can be identified within Asian cultures. These are relationality, circularity, and harmony. Based on these traditions he outlined the following philosophical and communicative assumptions.

The philosophical assumptions for an Asiatic paradigm are: 1) ontologically, everything and everyone are related across space and time, 2) epistemologically, everyone and everything become meaningful in relation to others, and 3) axiologically, harmony is vital to the survival of everyone and everything. There are some fundamental differences between this and US/Eurocentric paradigms. Western ontologies are generally individual focused whereas the Asiatic paradigm is interdependent. As a result, epistemologically, everything finds meaning in its relation to others. Axiologically, western paradigms lean towards control while the Asiatic paradigm centres around harmony (Miike, 2003; Miike & Yin 2022). Chen and An (2009) have provided a table of the

philosophical assumptions of a Chinese communication paradigm (their model includes reference to methodological assumptions as well).

Ontology (Nature of human communication)		
Holistic		
submerged collectivistic		
Axiology (Ultimate goal)	Epistemology (The way of knowing)	Methodology (The way of reaching the goal)
Harmonious	Interconnected	Intuitive
indirect subtle adaptative consensual agreeable	reciprocity we hierarchical associative ascribed	subjective nonlinear ambiguous ritual accommodative

Figure 4 Chinese Communication Paradigm (Chen & An, 2009, p. 204)

Communicative assumptions of an Asiatic paradigm are: 1) communication takes place within a context, 2) the Asian communicator is both active and passive, and 3) mutual adaptation is a requirement for harmony to be maintained. Western paradigms tend to be messenger focused with little importance given to contexts, they are outward communicators and harmony in communication is not the focus of communication (Miike, 2003)

I came across the Asiatic paradigm as part of this current study, and it took a while for my thinking to break out of the mould of existing research paradigms. Previously I had identified my study to be within the interpretive paradigm (Saunders et al.). I still think that the study would fit this paradigm, but I do appreciate the limitations listed above. As Miike & Yin (2022) highlight, the sobering fact is that within the existing paradigms non-western theories and methods have not progressed as they should have.

It took extensive reading to begin to understand the paradigm shift being proposed. In this study I have tried to remain true to the Asiatic paradigm as far as is possible. It is at best an attempt to conduct a study within the Asiatic paradigm. Due to the limited timeframe of my study and lack of readily available literature in the field, I have had to revert to existing frameworks particularly in relation to research methods, which I will discuss in the next section.

3.3 Research method

Miike (2003) implores scholars to critically analyse the universal applicability of US/Eurocentric methods of research and reconsider their suitability in Asian cultural contexts. There is clarity in literature that the aim here is not to do away with US/Eurocentric research methods. It is rather an appeal not to assume they are universally applicable. Miike (2003) concedes that there is bound to be overlap of US/Eurocentric research methods and Asiatic methods, but so far the empirical nature of US/Eurocentric methods have not allowed Eastern theoretical concepts of myths, proverbs, riddles to be developed. He suggests that Asian scholars should work with the view that to make a significant contribution to Asian communication the theories and methods will need to be in line with Asian ethics and contexts (2016).

Additionally, Miike (2003) highlights three methodological issues with US/Eurocentric methodological assumptions. Firstly, the hierarchy of data and evidence – western research methods appear to have a hierarchy for evidence wherein first hand, observable data is treated as having greater value than for instance autobiographies, idiomatic expressions, songs etc. The second methodological issue is the requirement for the validity of studies, superseding the utility of a study. Miike has questioned the need for this in human communication, wherein concepts that are experientially known are not considered just because they cannot be replicated in a different context. The third methodological issue is related to the overemphasis on the visible aspects of communication. Western methods do not include invisible and unobservable concepts in research. This is a problem within Asiatic communication, as the Asian communicator is internally active. This also excludes the spirituality from research, which is a big part of Asian communication (Ishii, 2001; Miike 2003; Miike & Yin, 2022).

For this study at first, I tried to find an Asiatic research method. I came across several works that appeared to develop various cultural concepts e.g.: Ishii (2009); Chen (2011), however it was not clear to me how this could be replicated in terms of research method. Eventually due to time constraints I defaulted to existing methods in literature. I did experience angst in feeling like I was not being true to the objective of conducting a study that was truly Asiatic in terms of the research method. Further down the track of this study, I did come across Miike and Yin's (2022) suggestion of basing the quest for Asiatic method on Enriquez's (1992) cross-indigenous methods. The five steps are: 1) the identification of key indigenous concepts, 2) semantic elaboration, 3) Indigenous re(codification), 4) the systemization and explication of implied theoretical frameworks and 5) application and use. This provides a promising framework to explore for future research, but it is outside the scope of this study.

As this study is exploratory, it is a qualitative method of research. Keeping in mind the Asiatic paradigm and the methodological assumptions of US/Eurocentric methods, I chose interviews for data

collection and Reflective Thematic Analysis for data analysis. Arguably both these methods are flexible enough to avert the methodological concerns of US/Eurocentric paradigms listed above. These methods are discussed in more detail below.

3.4 Data Collection

To collect data, Interviews were used to gain detailed accounts relating to intercultural communication experiences in the workplace (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). Semi-structured interview questions were the chosen method. This was so that I would not be limited by a structured format wherein I would be unable to ask follow-up questions if required. Unstructured interviews were not considered to ensure that the interview time was spent within the scope of the research (Gill et al., 2008).

Interviews have deliberately been chosen as opposed to focus groups which is a popular method of qualitative data collection. The main reason for this is Indian culture is one where face-saving and the maintenance of harmony is important. Therefore, being in a group is bound to influence responses. One on one interviews would alleviate this barrier, and it also ensures that there is no group think in responses (Miike, 2006; Holmes, 2006, Iqbal, 2107).

A limitation of the interview method is that it relies on self-reports and assumes that participants will be able to answer questions to reflect workplace realities. It is also impacted by trust for the researcher and people tend to behave differently depending on what they perceive to be the researchers' views (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008; Gill et al., 2008). I was careful to remain neutral in my tone and ensured that I did not lead responses but rather guided the conversation. I also endeavoured to earn the trust of the participants by situating myself in the research. I talked about my initial experiences; and participants tended to relate to me as an Indian migrant.

The interviews were 45 minutes to an hour long. Thirteen out of 18 interviews were conducted online via Zoom. This high number of online interviews is likely because COVID-19 was in the community at the time of data collection. Five interviews were conducted in-person. I did not perceive any difference based on whether the interview was online or in-person. The participants chose the date, time, and location of the interview. Interviews were held over a period of one month.

Having open-ended questions was useful as it allowed me to explore topics further as needed. The first interview served as a pilot in a sense. After this I edited any questions that were not clear. I also prepared examples based on my experiences to use as a means of clarifying the question if needed. This proved to be helpful as I was able to put thought into my examples, so that they were neutral and not suggestive. Following the interviews, I transcribed them and sent this to participants for checking and to obtain a transcript release authority (see Appendix E). During this process I found that I needed

clarification on responses from a couple of participants. I was able to organise follow-up interviews with the two participants and was able to gain the clarification needed.

The interview guide (see Appendix D) consisted of 15 questions in total. The first four questions and the very last question were general in nature for example, how long have they lived in a particular city? No demographic details were collected for this study. This is deliberate to avoid identification of participants, as the study is conducted in a provincial city in New Zealand. The remaining questions were based on the research questions for this study. The first two questions in this section related to the workplace and communication with New Zealand colleagues. The next five questions were built on characteristics of Sadharanikaran. Participants were forthcoming in their responses which resulted in the collection of extensive rich data. The next section describes the data analysis process.

3.5 Data Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) by Braun and Clarke (2019) was used for data analysis. RTA is a flexible tool for qualitative data analysis. In this study RTA is used deductively which means it is analysed within the framework of a suitable theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021). For this study Sadharanikaran communication model was used to guide the analysis.

In the absence of specific theoretical 'rules' Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-step process to guide analysis. They are explicit about this not being a linear process but rather a recurring process of immersion in data that requires headspace and is an ongoing questioning of one's assumptions and writing until analysis is completed. The six steps are: 1) familiarising oneself with the data i.e., transcribing, reading, re-reading, writing. 2) Generating codes, this is an open process, there is no coding framework. A code is referred to as an entity that captures a specific observation. 3) Searching for themes from codes, noting potential themes. 4) Reviewing themes i.e., generating a thematic map, re-checking against codes. 5) Defining and naming themes. 6) Writing a report with real examples and extracts from the data.

In RTA, the role of the researcher is embraced as aiding knowledge production. Analysis is an active and decisive process for the researcher, themes do not just emerge from the data but are rather chosen by the researcher based on the guiding theoretical framework, in this case the Sadharanikaran communication model (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2016; 2021). RTA has been chosen for data analysis due to its flexibility in allowing the use of different theoretical frameworks and because of the role of the researcher in data analysis. This has allowed me to use an Asiatic model of communication to guide analysis and as an Indian migrant myself, gives room to reflect on personal experiences and ponder beyond the spoken/observable data.

As per the RTA guidelines, I took the time to immerse myself in the data. I listened to the interviews multiple times, I read and re-read the transcripts and at this stage some themes had already begun to emerge. I kept notes during this time, while also awaiting transcript release authority from participants. This process was non-linear in my case, and I appreciated the flexibility of this method. I printed transcripts and individually coded responses, and this also assisted in identifying themes. Considering codes and themes across all 18 interviews enabled me to choose core themes.

I found that these themes corresponded to the characteristics of the Sadharanikaran communication model. This was not surprising as I had aligned my questions to the characteristics of Sadharanikaran, however some themes related to characteristics that were not included in the questions. This made it evident that the theory used supported this study and the RTA method well. Frequent and detailed direct quotes from the participants were used in order to capture their “voices”. Participant quotes were coded with a “P” followed by a sequential number for each participant. The findings are discussed in detail in the next chapter, the next section is regarding the sample for the study.

3.6 Sample

The participants required for this study are skilled migrants from India who have been working for one to five years in New Zealand. The reason for choosing this timeframe is to account for the adjustment period and acknowledge that as time progresses migrants are likely to renegotiate and reconstruct their communication behaviours (Grove, 1985; Holmes, 2008). However, at the time of this research, New Zealand borders had been closed for over a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and this meant that all participants had been in New Zealand for a minimum of one year.

Since the criterion is quite specific and there was no readily available list of participants Goodman’s (1961) non-random snowball sampling technique was used. In this method one participant is chosen and then each participant refers the researcher to other participants (Frey et al., 2000). Homophily bias is a criticism of this method of sampling. This refers to the overrepresentation of the first participant’s social network in the overall sample (Heckathorn, 2002). To mitigate this risk rather than relying on participants from one individual, multiple different avenues were used to send invitation emails, and participants were requested to forward those invitation emails to others they know that meet the criteria.

Research invitation emails were sent to the Network of Skilled Migrants, Massey University International, Midcentral District Health Board, and personal social networks. There was a good response to the invitation and people seemed interested in the study. There was one participant from Network of Skilled Migrants, two from Massey University International, one from Midcentral District Health Board and four generated from my personal social network. The remaining ten participants

were referred to the study by eight of the above list. These participants came from a range of different industries within the city (see Figure 5 below for the participant list).

Due to the exploratory nature of this study and in relation to the population of Indian skilled migrants in the city where the study was conducted, it was anticipated that the sample will be small. Research supports that rich and in-depth data can be gained by reasonable small sample sizes before code saturation is reached (Young & Casey, 2018). Considering this I am satisfied with the number of participants and the depth of data that has been gathered in this research.

Participant	Time in NZ	Part of India	Industry of work
P1	2 years	North India	Transport
P2	5 years	Central India	Agriculture
P3	3 years	North India	Agriculture
P4	1 year and 3 months	South India	Healthcare
P5	2 years	South India	Healthcare
P6	5 years	South India	Council
P7	1 year and 4 months	Central India	Healthcare
P8	3 years	South India	Healthcare
P9	4 years	North India	IT
P10	1 year and 1 month	Central India	Construction
P11	1 year	South India	Healthcare
P12	2 years	North India	Engineering
P13	4 years	South India	Healthcare
P14	5 years	Central India	IT
P15	2 years	South India	Tertiary Education
P16	3 years	North India	IT
P17	5 years	South India	Healthcare
P18	2 years	South India	IT

Figure 5 Participant list

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations for this study include informed consent, confidentiality and ensuring that participants are treated well and not harmed (Frey et al., 2000). I have strived to maintain a participant perspective throughout the research process and to remain open and reflexive regarding ethical issues that may arise during the research process (Tolich, 2001).

Ethics approval was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee board (see Appendix A), before beginning this research. The study was conducted in regular consultation with my supervisor Dr Franco Vaccarino who is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing at Massey University. I have also consulted with Dr Farah Palmer, Associate Dean Māori

at Massey Business School, to ensure that any implications to Māori people and Māori knowledge are addressed.

At the recruitment stage potential participants were provided with an Information Sheet with clear information about the study and consent was gained (see Appendix B & Appendix C). Participants were made aware that they have the freedom to participate or refrain at any stage of the research process. Since the snowball sampling was being used to study a small, connected community confidentiality of participants was of utmost importance, thus no identifying demographic information was collected (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Tolich, 2001).

The data were transcribed, stored, and analysed by the researcher alone. Transcripts were provided to participants and release authority obtained before any data was used. The data has been kept on a password protected computer and any print material has been kept in a locked cabinet. The data will be used only for purposes of completing this study and will be destroyed on completion of this study. I am ever mindful of the responsibility to analyse and report findings while being cognizant of the implications to the participants, Massey University, the Indian community, skilled migrants, and society at large (Frey et al., 2000).

Within the bicultural context in New Zealand research that values different worldviews is important. Particularly in the current environment where Kaupapa Māori has enabled research on the Māori perspective to grow in a meaningful way. This study is not expected to have a direct impact on Māori knowledge or Māori people. The framework of this study could be used to carry out indigenous research and any recommendations for communication could also be considered by Māori people. If the data brings up issues specific to Māori culture, I had planned to consult with Dr Farah Palmer to assist with interpretation, but this need did not arise.

3.8 Methods of achieving reliability and validity

Under the empirical framework of research methods, the credibility of a study is based on its reliability and validity. In qualitative studies, reliability refers to whether the research methods used are sound and if results can be repeated. The validity of a study refers to whether the research findings are accurate (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

For the current study the research paradigm has been derived from peer reviewed scholarly research, and a tried and tested method has been used for data collection and analysis. The analysis has been guided by a theoretical framework. The participants have checked that my capture of their accounts is accurate. I have made my processes and findings known and have linked them to existing literature. The above are the ways in which I have attempted to ensure the reliability and validity of this study.

In considering the Asiatic paradigm however Miike & Yin (2022) have questioned the dependence on the US/Eurocentric constructs of reliability and validity for research credibility. They suggest that while this is very useful for several disciplines it may not be the same for studying human communication. They highlight that insightful non-western theories have been dismissed in the past because they did not meet the criteria for validity. This is one of the methodological US/Eurocentric methods highlighted above, the reliance on validity as opposed to utility. If theory is only accepted based on its scope, then small cultures would be excluded. Miike suggests that instead of striving for global empirical validity Asiatic scholars should aim to gain intercultural relevance, which is something to ponder.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter the various decisions made relating to research methods for this study have been explained. The Asiatic research paradigm has been outlined and the reason for the paradigm change is explored. The search for an Asiatic research method and the subsequently chosen qualitative method is outlined. The data were collected by using semi-structured interviews and the RTA method was used for data analysis. This analysis was based on the theoretical framework of Sadharanikaran. Due to a specific criterion for participants the snowball sample was successfully used to gain participants for this study. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, data management, data sharing and the impact on Māori knowledge and people. Lastly the matter of reliability and validity and its relevance in Asiatic research has been considered. In the next chapter the findings and a discussion will be presented.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The previous section outlined and explained all the research design decisions that were made for this study. In this section the findings are presented, analysed, and discussed using an Asiacentric perspective.

All eighteen participants are well-educated and already had work experience before migrating to New Zealand. Some participants (P1, P2, P3, P12) came to New Zealand for post-graduate study and then stayed on to work. Migrating to New Zealand included a considerable financial investment for most participants. Therefore, skilled migrants are motivated to establish themselves in the New Zealand workforce.

It is well documented that people who migrate do so for a number of reasons, including a better work-life balance, better quality of life, better future for their children, love of travel (Alonso-Garbayo & Maben, 2009; Tabor et al. 2015; Kõu & Bailey, 2014; Yates, 2015). My study found that participants had similar reasons for migrating. Participants mentioned reasons for migrating were better quality of life, work-life balance, better pay, better working conditions, to enjoy New Zealand's natural beauty, and for post-graduate study. For four of the eighteen participants New Zealand was not their first choice for migration, they moved to New Zealand as Australia, Canada or United States of America had not worked out.

Generally, participants seemed happy with their decision to migrate and work in New Zealand, particularly in relation to work-life balance. Participants did face communication barriers in the workplace, seven out of 18 participants felt these barriers had been addressed or could be if taken to their manager. A few instances of racism seemed to be cause for distress with serious consequences.

Extensive and rich data was collected with clear themes emerging. These themes were derived using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to give the participants a voice, their direct quotes are used for analysis. The focus of this analysis is to have an Asiacentric communication lens, using the Sadharanikaran communication model, in understanding Indian skilled migrant experiences.

Maintaining harmony in communication emerged as a central theme and undergirds all the other themes. All the themes that emerged from this study had elements of working towards maintaining harmony. The themes are:

1. Maintaining harmony
2. Indirect Indian 'can't say no' and Indirect New Zealander 'too polite'

3. Quiet at first - voice
4. Adapting to 'the New Zealand way' of communicating
5. Management intercultural communication competence and
6. Racism.

These themes are discussed below.

4.2 Maintaining harmony

The need to maintain harmony in communication in the workplace came up as having utmost importance. All 18 participants discussed the work they did and the effort that went into maintaining harmony in communication. However, they did not appear to always be conscious of this effort, it was an ingrained predisposition that was drawn out by asking questions regarding why participants responded in a certain way. When asked why maintaining harmony in communication was so important, P4, P11 and P15 stated the importance of having a high value for harmony and getting along with people in the workplace. P7 and P9 viewed it as a cultural thing, and the way they were raised. P10 referred to it as subconscious behaviour for Indians.

This is consistent with the Sadharanikaran communication model wherein achieving harmony is the main goal of communication (Adhikary, 2008). Sahridayata, a core concept in Sadharanikaran is the state of achieving harmony. These findings are also consistent with other Asiatic literature. Chen (2011) is of the view that harmony is the ultimate goal of communication and that in order for communication to be considered competent it has to be harmonious and conflict free. Other Asiatic theorists also agree that achieving harmony is at the core of Asiatic communication (Miike, 2002, 2007; Chen, 2006; Ishii, 2007; Edmondson, 2009; Gunaratne, 2010; Li, 2020).

Some of the ways participants mentioned they maintained harmony while communicating, are making sure that the receiver is in a good state of mind, checking how the receiver's day is going before delivering a message, keeping quiet when a response would have been negative, playing along when they disagree, not asking questions, remaining silent when mistreated and working extra hours or extra shifts. Participants felt a strong awareness of the need to maintain harmony due to needing to continue working with the person. P4, P5, and P8 mentioned the phrase 'I need to see them tomorrow', P5 put it this way:

"I feel like Oh my god they're going to feel bad so better I keep quiet so that I can maintain the friendship because I need to work with them tomorrow as well, I have to see their face".

While some of these responses were inconsequential, some are quite serious wherein participants really did not agree with their colleagues but still did not say anything. P1, P4, P5, P10 and P13 said that it was very important to them that the receiver does not feel hurt or offended. P7 put it this way:

"I will not tell [that I disagree] because the kind of background that we come from, you know, we think that it's better that you know, just to keep the harmony. Not to have any issues with each other."

When prodded further P7 said the only time they might speak up is if the colleague was in breach of policy. It is clear that for participants the relational aspect was of more importance than the task. This is consistent with the findings of Holmes (2008) wherein the Chinese students were more focused on maintaining harmony than on the task which the New Zealand students did not understand. And the New Zealand students in that study found the Chinese students to be incompetent because of this. This behaviour is obviously not limited to migrant students but extends to skilled migrants as well.

P4, P7, P13, and P18 talked about instances where they tried to avoid confronting issues to maintain harmony until it could not be avoided because the issue grew or was disruptive to work. One response was P7 said that they 'hinted' their disapproval. Others felt forced to speak out and, according to them, this caused the harmony in communication to break. Participants who did this also mentioned feeling remorse or having second thoughts for speaking out.

P4 said "I initially I feel like oh did I do the right thing? ...whether I should shut, you know, my mouth and sit back".

Speaking out is not easy for skilled migrants as it disrupts the harmony. Participants would rather put up with an issue rather than address it. According to Chen (2011) Asiatic communication is agreeable and indirect. This was the same case with the participants in this study. It took a lot of speculation to speak out and even when they did speak out, they tended to feel remorse. P13 did speak out to their manager and when the manager suggested a conversation with all parties involved, they did not want to be a part of it, but rather wanted the manager to resolve the issue without involving them, so as to maintain harmony.

In instances where the harmony in communication is broken by another person, P5 and P10 reported that they had to clarify the problem and try to restore harmony. But the majority of participants felt that keeping quiet was the better way to avoid further misunderstanding. Participants said they were very uncomfortable when the harmony is considered to be broken. P5 and P10 said they were not able to give 100% to their work as the issue that caused the harmony to be broken would constantly be at the back of their minds. P16 said it was stressful and P14 said they had to make a conscious

effort to carry on with work and not let it bother them. Participants were impacted negatively by the breaking of harmony, both mentally and in relation to their work.

The sandharba or context in which harmony is broken also has an impact. In the Sadharanikaran communication model the context is what gives meaning to a message, and the very same message can mean different things in different contexts. Participants agreed that there is an acceptable way for any issue to be addressed, in private. P5, P15 and P16 mentioned instances wherein a colleague discussed an issue with them in the presence of other colleagues. This seemed to be a serious breach in terms of maintaining harmony. Here is an example by P5:

“she could have talked to me in person, right? Because I'm losing my value in front of my other colleagues too. She should know like no one should be talked to like that in front of others”.

In the US/Eurocentric view of communication it is the message that is important (Shaw, 2019). Whereas from an Asiatic communication perspective all communication occurs within the context of multiple relationships and so the message is not independent of the political, religious, and philosophical context in which the message is delivered (Miike, 2002). It is quite possible that the New Zealanders in the instances mentioned by P5, P15 and P16 had no idea about this as most tend to use a more Eurocentric communication framework. Participants did not actually mind the message per se, but rather that it was given in the presence of others. So in these instances the meaning of the message has changed to affect the value of the participant because it was delivered in front of others and this caused the harmony to be broken.

In the Sadharanikaran communication model, *sahridaya* which means ‘a common sympathetic heart’ has to be achieved by the sender and receiver by engaging in communication to achieve harmony for communication to be successful (Adhikary, 2008). If a message is delivered and harmony is not achieved, then that communication is not considered successful. This explains why participants avoid disagreeing and also why they feel remorse when they do.

The need to maintain harmony is not something participants are able to just drop since they are now in a Western setting. It is a shared value that is deeply ingrained in Indian skilled migrants. While skilled migrants are open to change as part of moving to a new country, Varghese and Jenkins (2009) pointed out that the change is limited to superficial pragmatic values and skilled migrants tend to hold on to their core values. All the themes that emerged from the findings have undercurrents of maintaining harmony in communication. These are discussed in the following sections.

4.3 Indirect Indian 'Can't say no' and Indirect New Zealander 'Too polite'

4.3.1 Indians 'can't say no'

In this section I present two rather conflicting findings. On the one hand Indian skilled migrants express being uncomfortable with direct speech and on the other hand they express frustrations of New Zealand English being too indirect.

Participants reported finding it hard to say 'no' directly when asked for help. Not only did they find it hard, but they also disliked it and preferred not to say 'no'. P15 said:

"it is our Indian culture, we are taught to always say yes, whether it is to an elder or superiors at work".

P4 and P10 were of the view that Indians find it hard to say 'no' because of being sympathetic and thoughtful of the requestor. P1 thought it would reflect badly on them if they said 'no'.

Even if it was a real inconvenience to their personal life for example even if participants had other family plans or obligations, participants still preferred phrases such as 'I will try' instead of 'no'. P4 said she always adjusted her plans and schedules in order to avoid saying 'no'. Here are two quotes from P10 to illustrate.

"I have never said no and don't like to say no directly. I'll say I'll try even if it means no. I can't see their face and say no."

"I had said that I can't work more than 20 hours and he [the manager] was like we can't find anyone to cover the shift can you please do it. I couldn't say no. I don't know why."

The inability to say 'no' is related to maintaining harmony in communication. According to Chen (2011) harmony-centred communication is consensual and indirect, and this is clearly illustrated in P10's quotes above. Miike (2002) also agrees that harmonious communication is other-directed meaning that it's about giving preference to the other person in the relationship and not being self-seeking. To achieve harmony, Asiatic communication includes mutual adaptation where messages are changed in order to maintain harmony. In the Sadharanikaran communication model, the preshaka (sender) and prapaka (receiver) are engaged in abhivyanjana (coding) and rasawadana (decoding) in order to achieve harmony. This is consistent with what participants were doing in that they would adjust their own plans or opinions in order to be consensual and agreeable.

Participants marvelled at the way New Zealanders were able to simply say 'no' when they were unable to do something or just state their point of view when they disagreed. P5 said that at first, she thought New Zealanders were rude because they were always direct, even with matters that were sensitive.

But in time, she realised they weren't rude, that is just how they communicate. The direct style of communication is something that skilled migrants have had to get used to over time. P8 wondered if maybe in a few years she will be able to say 'no' too but was not sure of it.

Another aspect that emerged in relation to not being able to say 'no' is that some participants felt that New Zealand managers were aware that Indian skilled migrants would put their head down and get work done and so they liked assigning work to them (P8, P10, P17). At times this made participants unsure of whether they were being taken for granted (P4, P8, P10). According to Holmes (2015) New Zealanders are known to be direct communicators who tend to be focused on the task at hand, so they would be taking skilled migrant consensual responses as literal and might well be unaware of the conflict migrants face in saying 'no'. This miscommunication might be the reason that migrants have ended up wondering if they are being taken for granted.

It appears that this communication barrier, namely the inability to say 'no', does change over time. Participants said that they realised that in New Zealand it was okay to say 'no'. P4 said that once she realised that if she says 'no', the requestor can try and ask someone else and this made communication easier and more harmonious, she was more comfortable to say 'no'. The ability to adapt to being more direct in communication is not something skilled migrants can instantly adopt since they are in Western country, it takes time. This is consistent with the Sadharanikaran communication model where the sender and receiver are both able to change in order to maintain harmony (Adhikary, 2003 as cited in Adhikary, 2008).

4.3.2 New Zealander's too polite

Most participants were on the indirect side of communication, and noticed the direct way in which New Zealanders communicate and did not feel like they could do that. However, six of the 18 participants found New Zealanders to be too indirect because of trying to be polite. According to Holmes et al. (2012) New Zealand society has its norms of what is considered appropriate workplace language and one such norm is politeness.

P2 and P14 said they felt that it was at times misleading and gave a sense of false assurance, for instance the tone may be polite, but the message might be negative. P2 and P3 said that especially while disagreeing the message is so indirect that it is not clear what the message is. P18 put it this way:

"sometimes when my boss talks to me, I don't understand what they are expecting from me...they are polite to the extent some meetings I don't know what we achieved."

P3 said they appreciated the politeness but agreed with the participants above that the extent of politeness sometimes makes messages more complicated. P10 simply said *"I wish they would be more direct"*. Participants talked about how the Indian workplace is quite formal and clear. Whereas P14 said that New Zealanders' way of speaking in terms of politeness required some unpacking.

New Zealand politeness is confusing for skilled migrants who expect clear professional and hierarchical communication in the workplace. This is consistent with Tam (2006) who suggests that Asian communication is inseparable from power relations. Miike (2002) explains that Asiatic communication always occurs within a context and can only be understood within the culture and systems, in this case the workplace with various hierarchies. The Sadharanikaran communication model as a model allows for communication between hierarchies as it is not messenger focused but rather *sahridayata* or harmony enables both the *preshaka* (sender) and *prapaka* (receiver) to communicate at the same level. New Zealand on the other hand places high value on egalitarianism and the workplace is hierarchically flat so people are not familiar with hierarchies (Holmes et al., 2012).

Communication is polite across hierarchies and is the accepted norm. It does not indicate closeness or friendship as it would in the Indian context. Communication in the Indian workplace is formal and professional, and any form of informality or politeness would be a sign of friendship or closeness. P15 elaborated on this and said they found it hard in the sense that the politeness made them think the relationship had grown deeper and later they felt it was only superficial.

P7 put it this way *"It's very superficial, you know, they don't go deeper. You feel that you know you can't trust the person."*

P6 and P11 said that they found it easier communicating with other Asians in the workplace, this is likely because of ease in communicating within an Asiatic communication style. This is consistent with literature where participants showed that unfamiliar communication styles were a barrier to communication in the workplace (De Bres, 2009; Fujio, 2004; Marra, 2012) and skilled migrants built relationships easier with other Asians in the workplace (Alonso-Garbayo & Maben, 2009).

4.4 Quiet at first - Voice

Participants reported being quiet in the first few months of their employment in New Zealand. Being quiet meant that participants would not speak in meetings, would not ask questions unless directly spoken to and generally just remain quiet. Participants sensed that this caused them to be viewed as not having opinions, not sharing opinions, being shy or being slow starters (P2, P3, P4, P8, P18). P18 put it this way:

"At least 4-5 months there was just no noise from me at all, no matter what."

P2, P3, P18 said *'it is in our culture to be quiet and listen', 'to wait for your turn', 'you do not just speak because you have an opinion', 'it is a sign of respect', 'It is a cautious approach of gauging how things are done and when is it OK to speak'*. Participants P2 and P3 said they didn't want to disturb the way things were, that they first needed to understand how things work. P5, P13, P15 and P11 said *"it is good to take time to be quiet, understand how things are done and only speak when you have value to add"*. P2 put it this way:

"At the starting like for me, I think when we join any new group of people or new team, always we need some time to analyse them or understand my responsibility".

This is a norm within Asiatic communication, there is a place for silence and sensemaking which enables harmony in communication. Miike (2002) highlights how traditional US/Eurocentric communication frameworks do not account for this. Miike (2006), Martin and Nakayama (2015), and R'Boul (2021) warn that a one-sided understanding of communication can result in ethnocentrism wherein anyone different is thought of as deficient even while they might be responding in a way that is appropriate in their culture.

The Sadharanikaran communication model outlines that when there is a bhava (or stimulus) there are stages of internal communication before the spoken word is uttered. Communication goes through the four stages of para (spiritual), pashyanti (intuition), madhyama (intellect) and only then there is vaikhari (uttered word). The findings above clearly highlight internal communication wherein skilled migrants take time before they engage in vaikhari or the uttered word. However, this does not mean that they are being passive, shy or are without ideas, but rather it is a time for silence and sense making.

After some time, participants said they were comfortable with the workplace and work-related communication but still struggled with non-work-related communication such as break times. P12, P14, and P18 said that break times took a little longer as they were not familiar with New Zealand pop culture, New Zealand humor, New Zealand history, to name a few. This is consistent with the findings of Holmes (2015), De Bres (2009), Fujio (2004) and Marra (2012) who found that in time skilled migrants were able to competently participate in work-related communication but often found unfamiliar communication styles difficult outside work-related communication such as small talk at break times. This tended to take longer to adapt to. Here is how P13 put it:

"At work I mean, this all the Kiwis sit together and they talk and they make jokes not about me, but like say about someone they do use some kind of phrases or like sayings that I don't know. Sometimes I don't get it what they're saying."

Once participants got past the quiet stage, participants found that in New Zealand workplaces their voice was heard and valued, and this was different to what they had experienced in India. P3, P6, and P7 said they realised that their opinion or ideas were considered and valued. While this is a positive change, participants still struggled to adapt to this. P2 said that *“to survive in the New Zealand workplace you must speak up”*. P18 on the other hand could not believe when her manager would let her lead conversations on things her team was doing.

Participants found that voice is not limited to positive and agreeable communication. P4 said she learned that she could negotiate her pay and have confidence in that. P5 had to remind herself that this is ‘not India’ and she can voice her disagreement. P13 said that when she first started working in New Zealand she hesitated to voice her concerns, but now she does so freely. P8 put it this way:

“I know that in New Zealand we have voice, we can speak up, we can agree or disagree, but we are not reaching to that level to react sometimes.”

So P8 understands that she has voice but is aware that she is not yet at the level of ease to use it but hopes to be able to do so in the future. A reason for participants being quiet also relates to the workplace culture in India. P1 and P8 said they were used to a power-driven work culture and not used to having a voice. There is a stark difference in workplace expectations between India and New Zealand. The Indian workplace hierarchy is established and followed very strictly. This hierarchy in communication is not limited to the workplace; it is the same in the family as well (P2, P15, P18). P2, P3, P9, and P18 said hierarchy meant that you must be quiet and speak when you are spoken to, these are the restrictions and rules that you must follow. You cannot just talk to your superiors because you had a thought.

P15 said not agreeing with your manager could cost you your job and P6 said it was an environment where there was lack of trust. P18 put it this way:

“You know we only speak when spoken to there are lots of restrictions. Back with my Indian boss I would give him like a brief before the meeting and he would talk for me in the meeting while I stayed quiet”.

P15 explained it like this – *“when you have been...brought up in that kind of environment or society...it kind of lingers in you...here it's flat, you feel you don't know how to respond to such a situation. Asians ... we are conditioned way too much.”*

P2 and P15 found that in New Zealand, hierarchy is almost absent from workplace communication. The workplace is flat, you have colleagues rather than managers. P15 said:

'This is a completely different scenario and takes time to adjust'.

Egalitarianism in the New Zealand workplace is clearly shown in the findings consistent with literature (Holmes, 2012). Participants were accustomed to differing levels of hierarchy being present in the workplace. According to Singh (1990), Miike (2006), Martin and Nakayama (2015) and R'Boul (2021), this is a part of Asian cultures.

Power relations and differing hierarchies are such an ingrained part of Asian cultures that the Sadharanikaran communication model has an inbuilt feature of sahridayata (harmony) to allow for communication across differing and complex hierarchies. This is achieved by ensuring that communication is not messenger-focused like traditional models of communication, but rather puts both the sender and receiver on an even platform because of the common goal of achieving harmony (Adhikary, 2008).

4.5 Adapting to 'the New Zealand way' of communicating

Initially there were some language related barriers that participants experienced, P2 and P18 referred to this as learning the 'New Zealand way' of speaking. Understanding accents was a difficulty in the beginning, P5, P6, and P18 mentioned that New Zealanders were hard to understand because they spoke fast. P14 and P18 highlighted that it went both ways - New Zealanders struggled to understand the skilled migrants accents too. Different ways of pronouncing the same words also added to the difficulty. Examples include the pronunciation of words with letters I, V, W, T and D (P2, P3, P10). P3, P4, and P8 said that names were particularly hard, P8 said *"they cannot pronounce our names correctly and we cannot pronounce theirs"*. While in this phase, participants did not feel confident to speak up or ask questions in case they got something wrong. P13 put it this way:

"I was afraid to ask them to repeat in case they think I don't know English."

Here are some other differences in speaking in New Zealand workplaces that Indian skilled migrants experienced. Participants mentioned that in the Indian workplace language is formal, P13 and P18 said that it took time to adjust to the colloquial and more informal way of speaking in New Zealand workplaces. Here is an example from P13:

"For people's sake I changed the terminology I use from proper and professional to more colloquial so people can understand what I am saying. Instead of saying have you passed urine now I have started saying have you peed".

P3, P7, and P9 also said that it took time to learn and to understand New Zealand English slang and references for New Zealand pop culture. Humour was another point of difference. Participants found

that New Zealanders were light-hearted and liked to joke (P2, P12, P14). P2 said that at first it can be confusing to gauge if it is serious or a joke, *“once you understand it you realise, you get that they are good sports, and you can give it back to them too”*. P7 found the amount of swearing that is accepted in the workplace particularly shocking and unprofessional. Another difference P18 mentioned is that in India while communicating there are things that are implied, whereas she has learnt that in New Zealand it is very important to be explicit and verbal in communicating.

These initial barriers that participants faced is consistent with literature wherein the taken for granted ways of speaking take time for outsiders to adjust to, and this includes accents, humour, how directives are received, and all other nuances of language (Yates, 2015; Dumitraşcu-Băldău & Dumitraşcu, 2019; Iqbal, 2017, Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014).

In the Sadharanikaran communication model both the sender and receiver are engaged in the process of abhivyanjana (coding) and rasawadana (decoding). The main guide for encoding is simplifying what is internal and expressing it. The sandesha (message) is sent using a sanketa (code) such as language, and this code can be either verbal or non-verbal. This is different from traditional communication frameworks that are only verbal and explicitly message focussed. We see above how participants grappled with the differences in the code and so the process of gaining rasawadana (decoding or understanding) is longer. However, we do also see some of the non-linear adapting as participants begin to adapt their own sanketa (code) and begin to adapt in order to achieve rasa (interpreting the message). The sarani (channel) for communication is both mind and body – this allows for non-verbal and implied messages.

Despite the differences listed above, all participants already communicated in English in their workplaces before coming to New Zealand, so they knew to speak English. P18 expressed some frustration when she said:

“We need to break the stigma that we cannot speak English.”

While this is true, for many participants, English is still a second language. P3 and P12 said that they often times translate from their native language to English in their mind while speaking. P1 and P16 also mentioned differences in choice of words, where in their native language there might be three or four different words to express a certain concept and when they say it in English the meaning can be perceived differently by New Zealanders. P15 said it wasn't just words but that tone in which Indian skilled migrants speak also has an impact. Just because he is soft spoken, he believes this impacted on how he was perceived:

“certain words that you use, or the tone of your voice can be taken in a very different way. They may see you as OK, you don’t have that leadership capacity or you’re not confident enough. In India I was a manager”.

Participants accept English as the spoken language in the New Zealand workplace according to Holmes (2012) this is a norm in the New Zealand workplace. From experience, skilled migrants are accustomed to a professional way of communicating in the workplace and so understand the need for communicating in English. P2 and P3 said this was important especially being mindful of colleagues or clients that may not understand the language. However just like some of the participants, research by De Bres (2009), Fujio (2004) and Marra (2012) supports that communicating in a second language is hard to navigate. And so sometimes it would be easier to communicate with colleagues in their native tongue during break times. One participant’s workplace did not allow this, and the participant found this to be unnecessary and harsh. When asked if there was a policy about this, they said they did not know:

“In the staff lounge where we have our break...we were talking in our language and our supervisor came in and said, you are not supposed to talk your language while you are on work. That time we all like feel bad, that’s our break time”. (P5)

Only one participant had this experience, most others’ expectations for communication only related to work rather than break times as well. Most of the barriers listed above, while they exist, are temporary and only present in the initial stages. P6, P9 and P13 said they got used to the accent in a short time and if they didn’t understand something, they just asked.

Sixteen of the 18 participants mentioned that they felt the need to adapt their communication style, only two participants said they didn’t feel the need to change. The things to adapt were perceived as not major but rather superficial, related to language i.e., the choice of words, terminology used at work, accents, and disposition. This included reducing the volume of speaking, speaking in a cheerful tone, saying sorry all the time (P5 and P11). All participants had a very positive attitude towards their need to adapt and learn the New Zealand way in relation to communicating in the workplace. Adapting is viewed as being required and a good thing, in fact it was embraced as an opportunity to learn about a new culture and accepted as a natural part of moving to a new country (P1, P2, P3 P4, P5, P7). P1 opined that adapting made integration into New Zealand easier. P5 put it this way:

“It’s my choice to come to their country. So, I have to adapt.”

The openness to adapting to ‘the New Zealand way’ is unsurprising as most Asiatic communication is other-centric (Miike, 2002). In the Sadharanikaran communication model adapting is a core feature,

where the sender and receiver both adapt in order to maintain harmony (Adhikary, 2008). Findings also showed some traces of US/Eurocentrism in relation to adapting. As Asante (1998) put it, US/Eurocentrism has permeated all spheres of life. This is what P15 said:

"I don't know whether it is because I come from a continent which has been like ruled by the British for 200 years. I am conditioned to look up to that English as a very high standard language. So I don't know whether my way of talking is right...so to get adjusted to that [New Zealand way of speaking] is OK for me completely."

I must note here the extent of adapting was limited to workplace communication and practices. In terms of a cultural point of view participants seemed less likely to adapt. An example is P4, P8, P13, and P16 all mentioned struggling to call their superiors or elders by their first name. This value exists because India is a hierarchical, high power distance society. Participants were less open about changing this. P4 put it this way:

"Oh, it's OK to learn new things, it is different, but it's good. Our culture I think is also important yeah Indian culture. So, what values and beliefs what we followed we anyway will follow till our death. But what's good in them I think it's good to adapt, yeah?"

4.6 Management intercultural communication competence

Management competence in intercultural communication seemed to have a big influence on skilled migrant intercultural communication experiences, particularly in the initial stages but also had a lasting impact. Some participants had New Zealand managers, while others had managers who had been migrants themselves. Line managers were influential and also organisational policies and upper management buy-in had an impact.

Limited management feedback is an intercultural communication barrier that participants felt. P6, P9, P14 and P15 all felt that managers did not provide enough feedback on work, such as how the skilled migrants are doing and how they can improve. Even though there are performance reviews P14 felt feedback was limited compared to India. P6 and P15 said they asked their managers for feedback when they needed it. P15 put it this way:

"I want reassurance ... that's what gives me confidence for my next move".

P9 on the other hand said that over the years he learnt that New Zealand prefers independent workers who just carried on with their work and so he concluded that no feedback was good because it meant that nothing was wrong.

Asiacentric communication is considered to be ongoing, it doesn't end when a message is delivered, there is a continuity to it and feedback is the way this is achieved (Miike, 2002). In the Sadharanikaran communication model once a message has been sent pratikriya or feedback is expected. Pratikriya is the response of the receiver after decoding the message. This puts the receiver in the messenger position and thus allowing the communication to be continuous (Adhikary, 2008, 2009; Shaw, 2019). This inherent need for communication to be ongoing with feedback explains why skilled migrants desire feedback. While there are feedback processes in New Zealand it is not one that is ongoing and so this is something that takes time for skilled migrants to realise and accept.

P7, P10, P14 and P13 had New Zealand managers who they found to be friendly and supportive. P7 said his manager, even when he was quiet, would ask him specific questions to draw him out. P10 and P14 said they never felt any cultural barriers in communication as such. This is how P10 put it:

"They all helped me, and you know getting used to this atmosphere or getting used to the work. I mean, they explained it so well that I didn't, I never felt any barrier in my workplace."

Other participants had managers that had been migrants themselves, some were Indian and others from other parts of the world. P2, P3, P5, P9, P12, and P18 were all very grateful for their managers and said that the fact that their managers understood their communication style helped in a huge way in terms of integrating into New Zealand workplaces. This is consistent with the findings of Matveev and Nelson (2004) and Holmes and O'Neill (2012) who report skilled migrants tended to thrive under managers who had been migrants themselves. Here is how P2 put it:

"Having a boss who is from the same culture, same origin, India helped because he would understand this is not what he is meaning, or he's not interpreting it right. He would also encourage and ask questions directed to me so that I would participate. Those kind of things kind of helped and worked in my favour...if it was not an Indian it would have been hard because I don't know what it is I don't know".

The majority of participants felt that if there were any issues or concerns, they were able to communicate this to their managers and they had the confidence that their managers would work on a resolution (P4, P7, P6, P8). P8 said that conflict resolution processes were transparent in the New Zealand workplace.

From an Asiacentric communication point of view, the manager-employee relationship is very important culturally. In the Sadharanikaran communication model for instance the relationship between those engaged in communication is more significant than the communication itself. For instance, in India there is the guru-shishya (student-teacher) relationship which is sacred just because

of the relationship between those communicating (Adhikary,2009). Similarly, the relationship between manager and employee is one of great influence and importance. Even so, the model ensures the communication is not sender dominant but gives both communicating parties an even platform.

Unfortunately, some participants who had managers that lacked intercultural communication competence, found this impacted them in a negative way. P15 felt that some managers just do not know how to address intercultural communication issues. Below are three examples.

P1 said that while providing a COVID briefing at a staff meeting, his manager subconsciously pointed to him while talking about the Delta variant. He was sure his manager was not even aware that they did that.

P10 said that her manager had no idea of Indian culture or days that were special to her. She was having a hard time being away from family during Diwali (an important Indian festival) so she asked to take annual leave that she had for that day. Her leave request was declined, she had tried to explain to them that this was like her Christmas, but the leave request was still declined. This impacted the participant in a negative way.

P11 had some serious issues with another staff member where she felt she was being bullied and her colleague was being racist. She reported this to her manager, her manager was a nice person but did not know how to address the issues and kept brushing them aside. This participant ended up leaving New Zealand due to unresolved workplace intercultural communication issues. Here's what she said:

"The manager was a very nice lady. But they are not trained, managers should be trained to solve problems. People who don't know management are made managers. If they had taken a step and you know done something things would have been different. There wouldn't have been so much of you know ill feeling".

Campbell (2016) reports that most New Zealanders have good intentions, but that cultural sensitivity needs to be developed in order to lessen the gap between intentions and actual practice. Some of the findings above do highlight this need. While managers seemed to have the most direct impact on participant experiences, organisational policies also had a bearing. P2 and P3 said their organisation was very inclusive and there was no place for racism in their organisation. Not only that their place of work celebrated major festivals for all the different cultures represented in the workplace. Management both funded and organised a party for the festivals and the whole organisation attended. Participants mentioned that this was always a great time, it was an opportunity to learn about different cultures and over the years has built a very inclusive environment. This is consistent

with the findings of Coates and Carr (2005) and Syed (2008) who report that organisations who go beyond legal compliance and take an active approach to intercultural communication result in culturally competent workplaces. There is such a stark contrast between P2 and P3's experiences and P10's experience in terms of intercultural communication in the workplace. This corresponds with Tharenou and Kulik's (2020) findings that an organisation's attitudes towards skilled migrants have an impact on skilled migrant experiences, either positive or negative.

P4, P6, P12, and P13 worked in organisations that did not have events like P2 and P3 but still felt that they worked in a good multicultural team, where everyone accepted each other and were used to working together. P16 said they wished that the organisation would lead initiatives for more opportunities to get to know different cultures. Tharenou and Kulik (2020) recommends that organisations should aid skilled migrant integration by managing expectations, investing capital in overcoming barriers and fostering an inclusive environment.

When asked what participants thought about intercultural communication training in their organisation, participants P2, P4, P9, and P17 said that there was adequate training, and the communication courses were compulsory. P15 said that currently their organisation only included Māori culture training and was of the view that it would be useful if this was expanded to include other cultures. P7 was of the opinion that for intercultural communication training to be meaningful it would need to be brought in at school level and cannot just be taught in workplaces. P12 thought it would be more useful to train those who came to New Zealand from outside rather than trying to train all of New Zealand.

4.7 Racism

Unfortunately, enough people talked about racism that it emerged as a theme. This should not have been surprising as it is in the literature. Brunton and Cook (2018), Brunton et al. (2020), Holmes (2015) and Iqbal (2017) have done studies that show that racism is present in New Zealand workplaces. Participants faced racism in different ways, some covert and in systemic layers and others sadly experienced more overt forms of racism (P4, P5, P7, P11).

Many participants faced the barrier that their work experience and skill was not recognised simply because their training was from India. Miike (2006) talks about how a US/Eurocentrism has fostered this view that the flow of learning goes from the west, so much so that western workplaces are unwilling to acknowledge learning from the east. Gunaratne (2010) refers to it as a paradigm where western cultures are considered to be superior to the east. We see this power relation while not overt is still present where Indian training is undermined. P11 opined that when a country allows a person to come in based on their skill, their skill must be recognised in the workplace no matter where they

are from. P3 had eight years of experience that was not recognised, P7 has not even been able to get job in their profession for 20 years because of requiring additional exams. Here are some other examples:

“I worked with the same machine back home so I'm quite confident. I have seven years of experience and still I'm not supposed to use it [in New Zealand] ...they can't accept our experience and our course. That was a huge barrier for me because people could not, you know, get over the thing that she's trained in India” (P5).

“I was a little more qualified than them also OK, but still it was not recognized. It was thought OK, she's from India, so she needs to learn the whole thing again, which was not necessary. I felt we were way ahead of them, but still they could not get past the Indian face. They think India is exotic with elephants and all that. So they are like they're more open to listening to our stories...You know our culture they like, but our skill they don't accept” (P11).

Wang and Shen (2000) talk about the east being viewed as a source of raw materials rather than knowledge. Considering the above experiences, the domination of US/Eurocentric communication frameworks seems to still have an influence on this type of thinking. P18 put it this way:

“They do not understand how elaborate and tedious our learning is and you know, we work exactly the same way as anyone over here. There are so many people who come from India to this country and then you have to write another examination just to prove that you've actually studied what you've studied... that is extreme.”

Some participants (P4, P15, P18) also felt this resistance sometimes comes up when they give suggestions at work. There appeared to be a distrust wherein they would say that is not possible and go another way. Even if the skilled migrant is confident, it would work based on their previous work experiences. P11 was told:

“Maybe you were doing all this in India, but here it is done this way we follow the UK system.”

Another instance of US/Eurocentrism again, Asante (1998) did say that this ideology has touched every area of study and life. Participants had experiences working in big multi-national companies in India and handled much bigger projects but their word on the matters would not be accepted, and this tended to be frustrating for participants (P11, P15, P18). P15 mentioned that New Zealand as a small country does not offer opportunity for growth like other countries such as the United States or United Kingdom, on top of that when suggestions are not taken, they felt stifled. P15 said the motivation to

come to New Zealand is not monetary alone but rather an expectation that they're able to use and grow their skill, which in his experience did not seem to be happening.

Participants have noted these occurrences as racism (P11, P15, P18). According to Maydell and Diego-Mendoza (2014), Iqbal (2017) and Tharenou and Kulik (2020) because of this the New Zealand workforce is missing out on readily available skills particularly in areas where there are shortages in New Zealand. Literature refers to this as 'brain waste' (Zikic, 2015). P13 said:

"I know there are shortages in my field, but people are unwilling to hire those with only overseas work experience".

P11 had an experience where the person assessing her was below her skill level as there was no one at her level. This is consistent with findings of Coates and Carr (2005) wherein host countries at times do not have the know-how to assess skilled migrant skills.

Over and above this, some participants experienced straight up overt racism. P8 and P13 had experiences where they were literally told by clients that 'they did not want to work with Indian brown skinned people'. P11 had a colleague that told clients that 'she needs to be taught because her training was in India'. Participants said this was not the norm, but it did happen. This was P18's experience:

"I had a customer who complained to the helpline and asked that she specifically wants to talk to a New Zealander, but I am the person that handles the complaints. So I called her and she said no I specifically asked for a New Zealander. I said I'm the one that handles this if you want the issue solved, you're going to have to talk to me".

P8, P9 and P12 also had experiences where people were either rude or made racist remarks. In most of these instances participants felt supported by their manager and team. However consistent with the findings of Pernice et Al. (2000) these experiences did take a toll on the participants' mental wellbeing. Butcher et al. (2006) warns that racism if left unchecked can result in skilled migrants leaving, a participant of this study did end up leaving and returning to India due to unresolved issues of racism.

The Sadharanikaran communication model, by requiring the sender and receiver of messages to be harmonious, has an inbuilt system against racism. After receiving a message by rasawadana (decoding) not all communication results on rasa (the state of achieving interpretation) in its ideal form. There are disruptions due to doshas (noises) that can lead to communication that is not harmonious (Adhikary, 2008). Racism could be considered as an environmental dosha. The contextual reality in which the communication occurs provides this meaning to communication.

New Zealand as a country relies on skilled migrants however this does not appear to be reflected in people's attitudes towards skilled migrants. Brunton and Cook (2018) and Brunton et al. (2020) report that New Zealanders are still resistant to immigrants who are different from them. There needs to be real change in this area in New Zealand particularly in the context where neighbouring countries are making very desirable offers to skilled migrants, both in terms of the scope of work and financial benefits. P4 put it this way:

"Everyone is telling, like what's the difference anyway we are not in our home country so why not move somewhere with a good pay".

4.8 Answering the research questions

The findings presented above answer the research questions regarding the intercultural communication barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants in the workplace by discussing the main themes that were found in the data. The communication barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants are:

- 1) Maintaining harmony – this refers to the work that skilled migrants put into maintaining harmony in the workplace.
- 2) Indirect Indian 'can't say no' and Indirect New Zealander 'too polite' – this refers to Indian skilled migrants' inability to say no. It is related to the need to maintain harmony in the workplace and the general cultural bend towards indirect speech. This caused issues within the workplace as New Zealanders are direct communicators. While most participants felt this, some participants also found New Zealanders' use of politeness in conversation indirect and confusing. This is because they are used to clear professional and hierarchical communication in the workplace.
- 3) Quiet at first – voice – Indian skilled migrants tended to be quiet initially, this is because of getting used to different power structures and also due to time taken in internal communicative processing. In time Indian skilled migrants did appreciate the voice they have in New Zealand workplaces.
- 4) Adapting to 'the New Zealand way' of communicating – this refers to accents and the unwritten nuances of language including small talk and humour. Indian skilled migrants were unanimous in their view that they needed to adapt their communication styles.
- 5) Management intercultural communication competence – the level of intercultural communication competence organisations and managers, whether good or bad, had a direct impact on the experiences of skilled migrants.

- 6) Racism – unfortunately Indian skilled migrants did face instances of racism. Most participants felt supported in these instances, however there were instances where the support was not sufficient.

An analysis of skilled migrant experiences using the Sadharanikaran communication model enabled me to put the Asian and Asian practices in the middle of inquiry. The way in which the findings aligned with this model showed how all the communication behaviours, although very different from New Zealanders, were well within the scope of competent Asiacentric communication.

4.9 Implications of findings and recommendations

The type of data collected, and the findings have brought the Asian communicator to the centre of analysis. Additionally, the analysis has not considered the Asian communicator through a US/Eurocentric lens but rather from an Asiacentric perspective. This has allowed for the Asians reality to be captured in its fullness. Although small scale this is an important step ahead in the landscape of Asiacentric work. The communication barriers found are different from a typical US/Eurocentric understanding of communication. This shows the importance of a correct lens in understanding human communication. An understanding that goes beyond US/Eurocentric communication models are so important. Schools, universities, and workplaces should offer multiple communication frameworks and models to enable a holistic understanding of human communication.

The findings also have implications for New Zealand workplaces in order to improve intercultural communication experiences for both Asian skilled migrants and the locals alike. Particularly since there is such a difference in Eurocentric and Asiacentric communication styles and skilled migrants are not able to adapt their communication styles instantly when they move to New Zealand. Here are some recommendations:

- Understanding the importance and centrality of maintaining harmony and the extent to which Asians adjust their communication style to maintain harmony would greatly enhance intercultural communication at the workplace.
- An awareness that Indian skilled migrants are not able to say 'no' when a request is made will ensure that New Zealanders are able to handle requests in a suitable way and skilled migrants do not end up feeling conflicted or like they are being taken for granted.
- Providing training on workplace communication styles of politeness can also remove some barriers in early integration. Also, an understanding of power distance and hierarchical communication that skilled migrants are accustomed to would help New Zealanders

understand skilled migrant behaviours. The flat power structure in New Zealand is something that takes time to adjust to.

- Indian skilled migrants come from a high power distance workplace where silence is valued. In the initial phase of integration into New Zealand, workplaces will lose valuable input from skilled migrants if managers are not aware of this. Understanding this would allow New Zealand managers to draw skilled migrants into conversations.
- The New Zealand workplace does include its own set of unwritten expectations of what is appropriate workplace communication. Skilled migrants, while they know the language spoken, have to go through a process of adaptation in order to be able to comfortably communicate in a new context. Offering training on workplace communication styles of politeness could help overcome some of these challenges. Also understanding and accepting different communication styles will help ease intercultural communication in the workplace.
- Managers are hugely influential in the integration process for skilled migrants. It is important that managers receive training in intercultural communication and are able to communicate with staff from different communication styles. It is also important that managers are equipped to address intercultural communication barriers in the workplace. In today's competitive world in order to retain skilled migrants Tharenou and Kulik (2020) recommend that organisations should aid skilled migrant integration by managing expectations, investing capital in overcoming barriers and fostering an inclusive environment.
- Racism of any form needs to be addressed proactively, not doing so will result in skilled migrants leaving. New Zealand workplaces must find ways to assess international education and work experience so that the skills that the migrants bring are not wasted or underutilised. There needs to be a broad level increase of awareness of New Zealand's reliance on skilled migrants and their importance in New Zealand society.

4.10 Summary

By examining the existing body of literature, the findings are situated within the broader context of previous research and theories. By doing so, this study is able to build upon existing knowledge and contribute to the understanding of Asiatic communication. The research questions are carefully examined and answered based on the collected data and analysis. Findings have been presented along with their implications to New Zealand workplaces.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Overview of the study

This study has been divided into five sections each explaining different steps of the research process. The introductory section highlights the predominance of US/Eurocentric communication frameworks that continues to inform education and workplaces, despite the significant multicultural shift in workforces. The current study aimed to address this limitation by adopting an Asiacentric perspective, focusing on the experiences of Indian skilled migrants using the Sadharanikaran communication model.

The second section delves into relevant literature, first discussing the issues arising from the widespread acceptance of US/Eurocentric communication frameworks as universally applicable. Then the emergence and development of Asiacentric perspectives in communication studies are explored, along with the major contributions in this field. The Sadharanikaran communication model, an Indian model used for analysis, is also outlined. The section further discusses communication barriers faced by skilled migrants in New Zealand.

Section three focuses on the research methods used in this study. The research paradigm is described as Asiacentric, based on Miike's assumptions (2003). Due to limited resources, the study employs familiar US/Eurocentric research methods. Semi-structured interviews with 18 participants were conducted to gather detailed accounts of their experiences. Reflective Thematic Analysis was used for data analysis, with snow-ball sampling used to select participants. Ethics approval was obtained from Massey University's Human Ethics Committee for this study.

The subsequent sections present the findings and discussion of this study in relation to the existing literature. Through data analysis, clear themes are chosen, which are supported by direct quotes from the participants. The study addresses the research questions, which focuses on intercultural communication issues faced by Indian skilled migrants in the workplace and how these issues can be understood from an Asiacentric perspective using the Sadharanikaran communication model. The implications of the findings for New Zealand workplaces are also discussed.

In conclusion, this section will highlight the key findings, discuss research contributions and limitations, and indicate areas of interest for future research.

5.2 Key findings

While workforces have drastically changed into multicultural spaces, the communication frameworks that inform education and workplaces are still predominantly US/Eurocentric. While the field of communication as it is has made great contributions to the understanding of human communication,

it is not universally applicable. This study aimed to explore the experiences of Indian skilled migrants from an Asiatic perspective using an Asiatic communication model called the Sadharanikaran communication model. Indian skilled migrants face several communication barriers in New Zealand workplaces, which can impact their integration and overall experience. These barriers include:

- **Maintaining harmony:** Skilled migrants put effort into maintaining harmony in the workplace, adjusting their communication style to achieve this. Understanding the importance of harmony and cultural differences can improve intercultural communication.
- **Indirect communication:** Indian migrants tend to avoid saying 'no' directly due to cultural norms and the need to preserve harmony. However, this clashes with the direct communication style of New Zealanders. Raising awareness of this difference can help New Zealanders respond appropriately and prevent conflicts. Some participants also observed that New Zealanders' politeness in conversation can be indirect and confusing. This is due to their familiarity with straightforward and hierarchical communication in the workplace. To facilitate early integration, offering training on workplace communication styles of politeness could help overcome some of these challenges.
- **Quiet at first:** Indian skilled migrants may be quiet initially, as they adjust to different power structures and go through internal communicative processing. Managers need to be aware of this and actively engage them in conversations to benefit from their valuable input.
- **Adapting to 'the New Zealand way' of communicating:** Skilled migrants often need to adapt their communication style, including accents, small talk, and humour, to fit into the New Zealand workplace culture. They are open to adapting however it is still a process and takes time.
- **Management intercultural communication competence:** The competence of managers in handling intercultural communication has a significant impact on the experiences of skilled migrants. It is crucial for managers to receive training in intercultural communication and address any communication issues in the workplace. Organisational policies are also at times a barrier to skilled migrants in workplaces.
- **Racism:** Unfortunately, some Indian skilled migrants experience instances of racism. Proper support and proactive measures are essential to address racism and prevent skilled migrants from leaving the workplace or the country.

Addressing these communication barriers and fostering a more inclusive and understanding workplace environment will contribute to better integration and experiences for Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand.

5.3 Research contributions

This study makes several important contributions to communication research:

Centring the Asian Communicator and Asiacentric Perspective: The study brings the Asian communicator to the forefront of analysis, highlighting Asian communication styles and realities. By adopting an Asiacentric lens instead of an US/Eurocentric lens, the study captures the fullness of Asian communication, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of Asian communication barriers and dynamics.

Challenging US/Eurocentric Communication Models: The findings show that the communication barriers identified are different from typical US/Eurocentric communication models. This highlights the importance of using appropriate lenses and understanding beyond US/Eurocentric frameworks in comprehending human communication. It also adds to the body of Asiacentric communication research.

Importance of Multiple Communication Frameworks: The study emphasises the significance of offering multiple communication frameworks and models in schools, universities, and workplaces. This approach promotes inclusivity, acknowledging diverse communication styles and fostering effective intercultural communication.

Implications for New Zealand Workplaces: The research sheds light on the communication barriers faced by Asian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces. Understanding the differences between US/Eurocentric and Asiacentric communication styles can facilitate better intercultural communication experiences for both skilled migrants and locals.

Recommendations for Improved Intercultural Communication: The study provides practical recommendations to enhance intercultural communication in New Zealand workplaces. These recommendations include understanding the importance of harmony, being aware of different communication styles, providing training on politeness, and equipping managers with intercultural communication skills.

Managing Skilled Migrant Integration: The study highlights the role of managers in the integration process for skilled migrants. It stresses the importance of intercultural communication training for managers and proactively addressing any form of racism to create an inclusive environment.

Recognition of Skilled Migrants' Contribution: The study underlines the significance of skilled migrants and their contributions to New Zealand society. It urges workplaces to assess international education and work experience effectively to fully utilise the skills and talents of migrants.

5.4 Research limitations

This is a small-scale study that has attempted to carry out research within the Asiacentric paradigm. While I have done my best to pick flexible methods that would align with the Asiacentric paradigm of research, a limitation of this study is that I have not been able to remain entirely true to the paradigm due to limited available academic resources particularly in the area of Asiacentric research methods in mainstream academic literature. In order to address this as Miike (2003) has suggested Asiacentric researchers should systematically build theory from Asian cultures, expand the geographical areas studied, compare and contrast Asian cultures with each other, develop multiple theories within historical contexts and develop indigenous methodology. Despite the limitations, this study represents a step towards embracing the Asiacentric paradigm and contributing to the body of knowledge from an Asian perspective.

5.5 Areas for future research

The aim of future Asiacentric research is to contribute to the development of the field of Asiacentric communication, making Asiacentric models, theories, and research methods easily accessible for educators, workplaces, and policymakers as needed. Here are two specific areas for future research from existing literature: The first area of interest is research based on Miike's (2002; 2006) four key dimensions for ongoing Asiacentric research. These dimensions are essential to understanding communication within Asian cultures: 1) Linguistic Dimension: As language serves as the primary code for communication in all cultures. 2) Religious Philosophical Dimension: This dimension explores how Asian communication has been influenced and shaped by religious beliefs. 3) Historical Dimension: As no culture exists independently of its historical background. 4) Aesthetic Dimension: Rituals and ceremonies are significant aspects that bind members of a culture together. This dimension focuses on exploring the aesthetic elements in Asiacentric communication. The second area of interest is research to aid intercultural communication issues that have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Scholars are called upon to engage with and address these issues in the context of intercultural communication (Kulich et al., 2021).

5.6 Summary

In conclusion this study contributes to the growing body of research on Asiacentric communication by offering an Asiacentric perspective and utilising the Sadharanikaran communication model. It sheds light on the experiences of Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces and provides insights into addressing communication barriers to foster more inclusive and culturally sensitive work environments.

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Appendix A – Massey University Ethics Low Risk Notification Letter



1/02/2022

Dear: Grace Selvaraj

Re: Low Risk Notification - 4000025453 - Workplace experiences of Indian skilled migrants in Palmerston North: Applying an Asiacentric perspective of Communication, foregrounding Harmony

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our database for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please contact a Research Ethics Administrator.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet



Applying an Asiacentric Communication model to explore the experiences of Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces.

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

My name is Grace Sneha Selvaraj, I grew up in India and have lived in New Zealand for the last 18 years. I live with my husband and daughter who has just turned 9 years old. I worked at Massey University since 2008 in Human Resources and then as a Marker, my most recent role was as an Academic Administrator. I am currently a full-time student completing a Master of Business Studies major in Communication, with the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing at the Massey Business School.

Project Description and Invitation

The New Zealand workplace today includes people from many different cultures. People's ability to navigate intercultural communication impacts their workplace experiences. Migrants face lots of challenges in the workplace including communication barriers. Currently Eurocentric theories and frameworks have dominated the field of Communication. These theories are based on Western contexts and for years have been uncritically accepted as being universally applicable. There is a call in literature for Asian researchers to engage with the complexities of Asian communication practices and add to the expansion of the understanding of human communication.

This project aims to respond to this call by conducting a study of Indian skilled migrant experiences within the framework of an Asiacentric communication model. Asiacentric communication is harmony centred and the goal of communication is achieving 'oneness' or harmony. Within this framework the voice of the Indian migrant will be central rather than in the peripheral as it is in many Eurocentric frameworks. The research objective is to examine intercultural communication barriers faced by Indian skilled migrants in the workplace through an Asiacentric communication framework known as Sadharanikaran an Indian model of Communication.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research. Your participation will add to the understanding of skilled migrant experiences and assist in addressing intercultural communication barriers in New Zealand workplaces.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

Participants for this study will be skilled migrants from India who have been working in New Zealand for one to five years. This timeframe has been chosen to account for the adjustment period. If you can recommend others who fit these criteria, this would be appreciated.

Project Procedures

Interviews will be used to gain detailed accounts relating to intercultural communication experiences in the workplace. I will have a semi-structured interview schedule to allow flexibility to ask follow-up questions as required. The interview will be conducted by myself, and it will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. The interview will be no longer than 45 minutes long and will be face to face at a location that suits you or can be held online via Zoom.

Data Management

Confidentiality of participants will be carefully protected in both the collection and reporting of data. Any identifiable information will not be collected or reported.

The data will be transcribed, stored, and analysed by the researcher (myself) alone. The data will be kept on a password protected computer, will be used only for purposes of completing this research project and will be destroyed on completion.

Transcripts of interviews will be provided to participants and release approval obtained before any data is used. I will be mindful of the responsibility to analyse and report findings while being cognizant of the implications to the participants, Massey University, the Indian community, Skilled migrants, and society at large. A summary of project findings will be made available to participants on completion.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any question.
- withdraw from the study at any time.
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.
- ask for the voice recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher.
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Project Contacts

Please feel free to contact the researcher and/or supervisors if you have any questions about the project.

Researcher

Grace Selvaraj

Email: Grace.Selvaraj.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

Phone: [REDACTED]

Supervisor

Dr Franco Vaccarino

Email: F.A.Vaccarino@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Prof Craig Johnson, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C – Participant Consent Form



Applying an Asiacentric Communication model to explore the experiences of Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read and I understand the Information Sheet attached. I understand the details of the study, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
3. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ [print full name] hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D – Interview Questions Schedule

Interview schedule

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my research.

General

How long have you worked in New Zealand?

Which part of India are you from?

Why did you decide to move to New Zealand?

Do you enjoy living in New Zealand?

Questions relating to the research objectives and research questions

What are some general barriers that you have faced in the workplace?

What are some communication issues/ barriers that you have faced when engaging with New Zealanders in your workplace -with you colleagues, managers and/or customers? Specific examples.

In Sadharanikaran an Indian model of communication and other Asiatic communication frameworks achieving 'oneness' or harmony is the main goal of communication.

Have you had situations where this harmony was broken – can you provide examples of when this happened and how did you respond to such situations, and how did it make you feel?

How have you navigated/managed these issues to maintain harmony?

Are you able to identify the main cause for this communication issue/barrier? – Do any of the features of Sadharanikaran relate to the issue.

What are some of the effects of this issue/barrier for you in the workplace?

Do you feel these issues/barriers have been resolved or removed?

How could intercultural communication in the workplace be improved? IC training?

Have you adjusted or adapted your communication style to fit in with the New Zealand way of communicating?

General

Is there anything else you would like to bring up that might benefit my research?

Could you recommend anyone else for this study? Or forward the information sheet to someone please.

Once I have transcribed this interview I will send you a copy, you will be able to edit this as you wish. I will then get your signature on a transcript release form so that I am able to use the data in my research.

Appendix E – Authority for The Release of Transcripts



Applying an Asiacentric Communication model to explore the experiences of Indian skilled migrants in New Zealand workplaces.

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name - printed