An Investigation of Successful and Unsuccessful Communication between International and North African Social Workers at Centres for Disabled Children in North Africa

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Abstract

There is a need to improve the quality of life for disabled children in North Africa. Although local governments and communities have been providing social services support, an increase in social services investment, particularly, specialists who work in the area of providing disability support, is needed from local and international organisations. However, international social workers' lack of cross cultural sensitivity creates communication barriers and prevents effective means of collaboration between international and local social workers. The main aim of this research is to identify culturally appropriate communication skills and possible pitfalls for international social workers by investigating successful and unsuccessful communication between international and local social workers working at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa. A constructivist qualitative approach has been used to explore the complex world of lived experiences of the social workers. The stories of four international and three local social workers were gathered through semi structured in-depth interviews. Three main themes emerged as a result of analysis of the interviews: language and religious value, gender relations, shame and honour. The findings have shown that in order for international social workers to communicate culturally appropriately and achieve successful collaboration with local social workers, the international workers need to be aware of the differences in mind-sets between individualistic and collective cultures, and be sensitive to the Arab/ Muslim cultural values of local social workers.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The background of this study is the need to improve the quality of life for disabled children in North Africa. According to Degirmenciogly (2007) and Nsamenang (1995), this is an issue that needs to be addressed. International and local social workers in North Africa identified that "In North Africa, the infrastructures for disabled children particularly in rural areas are not yet developed". One local social worker stated that although local governments and communities have been working with this issue by providing land, property and financial support, increased support from around the world is also needed. In order to increase the amount of support services for disabled children, an increase in social capital investment is needed from local and international organisations (Azaiza & Cohen, 2008). Particularly needed are specialists who work in the area of providing disability support. The international and local social workers stated that the benefits of having this support are observable in local communities in North Africa. According to international and local social workers from North Africa, a number of projects have been planned by Non Governmental Organisations from the United States and Europe in order to assist the services for disabled children. However, international and local workers also stated that there is a lack in employing an effective means of cross cultural understanding when trying to implement Western based projects from the United States as well as European countries into a North African Arab culture. To achieve a successful collaboration between local and international organisations, the level of cross-cultural awareness in this area needs to be raised.

A story leading to this thesis

The research is built upon my personal experiences as well as the social network that I built up through my voluntary work at schools for disabled children in North Africa over the last six years. Over the last six years, I have observed the activities and worked in several schools and rehabilitation centres for disabled children in North Africa. My voluntary work experiences at the schools and centres for disabled children in the last six years has enabled me to explore the differences and similarities of the working situations in these centres. I was able to gain a general picture of how the projects were operating in these centres. I

was also able to observe international social workers' coping strategies in relation to cross-cultural issues. My friendships with social workers, particularly with local social workers, gave me insights into their cultural values. Building relationships in Arab culture is based on spending time with people especially in informal settings such as having tea and coffee, sharing meals and occasionally even staying in locals' houses as a guest. These actions are considered to be respectful and appropriate because receiving hospitality is a sign of building good relationship. Throughout this qualitative study, my personal experiences with the social workers in North Africa have been included to construct the social as well as the cultural context of North Africa.

Positioning the author

I was born and spent first two decades of my life in Japan. In Japan, I received a Western theory based education within a Japanese cultural context. I was positioned as member of the dominant group in a monocultural society. Then, I migrated to New Zealand and have been spending the third and fourth decades of my life in what is said to be a bicultural society (Love & Waitoki, 2007). In New Zealand, I have also received Western theory based tertiary education. In New Zealand, I have been positioned as a member of an ethnic minority group because of my Japanese origin. In North Africa, I have been perceived as an outsider and as a member of a socio economically dominant group. However, compared to some of the international social workers in North Africa, I have attributes associated with non-dominant status because of my non-Western cultural upbringing and membership of an ethnic minority group in New Zealand. Thus, I am positioned in the middle in the cultural scale between North Africa and the West. This vantage point enables me to understand the issue of cross cultural sensitivity (Sonn, 2004). Cultural sensitivity assists in identifying and analysing the application of Western therapeutic theory into culturally conceptualised forms of practice.

Cultural competence

The issue of power relationship between dominant and non-dominant people groups is relevant to Maori, indigenous people of New Zealand, as there is a lack in cultural safety and cultural competence within mainstream psychological practice. The term cultural competence is borrowed from literature on

multicultural competencies in the United States (Love & Waitoki, 2007). However, the idea of cultural competence stems from the principles of culturally appropriate practice and research for Maori and non-Maori in New Zealand (Love & Waitoki, 2007). Cultural competence is also developed from the notion of cultural safety, which has been developed within nursing practice and research in New Zealand (New Zealand Psychologist Board, 2006; Ramsden, 2002):

> Cultural competence is defined as a having the awareness, knowledge, and skill, necessary to perform a myriad of psychological tasks that recognises the diverse worldviews and practices of oneself and of clients from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds. Competence is focused on the understanding of self as a culture bearer; the historical, social and political influences on health, in particular psychological health and wellbeing whether pertaining to individuals, peoples, organizations or communities and the development of relationships that engender trust and respect. Cultural competence includes an informed appreciation of the cultural basis of psychological theories, models and practices and a commitment to modify practice accordingly (New Zealand Psychologist Board, 2006, p. 5).

New Zealand Psychologist Board clearly states their commitment to cultural safety and Maori health and well-being (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2005). Cultural safety describes the responsibility of those in power positions to deliver appropriates psychological services to Maori consumers (Levy, 2007; New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2005). Cultural safety is also underpinned by the recognition of diversity within different worldviews and minority groups (Levy, 2007; New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2005, 2006b). The result of the implementation of cultural safety within psychological practices is the availability of culturally safe and appropriate psychological practices for diverse social groups (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2005, 2006b). This could be achieved through respecting the diversity of collectivistic worldviews in psychological practices (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2005; Zebian, Alamuddin, Maalouf, & Chatila, 2007). The principles based on cultural competence and safety are relevant to this study where the issue of power relationship exist between Eurocentric and traditional tribal value based practices.

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Cultural context in North Africa and the West

There are some significant differences in cultural context of North Africa and the West. Within collectivist cultures, there is a strong sense of community. Whenever people within collective cultures experience problems within their family network, they generally solve their problems within their close net-works such as the nuclear family, extended family or neighbours (Ben-Ari & Pines, 2002). Seeking help outside of their close support systems is not normal practice and might be considered shameful (Ben-Ari & Pines, 2002).

In contrast to the Arab collectivist culture, the individualistic society of the West places great emphasis on the rights of individuals. Within the West, the ideology has been largely influenced by capitalism. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010), capitalism is a social economic system characterised by production, is privately owned, by investments that are determined by private decision and the distribution of goods that are determined by competition. Capitalism has spawned the concept of individualism in the Western world.

Dwairy & Achoui (2006) describe the difference between Western and Arab cultures by referring to the notion of discipline. In the West, independence for adolescence is valued and parents tend to grant adolescents freedom. In contrast to this, Arab cultures value and emphasise collectiveness. Parents promote obedience and adherence to rules and regulations in order to teach submissive behaviour for the harmony of the collective society. For people who live in collective social structures, individuation does not develop to the same extent that it would within more individualised societies. Thus, norms, values, roles, and familial authority orders shape their behaviour as opposed to personal character (Dwairy, 2002). The collective relationship between parents and children can be seen within the decision making process of Arab adolescents. A study of adolescents in Lebanon has shown that friendships, marriage, occupational preference and even political opinions are dependent upon their parents' position on the subject. This is because Arab adolescent generally show loyalty to their parents as their providers (Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserie, & Farah, 2006). It is often the case that the father's belief and behaviour largely influence the behaviour and beliefs of their children within Arab societies (Sharabany, Eshel, & Hakim, 2008).

Concepts of disabilities in North Africa and the West

The concepts of disabilities are understood differently in North Africa and in the West. In North Africa, the prevalent belief is that disabilities are the result of the will of God or caused by a curse or by evil spirits (Al-Krenawi, Graham, Dean, & Eltaiba, 2004). In the West disability is perceived through a scientific and medical lens based on genetics and chemical imbalances or as a result of physical injury (Fisher & Goodley, 2007).

This difference in conceptual understanding is reflected in social actions in relation to disabilities. In North Africa seeking help is complex within itself. Seeking external help is not only seen as against God's destiny but also against their own community beliefs (Ben-Ari & Pines, 2002). For example, the will of God is translated into a disabled child's condition. When a family conceives a disabled child, they often believe that it is according to God's will, thus, seeking help could imply unbelief in God. An intervention can be seen as an act of unbelief, as one is seen to interfere with the child's destiny that was determined by God: within Arab culture it is believed that God controls all events, help seeking is therefore an act against God's will (Ben-Ari & Pines, 2002). However, some families believe that they will receive blessings if they care for disabled children. In the West, the majority of scientific practitioners separate spiritual dimensions from their practices (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001). Secularisation is considered to be the general and most accepted processes of modernisation (Halman & Draulans, 2006). However, some social work practitioners have negotiated to overturn the power relationship between Western dominant and indigenous practices (Love & Waitoki, 2007).

The Muslim values in Arab social work

Al-Krenawi & Graham (2001) highlight the importance of learning traditional Arab values which emphasise a belief in Islam. In their studies on social work in Arab nations, Al-Krenawi & Graham (2001) have examined Muslim values in order to gain insights into current practices among Arab social workers. An understanding of Muslim values assists in explaining the reasons behind the practice of Arab social workers and is also useful for identifying the reasons for any clashes between foreign and local social workers. Demands for culturally and socially appropriate ways to provide health care services in Arab countries

(Bilenko, Hammel, & Belmaker, 2007) will be met through an understanding of Islamic religious law (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001). Medical access for Arab Muslim females is an example; practitioners, and those in the educational service sectors need to be aware of culturally appropriate ways of how Muslim women access the services and help that is appropriate for Muslim females (Al-Krenawi, et al., 2004). According to Akbar, Saffir, & Granberry (1996), within Arab culture, where the majority of the population are Muslim, many events and practices have a spiritual connection and daily decisions and aspects of their lifestyle are often motivated by spiritual beliefs. In other words, a process of conceptualisation and decision making is integrated with social and spiritual aspects (Akbar, et al., 1996). Since North African society is based on Muslim values, it is crucial to understand how Muslim values are integrated in social work practices. This belief based method of analysis will be applied in this thesis in order to explore the communication barrier between international and local workers.

Arab postmodern society

A number of authors highlight the complexity of communication within Arab postmodern culture. As a number of Arab nations have been integrating with international market systems, people's beliefs and attitudes are adapting rapidly (Faour, 1989; Green & Smith, 2007). As the population is adjusting to the new economic and social changes, there is also a desire for people to improve their own socioeconomic status and there is growing notion of the value of modern societal living (Faour, 1989; Green & Smith, 2007). As a result there is an integration of both modern and traditional forms of living in Arab urban areas. However, Young & Shami (1997) argue that it is dangerous to assume that everyone in the Arab region has adopted western values in urban areas. Since people have different values such as strong Arab traditional values and more modern westernised values, generalisations about Arab people are not always correct and are not applicable to everyone (Young & Shami, 1997). In Arab postmodern society, the image of modern societal living has rapidly increased, but the values of traditional belief still remain. This implies that international social workers could underestimate the unseen traditional values of people due to the visible modern living of people.

Culturally sensitive social interventions

A number of authors highlight the importance of culturally sensitive interventions in Arab society. Culturally contextualised education is necessary in order to maintain the well-being of family members in Arab nations (Haj-Yahia, 1995). Research done by Blienko et al. (2007) found that significant paternal educational levels correlate positively with the utilisation of health care. Community based culturally and socially sensitive ways of providing health care services also assist in raising the awareness of the importance of early utilisation of health care (Bilenko, et al., 2007). Educational efforts to expand awareness towards health care services are important as a way to understand and improve health standards (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2006; Haj-Yahia, 1995). Blienko et al. (2007) believe that improvement in health care services can only be realised by making them more accessible, available and culturally sensitive to their clients (Bilenko, et al., 2007). It is also important for policy makers in Arab nations to design health services for a society that is in a period of transition (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2006). These researchers point out that the delivery of appropriate services is necessary at the societal level and this also necessitates international workers understanding the needs of North African society.

Culturally sensitive methods in Arab social work

There is a need to develop culturally sensitive methods of social work in Arab countries (Zebian, et al., 2007). Fundamental issue raised by Zebian, et al (2007) that relates to the lack of culturally sensitive practices is the fact that most of the theories and practices are based on Western concepts. Most psychologists in Arab countries have studied psychological theories from the West, therefore there is a bias that exists towards Western practices as most theoretical knowledge in psychology is based on Western contexts (Degirmenciogly, 2007). Research shows that cultural sensitivity is noticeably low on many dimensions of use of assessments including application to daily life, methodological procedures employed, theory building based on biochemical oriented theories of psychology (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001; Haj-Yahia, 1995; Zebian, et al., 2007). The need to continue constructing theoretical understandings and intervention models towards more appropriate methods with Arab people is required (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001; Haj-Yahia, 1995). This theory must encompass both traditional Arab culture as well as modernised Arab transitional cultures (Haj-Yahia, 1995).

Al-Krenawi & Graham (2001) point out that social workers need to understand the differences between modern social work practice and traditional support practice based on Arab traditional value. This indicates the need for international social workers to understand the concepts of Arab traditional value.

Justification for the study

This study is important for a number of reasons. According to one of the local social workers, lack of resources within schools for disabled children means there is a constant need for overseas experts, including specialised trained therapists, to share their educational programmes, management strategies, and materials to be used for therapy and rehabilitation of disabled children. International NGOs are therefore looking for ways to provide the most effective support. According to international and local social workers, the collaboration of international and local social workers is an effective ways of assisting the well-being of disabled children, their families and surrounding community members.

However, international and local social workers have identified that the barriers to successful collaboration are largely due to cultural differences between international workers and local workers. The international and local social workers stressed that the challenge of cross-cultural communication is an obstacle to success and results in a gradual failure of projects. Thus, good communication between international workers and locals is a crucial factor to achieving long-term success with community development projects in North Africa.

One contextual factor leading to communication barriers is the different concept and understandings held about disability between the international social workers and members of the North African population. Family members of disabled children can add to the difficulties by a failure to understand the nature of disability in general. According to one international social worker, "shame and helplessness is associated with having a disabled child within the family". A lack of research exists in this area, as disability is considered shameful in North African society in general. Research done by Karam et al. (2006) on mental disorders in Lebanon mentions the following; "we suspect that taboos surrounding mental illness as well as a lack of awareness are additional barriers against seeking treatment" (p. 1005). Culturally sensitive research and social interventions are required in order to improve the well-being for disabled children

within North African social context. In order to achieve culturally sensitive interventions, research about culturally sensitive communication within a North African context is necessary. Some concepts of appropriate communication are published within the field of the cross cultural studies, however, there is a lack of publications in the actual applications of the theory. This small scale study will add to the knowledge in this area.

Aims of the present study

The aim of this thesis is to explore international Non Government Organisation workers' stories of successful and unsuccessful cross-cultural communications with the local workers at schools and centres for disabled children to uncover factors that may enable or hinder communication between international and the local social workers. The purpose of this research is to find out how to improve the culturally sensitive practices of international social work at centres for disabled children in North Africa.

Scope of the study

This study utilised a constructivist qualitative study to gather an in-depth understanding of social reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This approach allows the researcher to draw attention to practices and ideas of people's experiences as important data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The stories of the international and the local workers were collected through semi structured individual interviews, which allowed gathering relevant and in-depth information within this study topic (Bernard, 2006).

Thesis outline

This thesis comprises four chapters. The procedure as well as results of the study is presented in this thesis. A review of literature relating to culturally sensitive approaches in the Arab world is presented in this chapter.

Chapter two describes the methodology applied in this study. A constructivist qualitative approach, employing semi structured individual interviews, was used to collect the stories of the international and the local workers. The ethical issues involved during this research are addressed. Cultural sensitivity as well as consent issues are presented.

Chapter three describes the findings of this research. The investigations of accounts gathered from the interviews are presented and analysed according to the themes that emerged from the stories of the international and the local workers.

This thesis concludes with chapter four, which presents the conclusions of this research. Some key factors from findings synthesised with literature are discussed. Recommendations made by the international and the local workers in relation to the research questions are presented with supporting literature. Limitations as well as possibilities for future research are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

This chapter comprises four parts: The first discusses a constructivist approach, which assists to analyse the complex world of lived experiences. Within the constructivist paradigm, I discuss an eclectic but systematic approach in data analysis process. The second part describes my data gathering methods used in the study: the process of recruitment; the choice of semi structured in-depth interview; and the method of data recording. The third part discusses ethical issues which include the method to implement culturally sensitive communication with the participants, to use observations from previous visits, to prevent coercion of the participants, to gain the social workers' consent, to ensure privacy and confidentiality of participants and to check the accuracy of recorded material. In the final part of this chapter, I describe the process of transcriptions and coding and analysis of the social workers' stories.

PART ONE: A CONSTRUCTIVIST QUALITATIVE APPROACH

The qualitative paradigm is appropriate for this study. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry aiming to gather an in-depth understanding of the socially constructed nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This type of research does not emphasise quantitative figures such as statistical sample of intensity, frequency or amount, but focuses on processes and meanings of the social reality, practices and ideas of people's experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The value of social reality is emphasised in qualitative research, therefore, qualitative researchers attempt to interpret the social phenomena according to the worldview of the people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Constructivist paradigm

The constructivist paradigm is appropriate for the cross-cultural nature of the research. Social constructivism focuses on understanding the complex world of lived experiences from those who live it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In other words, the social constructivist analyses "the emotional, linguistic, symbolic, interactive, political dimensions of the social world and their meaningfulness, or lack thereof" (Greene, 2003, p. 597) in order to understand the worldview of each group of people. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe methodological assumptions of the constructivist paradigm as: a) a relativist ontology which

means that the world consists of tangible multiple realities; b) a subjective epistemology, which is the interactive relationship between researcher (inquirer) and participant (respondent). In other words, the interaction involved in the data gathering process means that the researcher cannot be totally objective (Gliner & Morgan, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985); and c) a naturalistic procedure that is a process in the natural world. I describe the findings according to the criteria of eclectic research strategies. My methodology is also influenced by grounded theory, that is, the findings are rooted in the systematic analysis of qualitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998b).

Eclectic research strategies

This study is not focused on statistical significance but is seeking ideas and practices which will be elicited through in-depth conversations. The targeted data is grounded in people's experiences. Therefore, I have used eclectic research strategies. I have used inductive and deductive coding as well as content and thematic analysis to interpret the complex cross-cultural nature of data in a systematic way. This study is also influenced by grounded theory approach. In this approach, there is no rigid process for analysing data and the use of a mixed analysis method is appropriate (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a; Wester & Peters, 2000). In this study, the grounded reality of experiences, a method commonly used in anthropology, is used. It may be recognised as a part of grounded theory, however, the emphasis is on 'reality' not 'theory'.

Inductive and deductive coding

The target data are 'rooted' in the everyday experiences of participants. The real experiences of participants are raw data which are ideas or language that participants have constructed from their everyday experiences. Therefore, I used inductive coding method (Bernard, 2006). An inductive approach means that emerging codes and themes are identified and developed from the collected data without having interference from pre-conceptions of academic theories or the researcher's idea (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, this inductive approach is employed in the exploratory and discovery phase of the data analysis process (Bernard, 2006). However, in order to prevent this data analysis process from lacking a theoretical and epistemological commitment (Braun & Clarke, 2006),

deductive coding method, content analysis is employed in the later, confirmatory stage of data analysis process (Bernard, 2006).

Content and thematic analysis

By means of content analysis method, the codes and themes developed from the data collection are synthesised with other studies within same academic discipline (Bernard, 2006). Braun and Clark suggest that "content analysis is another method that can be used to identify patterns across qualitative data, and is sometimes treated as similar to thematic approaches" (2006, p. 98). Thus, thematic coding, which is used in thematic analysis, is also applied to categorise the data into meaningful themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006). Hence, I used combination of content and thematic analysis to draw a broad picture within the findings of this study.

PART TWO: GATHERING THE SOCIAL WORKERS' STORIES

Interviewing is an appropriate method of data collection in this research. Compared to everyday conversation, an interview is a conversation with a purpose (Dexter, 1970; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, interviewing is a practical method to gather rich data from social workers.

Recruitment of the participants

Four international NGO workers who have working experience within the North African region as well as three local social workers were personally invited to participate in interviews. The criteria for choosing participants were that they had working experiences at a school for disabled children in North Africa for more than five years or had knowledge and experiences in the social work field in the North African context. An information sheet (Appendix Three and Appendix Four) was sent to possible participants via email during the months of October and November 2010. All the participants were selected from the social networks I had built through my voluntary work at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa over the last six years. Thus, a trusted relationship had already been built with all the possible participants. In order to carry out reliable qualitative research, building a long-term and well-trusted relationship is crucial particularly in Arab culture (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000).

Semi structured/ In-depth interview

The interview protocol (Appendices One and Two) was semi structured and covered four areas. This allowed for conversational flexibility and flow to reveal participants' real life situations in context (Flick, 2006). Questions were open-ended to encourage the participants to respond in their own way (Bernard, 2006). In semi structured interviews, unlike every day conversations, there is a formality in the conversation in discussing the topic (Bernard, 2006). Thus, during this interview process with the participants, formalities such as purpose, regulations, particular topics of conversation, were set with an intention to gather specific information.

The individual interviews were conducted via Skype over a period of three months (October, November and December 2010). Interview questions were based on my observations and experiences. Participants received a copy of questionnaire beforehand to enable them to prepare their answers. One of the international social workers chose to send back written responses to the questions but offered to clarify the written answers if required. During the interviews, prompts, lists of topics that need to be covered for each question, were used where appropriate to keep the conversation flowing (Bernard, 2006). The prompts were drawn from previous knowledge and experiences that I have gathered from working with these participants in the past, as well as from three pilot interviews conducted prior to these interviews. For in-depth interviews, the use of prompts was to increase the range of topics that were contextually relevant to the research questions as well as to gain in-depth data within the relevant topics (Bernard, 2006). For one of the Skype interviews, a French interpreter who was selected by the participant was employed. Each interview was approximately one to one and half hours. Participants' permission was asked for further communication after the interviews had been conducted. Participants were sent a copy of the transcript after the interview to give them an opportunity to clarify or amend comments made during the interviews or to add further information. In addition, this also gave me the opportunity to ask any questions that may have surfaced during the interview. Communication after the interviews was conducted via emailing and Skype.

Recording

During the interviews via Skype, tape/ MP3 recording served as the main method of data recording. Note taking during conversations was avoided in order to prevent interruptions and to respect the natural flow of communication. A tape recorder and a MP3 recorder were used with participants' permission. All the recorded tape/ MP3 data were kept secure and only accessible by me.

PART THREE: ETHICAL ISSUES

This research was approved by the Department of Psychology Research and Ethics Committee, acting under the delegated authority of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato.

Cultural sensitivity for the North African workers

In order to carry out socially and culturally sensitive research with North African social workers, implementing culturally sensitive methods of communication is important (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). In North Africa, cultural values are based upon a concept of 'shame and honour'. Therefore, sharing personal negative communication experiences they had with international social workers could cause discomfort for the local participants. To avoid this, I asked the participants to recall general stories that they might have. For example: 'What negative stories have you heard?' as opposed to 'what negative stories do you have?' (Appendix Five). In this way, cultural sensitivities were respected. Furthermore, although I was seeking information on cultural and religious views which affect communication, I did not ask participants' personal details, particularly their religious beliefs. Instead I asked them societal views on cultural and religious traditions in North Africa. Additionally, as I have experience of working in the setting in North Africa, the relationships I had established meant that the participants were unlikely to be offended by my questions.

The use of observations on previous visits

Some of the observation data from previous trips are included within the findings section. However, the primary data were gathered from the Skype interviews as well as emailing during the data collection period. The information from previous observations enhances the findings gained from the data received from the participants. As noted, I brought up these same topics during the interviews. And

I used my previous experience to feed into present conversation so that consent issues would not arise.

Informed consent of participants without coercion

Since all the possible participants were known to me through my volunteer work, the information sheet was sent to the participants via email only. The communication via email made it easier for participants to 'say no'. The emails were sent during the months of October, November and December 2010.

Gaining the social workers' consent

All participants to be interviewed were asked either to complete the consent form (Appendix Three), or to verbally agree to be interviewed before the interviews were conducted. In Arab culture, verbal agreements are commonly used so it was anticipated that this would be the case here. These consents were audio taped. In one case, an interpreter translated the consent form into French for the verbal agreement. In order to protect participants' rights, participation was voluntary and all the participants had the right to refuse to answer questions or stop the interview at any time. They had the right to withdraw from the research up to the time when participants had checked and approved their transcript of the interview. In the consent process, an information sheet or verbal explanation about this research project was provided for all the participants. During the process of consent, opportunities to ask any questions and discussion in relation to participation were provided. The value of the research was outlined and explained on the consent form or verbally communicated to participants.

Privacy

In order to protect the privacy of the participants, all identifiable information such as the names of the participants, and the names and locations of the schools and centres has been withheld in the report. To further protect the anonymity of the participants the name of the countries I was recruiting participants from are not mentioned. Instead, the locations are described simply as North Africa.

Checking accuracy

I endeavoured to transcribe the social workers' stories as accurately as possible to ensure the reliability of the data. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then sent through email with a letter asking the participants to

check the accuracy of the transcripts and to make any changes or additions particularly where the comment was not clear. Three of the participants made very minor grammatical corrections. In one instance, a follow up interview was conducted to clarify the meaning and additional information was added. The rest confirmed the transcripts of their interviews without suggesting any modifications.

PART FOUR: ANALYSING THE SOCIAL WORKERS' STORIES

Transcriptions

All the interviews were transcribed by me in full. However, interruptions, unrelated conversation and all the identifiable information were disregarded. While transcribing interviews, significant comments were highlighted and some of the codes were identified. Braun and Clarke (2006) with several other authors affirm that the process of transcriptions may be seen as time-consuming (Riessman, 1993). However, this process is one of the crucial phases of data analysis (Bird, 2005), as the process is acknowledged as an interpretative act (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999).

Content analysis

As already stated, the data collected from interviews were analysed by means of content analysis. Stemler (2001) describes content analysis as the compression of collected data into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. Stemler (2001) also suggests that the content analysis should constantly be employed in the service of the research questions. Reference was to the research questions during the process of analysis. According to Holstein and Gubrium, "analyses of reality construction are now re-engaging questions concerning the broad cultural and the institutional contexts of meaning-making and social order" (2005, p. 484). Thus the interpretive practice of the content analysis was influenced by previous field trips made by me to North Africa, academic literature reviewed on culturally sensitive practices in the Arab world, and information and key words provided through pilot interviews prior to the interviews. Repetitive words and statements as well as statements that participants particularly emphasised in relation to the research questions were employed in the analysis process. The process of the content analysis is as follows.

Table 1

Phase of data analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1.Becoming familiar with the data:	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2.Generating initial codes:	Highlighting significant parts, picking up (bolding) key words and coding in a systematic fashion across the data set.
3.Categorising with themes:	Searching for themes and indicating each theme with a different colour.
4.Comparing and analysing according to the structure of the interviews (Appendices Four and Five):	Reading the stories of the international and the local social workers and comparing them. Noting down differences and similarities in the comments made by the international and the local workers.
5.Producing the findings and the implications:	Synthesising the notes from the comparisons with literature related to this study.

Note. Adapted from "Using thematic analysis in psychology," by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3, p.87.

Phase 1: Becoming familiar with the data

While I conducted all the interviews, I transcribed and I thoroughly read through the transcripts. Then, I became familiar with the data and some initial analytic ideas emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

At this stage, significant parts were highlighted and key words were identified. All the transcripts of the interviews were thoroughly read with special attention given to the highlighted parts and the key words in order to identify all the potential codes in a systematic fashion across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, prompts used during the interviews also assisted this coding process. All the codes were marked on the transcripts of the interviews. This is to protect the context of the coded data. Once the data is extracted from the transcripts of the interviews, there will be a risk of losing context within the coding unit (Bryman, 2008). Furthermore, the quotes of the participants were employed for two reasons. Firstly, quotes give audiences a better understanding as the quotes act as exemplars of concepts and theories (Bernard, 2006). Secondly, quotes express the topics within the socio-cultural context. Unusual words or common terms that are

used in unfamiliar ways in the text often represent socio-political statements within a particular society or a cultural group (Bernard, 2006).

Phase 3: Categorising with themes

This stage started when all the transcripts had been initially coded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Compared with phase 2, this phase focused on a wider scale of analysis, which involved comparison across all the coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main themes used within the analysis were then identified and categorised based upon the topics within the socio-cultural context of this study (Azaiza & Cohen, 2008; Stemler, 2001). Identified meaning units were coloured thematically.

Phase 4: Analysing according to the interview structure

The analysis continued through reading all the transcripts in order of the interview questions (Appendix Four and Five). The analysis was structured into the following format: a) stories of successful/ positive communication; b) stories of unsuccessful/ negative communication; c) communication with social workers generally; d) suggestions/ recommendations. This phase started with reading the 'successful stories' experienced by the international workers and the 'positive stories' experienced by the local workers. Then, those two were compared. In this comparison, similarities and differences were identified according to the codes and themes identified in phase 3. Significant similarities and differences in the comments from the international and the local social workers were noted down for further analysis. Similarly, the 'unsuccessful stories' experienced by the international and the 'negative stories' experienced by the local were read through and the similarities and the differences were identified and analysed. The same process was followed for the rest of the categories: c) the 'communication' of the international and the local and d) the recommendations/ suggestions of the international and the local.

Phase 5: Producing the findings and the implications

All the categorised data on similarities and differences were compared with relevant studies in this field. The categorised data and literature were synthesised into more global perspective discussion. In this way, the research findings are still rooted in the actual social workers' grounded statements, but their statements

have a wider application on the semantic level outlined in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Conclusion

In this chapter issues within constructivist qualitative approach were discussed and a theoretical account for the application of this approach was explained. The recruitment of the participants as well as the data collection through semi-structured in-depth interviews were outlined with a rationale for the application of these methods. The ethical issues, particularly with cultural sensitivity for the North African workers as well as privacy for all the workers, were ensured with my best intention. In addition, the processes of transcriptions as well as the analysis of the social workers' stories were described. In the following chapters, the main themes emerging from the interviews are investigated and debated with relevant literature.

CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS

The analyses of accounts collected through the interviews are presented in three sections. Section one explores aspects of language and religion related to the Muslim worldview in North Africa. Section two covers gender relations and the concepts of the rule of gender separation in an Islamic context. Section three looks at the concept of shame and honour. Each section comprises four parts. In the first part, the local social workers express their perceptions of the problems experienced by international social workers. In the second part, the local worker presents stories of positive communication with international workers, where relevant. The third part comprises international workers' stories of unsuccessful communication with local social workers and how they have coped with problems in cross cultural understanding. The final part points out areas where work is needed for successful collaboration between local and international workers. In the analysis and discussion of the stories, the actions of international workers, particularly their mistakes are critically analysed. Although this might seem judgemental of the foreigners by me as a foreigner, the aim of the study is to gather valuable insights into coping strategies for difficult cross cultural encounters and ultimately to deliver better services in North Africa.

Language and religious value

A local mediator pointed out one of the issues for international workers is a lack of understanding of the Muslim world view. "International workers often come with a particular mind set from their own country". The example given is from when an international worker came with a questionnaire for a survey with local people to be checked over by the local mediator. The local mediator explained:

> Those questions were really Western minded. We explained to her [international worker], "Culturally in this country, we don't ask these questions…In North Africa, it's a Muslim country, there are some questions [that] are taboo. You embarrass them when you ask them those questions".

Another local worker advised international workers that "critical comments and questions about culture and particularly religion should be avoided with local workers". The local mediator provided an example of a "taboo" in North Africa:

For example, we don't use this word…AIDS. That's why many Muslim countries they don't accept it [AIDS] because they say in Muslim country, prostitution doesn't exist. And that is true,…[because] that word is taboo. Even for the government [that word] is taboo. The government will never ever say, "We now try minimising the risk of AIDS". They will never accept that word [AIDS]. But in the West, if you want to minimise the number of people who are affected [by AIDS], you have to do [minimise] that [the risk]. But in Muslim country, they can't tell people like that. Even on radio or TV, [they don't use those words] because those words are taboo. Maybe if you are at university with students, you can vehicle the message, no problem. They will understand you and they are not ashamed of that. But if you go to the traditional people, that is very difficult to talk. You may tell them there is disease that can kill you and you may explain it [AIDS], [in the way] "you turn around around and around". And this is the thing that you need to be aware of. To do that, you need to be ready for the help of nationals. You can vehicle the message, but differently, not directly. You have to find the way for each group of people. Like if you are talking to students, doesn't matter, you can show them the film coming from the States about AIDS, they will accept it and they will understand it. But for the other groups, you have to find another way, an indirect way of vehicling the message.

This local mediator stressed:

[When] you [international workers] are in Muslim world where people don't think like in Western world, that's mean when you are asking questions, when you are dealing with people, you have to bear in mind that the culture is not your culture.

This local mediator identified the fact that local people need "new things" such as skills and knowledge from international workers "to improve the system". On the other hand, the local mediator also identified the fact that international workers need an adjusting period as well as the assistance of local workers to learn the mind set of the "Muslim world", which involves learning about words and subjects that are taboo. The importance of the local mediator's support in

communicating with local people is clearly identified in this example.

It is interesting that no comments were made by local workers in relation to positive communication with international workers in reference to language and religious value. This may be because the local workers take this aspect of their culture for granted expect international workers to follow local cultural protocols. That is cultural issue only become salient when international workers commit a cultural faux pas.

One of the international workers also identified the difficulty in understanding cultural values particularly in local language. The example of the complexity in delivering a message in a foreign language is given when international workers decided to give advice to a local physiotherapist at a centre for disabled children. The international workers noticed that the local therapist did not maintain a professional boundary with her children [clients]. She had become emotionally involved with the children and had taken up the role of a mother in caring for the children. The international workers suggested that she see an organisational psychologist. Four months later, the international workers were informed by another local worker that they "put shame on her". The international worker explained:

> The local therapist misunderstood that we thought she had a mental health issue. In North Africa, psychologists are not yet understood well…. People here think that psychologists are for crazy people. So if you go to see the psychologist, you are shamed. So she got the message from us that we wanted help her but she also got the [wrong] message from us that we thought she was crazy….we did not realise the way she understood "psychologist".

This unsuccessful communication reveals the issue of the lack of understanding of the local language with all its nuances. The use of the term "psychologist" was not socially acceptable in North African culture. The international workers' lack of understanding of the meaning of "psychologist" in North Africa caused unsuccessful communication with the local worker.

A lack of fluency in the language can also create problems. International workers identified that "the language is its own problem" for communication with their

local colleagues. In some parts of North Africa, Arabic as well as French is commonly spoken. On account of this, the international social workers, those who are fluent in French, may have fewer communication barriers. However, some North Africans are monolingual in Arabic. One international worker who is fluent in French identified the issue of the language:

> Because we used to work with people who do not have good level in French, our level in Arabic was very important. So sometimes we had a misunderstanding [with local workers] just because of the language. We couldn't understand each other.

Another senior international worker also identified that lack of fluency in the local language can cause unsuccessful communication with local workers. During a confrontation with local workers at a centre for disabled children, one new international worker failed in his communication with local workers. The senior international worker explained, "He was not good enough in the [local] language yet to explain all of his concerns without an interpreter. So, he didn't do it in their mother language". As the result, the international worker offended local workers which led to the failure of the project. This example shows the importance of using a local's mother tongue in communication appropriately. The international worker failed to deliver the message to the local workers by not using their mother tongue.

On the other hand, one of the international social workers identified that the utilisation of native languages to the different groups of people positively contributed to relationship building. Arabic is commonly spoken in many parts of North Africa. However, some parts of North Africa are tribal based societies in which a number of native languages are also spoken. For example, at an initial meeting with a possible partnering association, the international worker spoke to the local workers in their native language. The international worker commented, "When we approached them in their native language, actually one of many native languages, as it's their heart language, we were speaking to their heart. It wasn't through interpreter. So they've got a feel for us". The use of the native language had a significant impact in breaking the relational distance between outsider and insider.

Furthermore, demonstration of the expected conduct in the native language also has significant impact on communication with local workers. For example, the same international worker highlighted the usage of "particular phrase words of respect to God". In North Africa it is important to "recognise their religious worldview". In daily conversation, a "humble state of thankfulness and dependence of God are expressed by saying *Inshallah*, God willing. It is not matter of human initiative only, it's only God willing". This international worker emphasised that "the most important area of communication is to understand the little communication signals that indicate respectability….They'll hear you best if you approach them in appropriate manner". From this point of view, the importance of the usage of native language is not simply to translate words to words but to deliver the message in the way "they [local workers] can hear you best" by demonstrating the expected conduct in relation to religious and social significance.

Although there have been some difficult encounters, most of the international workers acknowledged the importance of understanding local language and culture, particularly their belief system. Understanding local languages assists international workers to "communicate properly" with local workers as well as with service users in North Africa. One of the local workers suggested that "we want to always put national and international to do the work together". In order to achieve international workers' appropriate communication with local workers, the assistance of local workers is necessary.

Gender relations

One of the factors that contributed to unsuccessful communication with local workers is international workers' inappropriate conduct in relation to gender. During the interviews, the subject of gender relations was not raised by local workers. It may be that the local workers take this aspect of their culture for granted. International workers would be expected to follow local cultural protocols in respect of gender relations. One of the international social workers explained that in North Africa, there is a "strict rule of gender separation". In most social occasions, "women deal with women, men deal with men". As this is commonly practised throughout North African society, international workers' lack of

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understanding of gender separation is a big issue in communication with local workers.

One of the senior international workers pointed out an international worker's mistake in relation to "the gender separation in Islamic context". The senior international worker explained that this particular incident regarding gender separation occurred when a new male international worker who was a director of a centre for disabled children confronted local female therapists at the centre. When the new international worker confronted the local female therapists, "he did not take his wife". In Islamic society, when a male has a difficult encounter with female, it is culturally appropriate "to take a female ally to explain". This culturally inappropriate conduct let to the failure of a negotiation with the local female therapists.

In order to address this mistake of the international worker, the following international workers suggest the alternative ways of improving the inappropriate practice in gender separation. One of the international workers emphasised:

> ….when the director [who is international worker] is the opposite gender to his employees [who are local workers]. And I suppose if we were to be the most sensitive, we would have a female director but we don't have any of those. All of our directors are men. But there are the ways to alleviate this problem of course by their wives, the directors' foreign national wives to be involved.

This international worker noted the challenge of being culturally sensitive to the particular protocol of high respect for gender distinction. However, there are the ways to be culturally sensitive by taking their wives with them when the foreign national go to meet with groups of local women.

At centres for disabled children in North Africa, the majority of physiotherapists are female. They treat female clients and work with mothers of disabled children in the therapy sessions. The successful application of gender separation at a centre for disabled children is demonstrated by one of the international social workers:

> We assured [them] that we would respect women's sensitivity for gender separation. In the therapy process, we would have women doing all the

therapy. Although we'd had a male director of the centre, we would not have men doing any therapy.

Another international worker also demonstrated a successful approach to gender separation in relation to informal team building meetings in their workshop. In North African collective society, sharing tea or coffee at a workplace is an important cultural practice. The worker said, "We [males] had a third worker in the workshop. And she was a woman. As so we tried to go out [for team building meetings], but it was less with her". In this way, the international worker assured the culturally appropriate amount of social interaction with a female by deliberately spending less time with his female local colleague than his male local colleagues. However, this would be to the detriment of the female worker's learning and place in the programme due to the limited involvement. Having another female member present the group would have provided a better working environment for the local female worker and also created opportunities for bonding sessions which are incredibly necessary for good collegial relations.

Those international social workers who have achieved successful outcomes have been collaborating with their local associations for over five years. One of the important culturally appropriate communication skills, the application of gender separation, is identified in the business meeting, the therapy sessions, and the informal team building meetings. Although male international workers were present in those occasions with some limitations, they identified and respected the "rule of gender separation" by having female staff members accompany them, consistency in assuring only the female therapists attending mothers and their children, and the minimum interactions with the local female colleagues.

In order to maintain the successful collaborations with local workers, international workers still need to be aware of "the rule of gender separation". This is because the social protocols of local workers are different from the social protocols of international workers.

Shame and honour

In a collective society of North Africa, a concept of shame and honour is widely observed. A local mediator pointed out that one of the issues facing international workers is a lack of "understanding of the concept of shame and honour".

According to the local mediator, international workers' lack of understanding of the shame and honour concept had led local workers to "feel embarrassed" and "lose face". The local mediator explained an incident occurred due to an international worker's lack of understanding of the shame and honour concept at Arab workplace. One of the international workers who was a medical doctor saw the head nurse "giving an injection the wrong way". The international worker "told the local worker off". The local mediator explained:

> He [the local head nurse] was offended and he said, "I'll stop working here"…He [the international worker] made a big problem. And this [local] nurse came to me because he knew that I was speaking same language as him. And he told me, "I have worked and I have done like this for ten years. And nobody has complained. And today, Oh this man [the international worker] came and he was telling me this and that". And then I told him [the local nurse], "Okay, okay, just calm". And then I went to the international worker and told him, "You have made a mistake. It's not your right to go and tell this person. If you have seen that he was doing it wrong, go to the director of the hospital who is a national [local] like him and he is superior and his boss. And tell him [about] the nurse [but without telling anything to the local nurse]…he [the director] is national so he knows the culture. He will not tell him off in front of people, "you don't know how to do it". Now, he [the director] will tell him [local nurse], "how about I am sending you to this hospital for one week and you work with another person". So he [the director]'ll send him [local nurse] to another national to teach him how to do differently".

This local mediator further explained:

> In the shame society, people don't like to lose face in front of others…[particularly] in front of international [workers]….if he [the international worker] wants to correct the local worker,…he needs to go to the mediator [the director]…who can deal with the person [to explain]…And another [local] person will tell him [local nurse], "you are very good but…there is another way to improve". And in another day, they will solve the problem through discussions.

This local mediator emphasised that a "local mediator can show gently and indirectly" but "not directly between local and international" worker. The international worker's mistake is identified as being too direct in confronting the local worker. It is important to have a local mediator to act in such situations. This prevents international workers from causing local workers to "lose face". A local mediator plays a crucial role in preventing international workers from miscommunication with international worker; this will be discussed later in this chapter.

The local workers did not comment on positive communication in relation to shame and honour. This may be due to the fact that the local workers take this aspect of their culture for granted. In addition, the number of problems encountered by international workers indicates the high level of difficulty in dealing with the shame and honour concept.

A senior international worker who was in a leadership position experienced difficulty in communicating with local workers due to the Arab shame and honour concept. During a negotiation with local workers at a centre for disabled children, the international worker had had a productive discussion with subordinate staff members of the centre. The international worker assumed that they would report the productive outcome of the discussion to the president of the centre. However, none of them reported to the president. The international worker explained this incident:

> They [the subordinate staff members] didn't do it just because they couldn't do it. Because it was shameful for the president to find that I have been talking with them only, but not with the president….I should have gone by myself to the president. And I should have suggested, "Oh, I saw the workers and we talked about this. And it's good if we can talk together". By contrast, if I have said to the president, "I have discussed with the workers already and now you should approve this", this would have also been mistake. [The important point is] *not showing* [to the president] that I had discussed already with all the other people.

In this incident, the international worker narrowly avoided dishonouring the president. In this story, the source of the shame is the international worker's

action of discussing a matter with subordinate members in the absence of the president. The international worker failed in two ways. Firstly, by excluding the president from the decision making process, the international worker would have dishonoured the authority of the president. Second, the international worker failed to acknowledge the *status* of himself as a leader, the president as a decision maker, and the subordinate staff members. The international worker broke the rule of hierarchy by not dealing with the president but with the subordinate members. However, the subordinate staff members identified the international worker's mistake and indirectly prevented the president from being dishonoured by not informing him of the result of the discussion. This story points out the importance of the absence of shame. It is crucial to not embarrass high-ranked people. In Arab hierarchical society, it is important that communication occurs between people of similar status. It is also notable that indirect communication prevents local workers from being embarrassed or ashamed.

Another international worker also identified the unsuccessful communication with local people due to the group mentality of shame and honour in Arab collective society. In a presentation of the computing project to a large group of people at a local university, not one person expressed serious interest in using the free software after the meeting. The international worker explained the reason for this unsuccessful presentation:

> I think that the audience may have been jealous to see a foreigner working on such a worthwhile and altruistic project for the disabled children. They may have thought something that they themselves should really be doing for their own people….In the future, I would not go out of my way to present my project in that sort of environment. It was better *being introduced one-on-one* with organisations that could really use it. I would make sure that the project is presented without much noise (low profile) so as not to arouse jealousy.

Although the problems could have been resentment towards outsiders or the local audience's lack of computer skills, this international worker emphasised that the primary issue was that the audiences may have been embarrassed for not having created the worthwhile software for their own people and having to rely on software from an outsider. As a result, the collective feeling of embarrassment

and shame was engendered by the unknown foreigner. The previous international worker also noted that "[it is] much more difficult to work with people when trust is not established". On account of this, this international worker suggested that a "one-on-one" relationship may have been effective to share the benefit of the software. The complexity of the shame and honour concept was identified as one of the pitfalls for international workers to have successful communication with the local people.

It is noteworthy that both local and international workers identify any successful experiences related to the shame and honour concepts. This may indicate that an inadequate understanding of the shame and honour concepts is one of the weaknesses of international workers. Some suggestions to improve international workers' mistakes were presented by local and international workers. These included "having local workers to be mediators", "conveying message indirectly to local workers", and "communicating one-on-one with local audiences". The applications of those suggestions are necessary for international workers to collaborate successfully with local workers.

Hierarchy

The class structure in North Africa is extremely rigid. In a rigid class society, every important decision is controlled by those at the top of the hierarchy, that is, the governmental authorities in the country. According to the local mediator, one of the issues is that some international workers do not go to see local authorities, which means they do not find out the needs of the area at the beginning of their projects. The local mediator explained that when a group of international workers came to North Africa to provide dental care for local children, the local workers worked together with the international workers. There were about two hundred children waiting to receive "the free care". There was a severe disagreement between the international workers and the local workers and "the international workers were about to stop working". The local mediator was called into intervene in this conflict. This mediator "explained the situation to both of them". The local mediator explained:

> All the international workers were working like they would work in their
> clinics. They gave anaesthetics and waited for twenty minutes for them
> to work but the national [local workers] gave an anaesthetic and after

two to three minutes, they started working on the teeth even if it was a little bit painful for the child but the child won't die from that. But if you do it like in a clinic, you will only see twenty to thirty people a day. And the [local] authority would not be happy with that….The national [local workers] were right because the national workers normally work at that speed…to help the number. The local authority expected that we would see two hundred children, but the international workers wanted to do good job….

The implication here is that by not recognising "the expectations of the local authority", the communication was unsuccessful and the needs of the people were not met as a result. The local mediator further explained the importance of communicating with the local authorities:

The authorities are those who give you the permission, they give you the green light to do that [project]…Then your work will be successful. And the authorities are always after each action, they will ask people [local workers] what is going on. And people [local workers] will report to them. And if the people [local workers] report very good message about you, good report,…then *the authorities will even help you.*

The group of international workers failed to recognise the influence of the local authority, that is, the power to "give permission" as well as the power to provide vast governmental support.

None of the local workers commented on positive experiences with international workers in relation to hierarchy. As in other areas where communication was unsuccessful, it may be that the local workers take this aspect of their culture for granted. International workers would be expected to follow this cultural protocol of hierarchy.

However, there was evidence that some international workers had acknowledged the power of the local authorities and were able as a result to find the real need. One international worker said:

So the first thing you do is you go to the people who are entrusted with decision making in your region you want to go to. We went to the Ministry of Health, the Mayor of the city, the governor of the province

and the hospital. And we talked to the directors as well as caregivers. And we asked them, "What are the most important needs you feel your community faces". The leader of the government authority said that he wants to be known as an advocate of the poor and the disabled. So following the lead of our authority, and the lead of the decision makers and power brokers of our region, we followed what they felt was the important need. That's why we went to the therapy not into economic issues or into eye surgery or anything else. We followed their priority for what they thought the number one need and that is, one of the number one needs was physical therapy.

In the shame and honour culture of North Africa, following the leader of the government authority not only satisfies the needs of community but also acknowledges the status of the leader which in turn respects the people of the country. Therefore, the act of the international workers, following the lead of the government authority, was a sign of respect to the leader as well as to the people of the country.

Another example of awareness of the importance of following authorities' lead is shown in the following comment from an international worker:

You need to get [power brokers] on your side, it doesn't help if you have hundreds of poor people who want your services if the power brokers, that is the Governor and the Mayor and the Minister of Health, do not want you there.

Here, an international worker has recognised the power of authority to provide support for their projects. In further comments, he notes that the "successful" community projects are achieved by "finding the real needs of local community" as well as having a collaborative "support from the local authorities who are the power brokers and experts in the area".

Another aspect of hierarchy is the clear boundaries in different social statuses. This problem was identified only by the international workers. As previously mentioned, the local workers may have taken for granted this aspect of their own culture. Therefore, this also implies the requirement for international workers to follow this cultural norm.

One of the factors for unsuccessful communication with local workers is the issue of having different expectations between international and local workers. In particular, different expectations about the class distinction tend to cause unsuccessful communication between the international and the local workers. One of the senior international workers highlighted that the problem of having different expectations is "less cross-cultural and more just administrative". For example, in one of the centres for disabled children, a director who was an international worker had certain expectations of the tasks of the female therapists without producing a clear job description at the beginning. The incident occurred when the number of clients decreased. As a result, the local female therapists were unmotivated and underutilised. The director, who was an international worker decided to include activities such as cleaning and serving tea for visitors as a part of the therapists' workload. However, the local female therapists protested and saying that that was not their job. Subsequently, the director who was international worker made a complaint to the board of the partnering local association. This association agreed with the therapists saying that this was a "maid's job". The senior international worker identified the problem of the international worker as:

> The director [who was international worker] had set certain expectations of their [local female therapists'] job responsibilities. The director increased his expectations. But the director did not *acknowledge the class distinction* between what a woman therapists has to do and what a normal woman maid would do.

In North Africa, maids are employed in some of the households for domestic duties such as cleaning and cooking. The maids are also employed in centres for disabled children. Although women are expected to take care of household duties at home, female therapists at work are usually expected to maintain their professional standing which is therapeutic responsibility only. One senior international worker suggested that the director had to break the expectations of the female therapists and should have outlined a clear job description at the beginning of their employment. This example highlights the issue of expectations. The pitfall for the international worker was identified as the failure

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to set out the expectations at the beginning of the project in a hierarchical society where a class distinction clearly exists in employment.

Another international worker stated that one of the difficulties of working with the local workers is "to understand the different level of relationship" in a partnering local association. For instance, there are "people in power", for example, the President of an association. Then there are practitioners such as doctors, professors, and teachers. Each of them has different status in terms of class. The international worker mentioned that one of the difficulties of communication with local workers is:

> to know who I am talking right now [in their hierarchy]….One of the challenges for me was to go into the game, with that guy I should be at that level, with another one I have to be at their level.

It seems that trying to work within this hierarchical system was one of the greater challenges of all encounters due to the *"unspoken"* expectation.

Another international worker also identified a further instance of unsuccessful communication with local workers due to the different class structure in North Africa. During an orientation for new local physiotherapists at a centre for disabled children, the international worker was explaining the therapeutic procedure to her new student. However, one of her local colleagues firmly told her to stop explaining and to just let the new student observe the international worker. Although the international worker explained the benefit of her coaching strategy to her local colleague, the local colleague still insisted on making the new student observe the international worker. The international worker explained that the unsuccessful communication in this situation with her local colleague was due to "the two different cultural approaches" to their new students:

> I had an impression that my local colleague thinks that she is an experienced physiotherapist and she needs to stay in an advanced position than the new workers. So that's why the new girl had to be patient even if she did not understand [the therapeutic procedure]. I think it was like *a group of unspoken rule* that if you are new, you have to prove yourself first. You won't be accepted as a member of same level right way. You have to work hard before we really accept you.

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That's why I think new girls have to learn first and work in practical time without being paid. [On the other hand,] in my country [Europe], it is normal to explain to new workers because I don't think I'm superior to the new workers. I'm at same level as the new workers. So that's why I thought that the new girl could learn from me. I think this [unsuccessful communication] was to do with the cultural difference in hierarchal society.

This story identified the hierarchical work relationship in North Africa. It is obvious that there is a clear boundary between the subordinate and senior workers. This international worker broke the boundary by letting the new worker into the circle of senior members before the new worker had earned a place in their circle. In North African hierarchical society, it is important to *maintain the honour* of the senior members by *setting a clear boundary between the subordinate and the superior*.

Another international worker further explained, "Sometimes it's difficult because things [rule of hierarchy] are not spoken. They [local workers] don't say as much as we do". The way of communication among local workers is indirect. And many of these cultural expectations and rules are made explicit. Furthermore, another international worker explained the challenge of the *unspoken rules*, "When I communicate with my local colleagues, I have to be very sensitive for what [possibly] could hurt them, what could be difficult for them [to hear] because if I said something wrong, it could offend them". This means that international workers need to express their thoughts indirectly. This aspect of communication is discussed in the next part.

For international workers to achieve successful collaboration with local workers, as the local mediator suggested, international workers need to follow the local authority's guidance in assessing the needs of the area. In addition, international workers also need to be mindful of the unspoken rule of the class distinction in hierarchical society.

Indirect communication

Several methods of indirect way of communication were mentioned in the stories. They included setting a good example, modelling, and using stories, which are cultural underpinnings.

One local worker stressed the importance of setting a good example because when international workers share their skills and knowledge with local workers at a school for disabled children, "they [local workers] don't only listen to what you [international workers] say but they do [pay attention to] what they see". It is noteworthy that this indirect way of communication was also identified in the previous story of *learning through observing* in the orientation for new physiotherapists. The local worker further explained:

> When you [international workers] set an example, you'll work with them [local workers]. And they see your good example, they see how you do things, they see how you work. Even if after you have left there, you would have delegated the work. So they may continue to imitate you. But you need first to *be a good example*. Because I think people just they come, they give money, then they say, here's the outline, here's the guideline, we want you to do this and do that. People are used to [those ways] in our country [North Africa]. And they [North Africans] don't do it. Because in our country, with the people [who say] do this and do that, those who are telling, they don't do it themselves. That's why for us [North Africans], we have to set an example [even among] ourselves [North Africans].

This local worker stressed that one of the important factors for international workers to communicate with local workers effectively is the notion of "setting a good example".

No local workers reported positive experiences with international worker on this topic of indirect communication. It may be again that the local workers take this aspect of their culture for granted. Local workers would be expecting international workers to communicate indirectly with local workers.

Although the majority of international workers acknowledged indirect communication such as the notion of "setting a good example" and "the

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impartation of skills and knowledge through *modelling* is the way to avoid paternalism over the local workers", they did not identify unsuccessful experiences in relation to indirect communication. This may indicate that the notion of "setting a good example" as well as "modelling" is understood by the international workers. However, the international workers may find difficult to identify the reasons for their mistakes in not using the notion of indirect communication.

Another method of indirect communication is communication in story form. Several international workers had communicated effectively with local workers through the use of stories. One international worker explained:

> We make effort to *model* those values [improving the lives of disabled children by utilising the skills and knowledge] and those principles that we want to impart rather just teaching them words... We need to be able to communicate those values in *stories*. They [local workers] communicate in story form rather than propositional lecture form. And we try to do it all the time.

In Arab oral culture, "communication in story form" is a more effective method of explanation than "propositional lecture form" [the use of short summary or bullet points explanations] which is commonly used in the culture of international workers. For example, when I asked a local worker how important it is to use a local mediator, the local worker explained his opinions in the following parable:

> You know, in the early 70's, one of the bus companies in North Africa had first six or eight front seats reserved as first class and people used to hire them. But now it doesn't exist anymore. One day one old woman, she is from a village, she came and she also wanted to sit in those first class seats because it's like honour. But she found all the first class seats reserved, then she started sitting on a driver's seat. Then the bus driver came and he told her, "Excuse me, this is my seat". She said, "No, this is my seat, I won't move from here". Then, one of the foreign tourists he said, "We are in hurry, let's call the police". And one of a local people, he knew that if you call police, it will take a long time and everyone will be late. Then, the local person whispered in the old

woman's ear. And she suddenly got up and followed him and she sat at the end of the bus. And the bus started moving. Then, the driver called the local man and asked him, "What did you say to that woman to follow you?" He said to the driver, "I told her that the bus behind us is leaving first".

This local mediator explained this story:

> "Local people can understand better than foreigners. Because if they had called the police, like the foreign tourist had suggested, it would have made it even worse. And I think that looking for a mediator from national [local] may find the way to talk with local people…Generally speaking, it may be helpful to find a local person who is trustworthy and the local mediator may help to understand and solve the problems".

There are some benefits through using stories. One is that the message is explained within the cultural context. Another is that because of the indirect nature of presentation, the message is communicated without offending the person with whom one is communicating. In this previous scenario, the local worker was explaining the importance of using a local mediator to me. This local worker could have convinced me by saying directly, "You should use a local mediator". Instead, the message, the suggestion for me to use a local mediator, was communicated impersonally and indirectly through the story. This explained the way the local people convey the message to their audiences. In shame and honour culture, as previously mentioned, the use of stories is necessary.

One of the international workers successfully used stories in their physiotherapy training sessions at a centre for disabled children. The international worker was trying to introduce a new way of therapy to local physiotherapists. The new idea was to coach the children's mother or family members to treat their own children during the therapy sessions. However, the discussion with local therapists was not productive and turned into an argument. As soon as the international worker started explaining in stories, the local therapists started to realise what the international worker was trying to communicate. As the international worker described it:

The utilisation of parable teaching is useful because it is neutral and its story is not based on our authority but *referring to experiences* or theories that have been practised over the long period. It is important that the point that we are presenting is convincing enough because everybody has some habitual components in therapeutic practice.

The importance of the utilisation of storytelling in skill training sessions is identified here. When international workers introduce a new idea to local workers, the use of narrative form of explanation assists the local workers to understand the new idea that international workers are attempting to communicate.

Another international worker commented on a coping strategy in relation to the notion of indirect communication:

I'm not so direct anymore and I try to feel [read the atmosphere] more of what I can say, where I am at, and to whom I am communicating with. I cannot expect them [local workers] to change but I had to change.

This international worker had identified the demeanour of a shame and honour society. For this reason this worker now to conveys messages *"indirectly"*. This worker has also managed to communicate according to the "hierarchical level of relationship" as previously mentioned.

Another international worker also commented on a coping strategy in relation to the notion of indirect communication, "In order to understand more of local people, I had to reduce my expectations relating to formal training and increase my commitment to *doing specific tasks 'together'* with them [local workers]". This worker also felt he ought to focus on building relationship by doing tasks together rather than his high performance task oriented view. This international worker's change was necessary to avoid the paternalism of the dominant theories based skill training style.

International workers pointed out some great changes in the lives of disabled children in North Africa as the result of using indirect communication methods. The work of international workers has contributed positive changes in the lives of disabled children. One of the international workers described:

One thing that we have communicated is if we can help these children, they can progress. Through our project we could have explained…but just the fact that people could see the improvement in these lives of these children, was the best thing we could communicate.

This worker has also communicated with parents of disabled children through an awareness programme as well as brochures and video that the worker produced in the local language. Those indirect tools encouraged dialogue in which parents could reflect on their own situations. As one worker noted, "We addressed the questions through those [indirect tools]. We did not solve anything but we addressed questions for these parents to communicate themselves. These parents also communicated with their family members and even with their therapists sometimes". By working in this way, the international worker was not forcing parents to believe the dominant theories of therapy but *"indirectly"* communicating with those parents.

Another international worker also identified the positive changes in the lives of disabled children and their parents as well as local therapist through training that had been organised by international workers:

The parents are far more willing to bringing their children to public space now. They used to shut them into their room almost shame having a disabled child. They take them out now in strollers, in wheelchairs, take them to other gatherings, they are far more socially acceptable now. I think parents have felt empowered… The goal of our courses is to teach parents how to do therapy and to help their children therapeutically and [also to teach them] practical life skills. The parents have changed dramatically that they have power to help their own child and do not depend on the professionals [therapists]. [Furthermore,] some local workers have been trained by foreign physiotherapists to be therapists. [On account of this], the local workers are empowered as the parents.

Some "dramatic changes" have been observed at centres for disabled children. This international worker describes, "These remarkable changes reflect the imparting humanitarian value [transferring skills and knowledge] through modelling approach adopted by the international workers". According to the international worker, the modelling includes the *"indirect"* communication

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through raising awareness as well as presenting the progress of the children, and also the practical hands on therapeutic training for the local workers as well as the mothers of disabled children. Some positive changes are identified through the communication between international and local social workers.

In order to see more positive changes in the projects, international workers need to identify and cope with the mistakes in relation to indirect communication. To identify the mistakes, international workers need collaborative support from local mediators. In order for international workers to communicate indirectly with local workers, one of the local worker suggested international workers to *"show step by step and improve little by little"* and to "*do it in friendly way"*.

Delegation and accountability

None of the local workers particularly commented on problematic actions of international worker in relation to delegation. Instead, the majority of local workers made positive statements on international workers who trusted local workers when international workers "delegated" their responsibility to local workers. A local mediator explains the importance of "delegation" in a following example of French business management strategy:

> When large French companies run their business in North Africa, they usually employ a national [local] manager who is accountable to a parental French company. They [French company and local manager] are working together but they [French company] leave it [responsibility in North African branch] to this local manager because he understands the culture and he can deal with [local] people correctly.

This example illustrated the importance of delegation in the context of cross-cultural administration and highlights the importance for international workers to build an accountable local partner who understands the local culture to deal with local business.

One of the local workers presented a story of an international worker's successful delegation as follows. At a school for disabled children, one of the international workers asked a local worker to help distributing flyers to pharmacists in their community. First of all, the local and the international workers "discussed together" to figure out an appropriate message for the flyers. Afterwards, the

local and the international workers with another local worker went to visit three pharmacies to distribute the flyers they had produced. After the visits to the three pharmacists, the international worker "let the local workers take the responsibility" to distribute the flyers to the rest of the pharmacies. The local worker explained:

> This [the international worker letting the local workers take the responsibilities] was good way to do because local workers understand their own culture better. So they [local workers] would do better jobs. [The reason of this positive communication was] because the international worker let the responsibility in our hands to make contact with the managers of the pharmacies and to explain the project.

The appropriate communication skill of the international worker is identified as "letting the local worker to take the responsibility" to manage the distribution of the flyers to the pharmacists. The international worker successfully identified that the local workers are able to communicate better with members of local community on account of their own "cultural understanding".

A local worker provided another example of the importance of paying attention to local workers' advice which is culturally competent. When one of the international workers was recruiting a new local staff member, the international worker selected one of the male candidates. The international worker had made the decision because the majority of staff members were male and he had considered the rule of gender separation. However, this local worker had disagreed with this decision and had suggested employing one of the female workers as first choice. After the discussion, the international worker accepted the local worker's suggestion by saying "if you say, it's better to take that female candidate, we'll take the person you suggested". This local worker described, "I found it positive because this international worker had confidence in me. This worker had confidence in my choice that I knew the best candidate". Another appropriate communication skill of the international worker is identified in the international worker's decision. Although this international worker thought the rule of gender separation was important, he also acknowledged himself as an outsider in this cultural context. Therefore, he accepted the opinion of the local worker who is an insider and knows this situation better than outsider. In

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addition, this local worker was acknowledged as a cultural expert and empowered by the sensible decision of the international worker. This trust relationship had been built over a period of time.

While none of the international workers comment on unsuccessful experiences in relation to delegation, the majority of international workers mentioned the importance for international workers to find local partners at their workplace. One international worker considered that "seeking to build real relationship with local workers" was one of the most important factors in developing a successful programme at a centre for disabled children. Another international worker had these words of advice for international workers:

> Don't try leading or initiating anything by yourself. Find people who are vested in the community. Making this [finding partners] becomes successful [for developing programme]…so your effort is preceded as a local effort as much as or more than international effort from the outside.

Another international worker also stressed that a "culturally appropriate project is achieved by encouraging and empowering local workers to take initiative and responsibility. Encouraging local partners to take responsibility is an important step to make a project self-sustainable". Thus, "the long-term success" is achieved by building an "accountable relationship" between international and local workers.

Mediation

In the Arab world, mediation is commonly practised for a variety of conflict resolutions. As previously mentioned in the shame and honour section, problems can be caused if a mediator is not used in sensitive situations

As the local mediator previously mentioned in the shame and honour story, the local head nurse was offended by the bluntness of the international worker. In the example, the international worker had confronted the local head nurse directly rather than use a local mediator. This mediator could have explained "indirectly" in the way that local head nurse could hear without being offended and "losing face".

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The local mediator discussed how a local mediator could ensure successful communication:

> To avoid the problem between international and local workers, we always choose mediator to be national [local worker]. For example, the international worker needs to ask for a help from the local mediator instead of shaming the local worker. The local mediator will go and talk to the local worker about the complaints of the international worker. And then the local worker will accept it [the complaints of the international worker].

A local mediator explained another incident in relation to a group of international workers' failure of not seeking local mediator's assistant. The local mediator recalled an incident that occurred at the end of a medical project supported by a group of international workers. The international worker had invited the local workers to a dinner party at a local restaurant. But from the local workers, perspective, restaurant was "only for very rich people". Subsequently, one of the local workers who is from a poor family asked financial support from the international team to purchase a hearing aid for a family member because the international workers appeared to have lots of money. The group of international workers declined the request saying "it was not planned" in their budget. The incident caused "embarrassment" for the local worker who had asked for support. It was also stated that all the local workers "felt embarrassed" by "the amount of money spent in just one evening" by the international workers. After the incident, the local mediator explained this situation to the international team at a debriefing. The local mediator said that in the following year, the dining venue was set at "a place where they worked" and "everybody enjoyed a national [homemade] meal together".

Although the local mediator explained to the group of international and local workers and made a peace between them, the group of international workers could have asked the assistance from the local mediator prior to the dinner party. If the group of international workers had asked for help from a local mediator earlier, the action of international worker would have prevented the local workers from "feeling embarrassed". It is also noteworthy that international workers' lack of

understanding of the local workers' situations as well as the concept of shame and honour caused the local workers to be ashamed.

In contrast, a local mediator explained a successful collaborative project due to the local mediator's early intervention in the situation. The local mediator described that when an international worker who was a surgeon visited North Africa to assist in a medical programme, he came with *expectations* with on how he could work in his speciality and particularly operating schedules and resources available. However, when he arrived, the local mediator "had to adjust his schedule to suit the situation in North Africa" where there was high demand for services with limited resources. After the local mediator's intervention which was to "adjust his [international worker's] schedule", the surgeon worked successfully with a local team. Since then, the surgeon has been coming to North Africa to work with the local team for the last five years. The local mediator explained:

> At the beginning, it was like a miscommunication. He [interracial worker] didn't know the programme [the situations in North Africa]. But that it happened when people, they come from abroad, they come with a programme according to the nation or to the setting, they are coming from a rich country or a well-equipped hospital. And then when they came to us they found something [unexpected]….we need always to adapt the skills of person who is coming to the needs of the country of North Africa, also of the situation

The art of mediation is illustrated in this local mediator's story. This local mediator clearly identified the gap between the expectation of the international worker and the reality as well as the needs of North Africa. As the result, the local mediator was able to "*adjust*" the international worker's *expectation* to appropriate level. The local mediator further explained:

> We try to communicate with people [international workers] before they come also when they come, we try to channel to them the situation, that is very helpful… Sometime, I send even pictures through emails. These people when they come, they have like a view but sometime even we send things [information], when they come, they [need to] feel that [the reality]…by experiences…

The success in this project was largely achieved by the skill of the local mediator and also by the adaptability of the international worker. The local mediator also stressed that "what you are expecting is not sure…we always need to be patient and to be willing to accept the unexpected "'challenges' and 'situations'".

One of the senior international workers also strongly suggested the use of mediation for conflicts with local workers. The senior international worker explained that when one of new international workers confronted local therapists in relation to the local therapists' lack of time management by himself without the use of a mediator, this international worker aggravated the situation. The senior international worker further explained:

> This new international worker should have used a mediator. Mediation is an important cultural aspect in this culture. Find someone who is a mediator, someone from inside of the culture, not an outsider, to explain.... The issue of mediatorship, the issue of the request coming from insider rather than from foreigner [who is] apparently not understanding the culture, would have been alleviated".

This comment also shows that not using a mediator during important confrontations is another pitfall for international workers. This senior international worker clearly identified the following points that were also identified by the previous local mediator. A lack of "cultural understanding" is an issue for international workers because as outsiders they are generally less competent in understanding of the local culture compared to "insiders" who are expert in their cultural practice. The mediator who is an expert in the local culture would have prevented the unsuccessful communication with the local therapist by explaining the message in a way that is culturally sensitive. Local therapists would have then understood the message.

None of the international workers identified successful experiences with local workers in relation to mediation. It may be that international workers may not have identified the local workers' effort of mediation for two reasons. First, the local workers may have resolved some of the international workers' issues without informing the international workers. Second, international workers may have distinguished their work and private life, thus, the support that international

workers received from their local friends may not be acknowledged as the support from their local colleagues. This also highlights the *relational* aspect of local workers' mediation, that is, local mediators provide their support based on their friendship, which has been built prior to their business relationship. This topic of friendship is explored in the next section.

As it identified by the local mediator and the senior international worker, the interventions of mediators are important particularly when international workers confront local workers. These similar comments made by the local mediator and the senior international workers speak volumes of the importance for international workers of employing a local mediator in confrontations as well as in collaborative projects with local workers. To avoid paternalism international workers need to pay attention to a local worker's advice and acknowledge the local workers as cultural experts. A local mediator stressed the importance for international workers to seek assistance from local mediators with following two reasons. Mediation is "softening the differences between the international and local workers". A relationship between international and local workers is necessary to achieve the "successful [social] work" in North Africa.

Friendship

The majority of the local workers emphasised that one of the issues for international workers was not having a close local partner at workplace. The local worker mentioned that in order to work in North Africa, international workers are expected to *"have at a very close local friend"* who is also a working partner.

One of the local workers mentioned that one of the challenges of communication with international workers is their "cautious" attitude towards sharing personal and other information to their close local workmates. The local worker explained,

> At work, they often keep information for themselves. They don't say everything. For example, there are topics that we could discuss but they don't want to discuss. You cannot always know what they really think. And they don't put all their confidence in local person, even the closest person.

This local worker further explained that international workers do not need to share "their plans and ideas with everybody" but they need to share them with "the

closest person". This local worker identified that when a trust relationship has been built between local and international workers, the international workers are *expected to share* their important information with the closest local worker even about their *"private life"*. It would seem that the international workers' "cautious" attitude may result in international workers' failure in meeting local workers' "expectation" of "building personal relationship at the work place".

Another local worker explained that *"having a close local friend"* gives international workers an opportunity to "discuss sensitive subjects" that would not be acceptable to discuss with other local workers. These topics include "religion, culture, economy and politics". Comments that are negative in relation to these topics must be avoided. The local worker said:

> If you [international workers] want to talk about it [sensitive subjects] in front of a group [local workers], you just have to say, "Yes, it's very good in your country". You should not say, "It's not good in your country".

This local worker's comment implies that the only way to learn the insight of North African cultural protocols is from the close local friend.

Another local worker explained the necessity for international workers to have cultural orientations which are organised by their local friends:

> Orientations where you [local workers] speak to international workers about culture…about many things that they face [are necessary]…because that [orientations] is also part of the successful work…Whatever you tell people, the best way to learn is when you [international workers] are living in the place. You can read the books about North Africa, but when you come to North Africa, then you know better than books….it's like food, people may describe you the taste of the meal, but if you don't taste it, you are just a dreamer.

This local worker stressed that the support of local workers through "cultural orientations" is necessary to achieve "successful results". The importance of the living experience is also identified as an important process for their cultural adaptation. Some of the unspoken cultural rules could be only explained by the local workers. Hence, "having a close local friend", who takes a role of

"mediator", is essential for international workers to "adjust" in a foreign nation in North Africa.

Another local worker identified having a close local friend or partner can help in resolving difficult situations. The local worker explained that when an international worker offends a group of local workers, the close local friend will take a role of mediator between the international worker and the group of local workers. The local worker further explained:

> The close local friend will explain that the foreign person [international worker] is not familiar with the cultural protocol, therefore, the foreign person made a mistake without intentions. And the close local friend will also ask forgiveness from the group on behalf of the foreign person. Because if the foreign person asks forgiveness directly, the group will think, "He knows that is mistake. Why did he do it? He should not have done". Then, the group won't forgive the foreign person easily. In this situation, it is not necessary for the foreign person to ask this local friend to take this action. The local friend will feel sorry to the foreign person and then the local friend will go and ask forgiveness from the group.

From this point of view, "the close local friend" takes roles of a mediator as well as personal protection to eliminate the displeasure of the group of local workers in order to protect the international worker.

Local workers did identify some positive experiences with international workers in relation to friendship. One of the local worker explained that based on the friendship between the local worker and an international worker, the international worker has been supporting a centre for disabled children where the local worker works. The local worker explained, "We have a friend who is an international worker comes every year to help for our centre. Our friend usually brings new idea, plan and some advice as well as some books for education for disabled children". This international worker has built a friendship with this local worker. Therefore, the local worker perceived the input of the international worker not as a *top-down support* but as a *friendship based support*. Another local worker explained the impact of friendship:

When you come as an international and you want to improve the systems to help those people by introducing new scheme, you *do it in a friendly way*….They [local workers] will accept it because it's coming from someone who is personally known which mean that the barrier of teacher and student is already broken….I normally suggest international workers to invite local workers for a coffee or even for a meal….and talk about whatever topics but not work related topics, maybe football if you are male…

This comment explains the significance of friendship in the previous international worker's successful communication, which was achieved by being a friend of the local worker. It may be seen that the previous international worker used the friendship just to deliver the services. However, in Arab culture, private and work lives are integrated. Therefore, international workers are expected to build friendships with local workers prior to the business as it was suggested by the local worker, "to invite local workers for a coffee". Unlike individual and task oriented work relationship in a modern business world, work relationship in North Africa is based on collective values, that is, the relationship "who you know" is a more important asset than the ability of individual.

As previously mentioned in the section on shame and honour, one of the international workers made an unsuccessful communication with a group of local students at a local university during the international worker's presentation. As the international worker explained, the unsuccessful communication was mainly due to the fact that the international worker and the local audiences did not know each other. This demonstrates the importance of establishing friendships with local workers. Another international worker commented that "It is much more difficult to work with local people when *trust* is not established". This comment also highlights the importance of building friendships with local workers.

All the international workers identified the importance of having social relationships when working with North African colleagues. For example, at a very first meeting with a possible partnering local association, one of the international worker demonstrated the Arab way of business meeting "by introducing, by getting to know one another personally….first of all, I told them about my wife, about my children. I told them about work that my organisation

does". In addition, this international worker stressed the importance of showing interest and concern for the members of partnering associations by "listening to the challenges they face and trying to understand their difficulties". Another international social worker also stressed the importance of personal relationship:

> In the North African culture, to have relationship outside of the work place is very important, to take time to drink tea together, to make some outing together. And we also invited him [my local colleague] as a family because his family lived in a different town and he was by himself….And our relationship was more than just work relationship

This international worker considered that building close friendships in the work place by "exchange and reciprocity" is one of the key elements for achieving successful communication with local workers. This international worker also identified that *building partnership* with local workers is one of the essential components of successful communication with local workers:

> We had different partners and always *formed a partnership*…so I have to spend some time with these partners. Because the relationship is built not only for working and making plans together, but just *spending time together*. So it was impossible to have too many partners. Because it was very time consuming, just to build up good relationship with different people. So, then we can go and do something [business with them]. That's the way we functioned.

Even though this international worker "expected" that building good relationship with local partners would be "very time consuming", he also acknowledged that being relational is "the way we [North Africans] functioned". This international worker had successfully discerned the difference in work relationships between his home country and North Africa:

> In North Africa, work and private relationship are much more mixed together….It is like in a small village, everyone seems to know everything [of each other]…. [We need to] try to invest time in relationships, for example, if somebody is sick, visit the person. It is about community. If you want to have a good communication with

[local] people, you need to make some effort to get into the community. So function as they function.

This international worker worked successfully by choosing the culturally sensitive way of investing time in building relationships in a collective society. The following international worker's comment summarises the principle of friendship in North Africa: "In North Africa, the relationships are quite exclusive. [The mentality of North Africans is that] if you are my friend, why should I have other friends?". This explains that a comment form one of the local workers who stated that international workers are expected to trust "not everybody but the closest local friend".

In order to achieve successful collaborative work with local workers, international workers need to make commitment to build strong relationships with local workers because: *trust* is the basic for *building partnership* in the projects; close local friends can help international workers adjust to a different cultural environment; and the close local friends can intervene in times of difficulty when international workers may offend local workers.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Stories of the international and the local social workers have been explored in this research. These were gathered through a constructivist qualitative methodology to develop a picture of the complex world of lived experiences of the social workers. The stories of successful and unsuccessful communication reveal that communication difficulties arise in a range of situations and that they take a variety of forms underpinned by insensitivity or a lack of knowledge of cultural difference. This section looks at these findings in relation to previous literature and the implications they have for international social workers' practice.

There is a need to improve the quality of life for disabled children in North Africa where the prevalent belief is that disabilities are the result of the will of God or caused by a curse or by evil spirits (Al-Krenawi, et al., 2004). When a family conceives a disabled child, they often believe that it is according to God's will, thus, seeking help could imply unbelief in God. An intervention can be seen as an act of unbelief, as one is seen to interfere with the child's destiny that was determined by God. International workers mentioned that "shame and helplessness is associated with having a disabled child within the family". Thus, disabled children in North Africa are often hidden away from the society.

A numbers of international and local workers pointed out that raising such issues in conversations with local people causes communication barriers with local social workers. This is particularly the case where there are social and religious taboos against talking about such topics. Therefore, international workers need to be aware of the following two suggestions made by local workers. Firstly, one local mediator suggested that in order to observe the taboos in Muslim world, international workers need to acknowledge the religious worldview of local workers. In contrast to the West, healthcare practices in Arab society are more spiritually oriented, for example, there are diverse forms of spiritual healing systems, particularly traditional psychosocial and psychiatric healers are observed among Arab populations (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999; Crabtree, 2008). Secondly, international workers need to work along with a local mediator who is familiar with social and religious taboos in the North Africa. International social workers do not often have access to an culturally contextualised model of social

work education due to the Westernised curricula in which they have been trained (Crabtree, 2008). In order to work with the Muslim populations, the worldview of the traditional healing belief methods needs to be understood by non-Arab social workers with the help of local educators (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999; Crabtree, 2008). Thus, international workers need to seek educational guidance from local mediators in order to understand "the ethnographic details of cultural belief systems" (Crabtree, 2008, p. 546).

Along with a thorough understanding of the cultural belief system comes a better understanding of the language, as language is largely influenced by and interconnected to belief system. The utilisation of native language is one effective way to communicate with local workers. The international workers pointed out that the use of "local workers' heart language speaks to their heart". In my experiences with people from different sociocultural backgrounds, the use of their native language as well as the application of certain cultural mannerisms such as appropriate choice of terms or phrases, contents, tone and body language according to their sociocultural status, have allowed me to access their relational circle. In North Africa, for example, men exchange greetings with close friends by shaking their right hands and accompanying this with air kisses and a long stream of formulaic well wishes. Although this process may take up to ten minutes, this gestures signifies a way of showing respect and the depth of relationship. Kharrat (2000) also concluded that a foreign language learner should focus on integrating into the target foreign culture in order to express phrases in culturally contextualised form. International workers explained that there are no shortcuts for building relationships in cross cultural settings. The international workers, who have participated in this study, have all been in North Africa for a minimum period of five years, or equivalent. This is because understanding of the native languages as well as appropriate cultural mannerisms requires time and experiences within the particular sociocultural environment. In order to achieve the successful collaboration with local workers, international workers need to invest their time and energies into the process of cultural adaptation by integrating with local people.

In North African society, the strict rule of gender separation often becomes an obstacle for international workers' communication with local workers. Al-

Krenawi & Graham (1999) suggested that in order for social workers to work successfully with Muslim populations, an understanding of Islamic culture and gender constructions is necessary. International workers suggested that one way to address the issue of gender separation is to have a trusted male or female member accompanying one to a meeting with members of the opposite sex. Lawrence and Rozmus (2001) also pointed out that in health care consultations, a female worker needs to be in attendance when a male practitioner consults a Muslim female client. Similarly, Ali (1996), and Lawrence and Rozmus (2001) suggested that in order to work in a culturally appropriately way with people from a Muslim background, there must be recognition of the belief that a Muslim female should not be left alone with a male who is not her spouse or a member of close family. Although Crabtree (2008) stated that collegial relationships between Muslim males and females may be observed, there must be limits to the degree of social interaction that can take place due to the strict rule of gender separation. A lack of a balance in male or female representation within an international team can cause limited involvement in some projects where the majority of a group of local workers are of one sex. In order for international workers to be culturally sensitive and have effective means of collaboration in Islamic society of North Africa, international workers need to be aware of the need to have a balance of male and female employment at the workplace.

In a story of one of the international workers who embarrassed a group of local people at a local university for not having created the worthwhile software for their own people and having to rely on software from an outsider, the international worker stressed that the primary source of the incident may have been due to the *collective* feeling of embarrassment and shame caused by the unknown foreigner. Similarly, Ben-Ari and Pines (2002) explain that within collectivist cultures, there is a strong sense of community. Whenever people within collective cultures experience problems within their family network, they generally solve their problems within their close net-works such as the nuclear family, extended family or neighbours. Seeking help outside of their close support systems is not normally practised and the act of seeking help outside of their close community might be considered to be shameful (Ben-Ari & Pines, 2002). The international worker suggested that in order to avoid the collective feeling of embarrassment of local workers, "one-on-one communication" is necessary when sharing new

information with local workers. Dwairy (2002) also pointed out that in the collective society of the Arab world, individuals have a strong commitment to others, therefore, in the presence of others, the group's opinions may be of more importance than an individual's opinions and that the only way a person can express their opinions is in private settings or within very small groups. This suggests that when new information is shared by international workers, which is not part of the ordinary social norms or practices for local workers, international workers need to create a private setting and friendly open forum where local workers feel comfortable in sharing personal concerns and in which the relationship is based on trust and mutual sharing. Once the new idea is accepted by a local worker, it becomes a communal resource to be shared among a group of local workers. The local worker, as a cultural insider, provides validation of new information and aids in the acceptance thereof as they share the same understanding of the local culture (Al-Makhamreh & Lewando-Hundt, 2008).

In North African hierarchical society, a good relationships with the local authority is integral to the success of social work projects. Haj-Yahia (1995) also commented that in order to maintain harmony in Arab society, accepting hierarchical relationships is important. The findings found that local authority's support was crucial for two reasons. The first is to assess the needs of the local community, and to receive the permission for the project. The second is that international workers being accepted by the local authority means that international workers are also being accepted by the rest of the community members. In the hierarchical society of North Africa, the leader of the community has the power to make important decisions for the community and the members of the community will respect and follow the decision of the leader. Irani (1999) similarly addressed that in Arab collective society, the leaders of the hierarchy hold the absolute power over the community whether in village or national levels. Therefore, in the hierarchical society of North Africa, acknowledging the status of a leader may determine the successful collaboration with the local authority as well as local social workers.

Acknowledging the shame and honour concept is also integral to the success of projects. In a shame and honour society, *indirect speech* is one of the most important tools to deliver a message without offending anyone. Similarly, Dwairy

(2002) mentioned that in the collective society of the Arab world, indirect methods of communication are commonly utilised to avoid confrontation and maintain peace in relationship, which in turn avoids shame. Local workers strongly suggested international workers work with local mediators to "find the way to talk with local people". The utilisation of storytelling in explanations for therapeutic lessons was suggested by international and local workers. A body of literature also suggested the use of storytelling and metaphor, which makes difficult communication issues less confrontational within the cultural context (Al-Krenawi, 2000; Al-Krenawi & Slater, 2007; Dwairy, 2009). Local workers' practical advice in relation to indirect speech for international workers is "to be a good example, to show step by step, and to improve little by little and to do it in a friendly way". This advice would save local workers' face from international workers' bluntness which originated from their high performance task oriented view. Therefore, in order for international workers to collaborate with local workers successfully, international workers need to apply the indirect ways of communication through sharing their examples in narrative form.

Most of the participants strongly recommended that international workers work with a local mediator. Some of the offence to local workers was primarily caused by international workers' lack of cultural understanding. The findings showed that by interacting with both parties, local mediators have the ability to identify, and thus, alleviate the risks of miscommunication between international and local workers. Al-Krenawi and Graham (2001) also suggested that collaborative work with a local mediator can ensure that projects are more culturally sensitive and successful. Al-Krenawi and Graham (2001) also point out that one of the crucial roles of a local mediator is to promote the work of social workers in a local community where their role is not yet recognised or understood. Clearly, the involvement of a local mediator in a project can determine the success of the project. Thus, international workers need to acknowledge the expertise of the local mediators and seek their advice regularly and work alongside them.

Local workers recommended that international workers build a close relationship with a local worker. This is because, first, a trusting relationship is the foundation of partnership in the projects. As Sabagh and Ghazalla (1986) point out, social workers in the Arab world require more personalised social interaction than social

workers in the West; social workers in the Arab world need to build personal relationships at workplaces and this human bond permits commitment from those who are involved in the project. Ibrahim (1980) also noted that the important mechanism of membership recruitment in the Arab world is kinship and friendship; therefore, family members or close friends are usually chosen to be the partnering members of a group in Arab society. Second, the local workers emphasised that a close local friend can takes the role of mediator to orientating international workers to the different environment of the local culture as well as acting as a "minder" for the international worker in any confrontations with other local workers. Several authors also pointed out that a local mediator takes a crucial role in resolving conflicts due to the non-Arab social workers' lack of understanding of the concepts of shame and honour in Arab society (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003; Cohen, 2001; Irani, 1999). Therefore, in order for international workers to collaborate with local workers successfully, international workers need to develop a good relationship with local colleagues and also to have at least one local close friend.

Possibilities for future research

This study has uncovered various opportunities for future investigation on the issue of support services for disabled children in North Africa as well as cross cultural communication between international and North African social workers.

A small amount of literature on disability health care services in the North African context is a concern. In this study, the local social workers showed a demand for improving support services for disabled children in North Africa.

Future research could explore what it means for a mother or family members of a disabled child to live with their disabled child in North Africa, which would contribute in-depth understanding of the needs for disabled children in North Africa to international and local social workers as well as to the academic circle.

A project could look at the support services available for disabled children coming from various locations and tribal groups of North Africa. Some disabled children are living in rural areas and the others are living in urban areas. Their tribal back grounds also vary. Particularly, one of the local workers pointed out that there is high demand for social work services in rural areas where a lack of access to

support services for disabled children exists. Future research could focus on the experiences of disabled children who do not have access to the support services due to the inaccessibility to the support services.

A research project could focus on investigating the role of interpersonal relationships between international social workers. This because according to Smith and Bond (2006), important issues arise within the field of multicultural teams from overseas. Cultural differences between the foreign workers contribute difficulties in collaborating with people from different cultural backgrounds (Smith & Bond, 2006). These authors point out the issues of cross cultural interpersonal relationship amongst international social workers. Therefore, further studies need to investigate on the factors of communication barriers between international social workers in the context of working in North Africa.

Limitations

The study has some limitations due to complexity of the cross-cultural qualitative research. Some complexity in interpretations of conversations and observed data have remained unexplored due to the cross-cultural dynamics. The interviewees as well as the interviewer have different languages, cultural backgrounds and upbringing. This can result in some omitting and misinterpreting or bias in the message recorded (Flick, 2006). However, the main aim of the study has been finding out what experiences social workers have had, rather than theorising their situations. Thus, seeking the grounded reality of social workers' lived experiences reduced the risk of misinterpretation.

Because of their outsider status, it is likely that some of the analyses by international workers are off the mark. However, those international workers have had field experiences in North Africa of more than five years or have equivalent knowledge and experiences within the field of North Africa. Thus, they are likely to have a reasonably high level of cultural sensitivity for analysing the local culture.

Due to the existing relationships between the international and the local social workers, local social workers might have been unwilling or uncomfortable about sharing unsuccessful or negative communication experiences with their colleagues. This may be due to their desire to protect their colleagues' dignity,

prestige and respect within an Arab shame and honour based society. During my interviews with local social workers, the interviewees may have felt obliged to make positive comments about international social workers due to their perception of me as an international social worker. However, I have not been a long-term social worker and my status in North Africa would be seen as a visitor. Thus my relational position may be seen as neutral by both international and local workers. I could have been seen as unbiased, which may be an advantage for the study by reducing bias.

In conclusion, this thesis has investigated the factors of international social workers' successful and unsuccessful cross cultural communication with local social workers within the context of working in centres for disabled children in North Africa. It has shown that in order for international workers to communicate culturally appropriately and achieve successful collaboration with local workers, international workers need to continue being aware of the different mind-set between individualistic and collective societies and being sensitive to the cultural values of local workers. It is my hope that this thesis will raise more awareness of the importance of cross cultural communication between international and local social workers, which in turn will contribute to successful communication between international and local social workers in North Africa where more collaborative work is needed to advance the position of the socially disadvantaged people in North Africa.

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APPENDIX ONE: INFORMATION SHEETS FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS

An investigation of successful and unsuccessful communication between international and North African social workers at centres for disabled children in North Africa

The topic of this study aims to identify culturally sensitive communication skills of international social workers working at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa. To do this, I would like to ask you to share your successful and unsuccessful communication experiences with North African social workers.

WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

You will be involved in a Skype interview, which is a discussion between you and me that will last for approximately one hour. We will do this at a time that suits us both.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED?

1. Stories of successful communication with local workers:
   - Tell me about one really successful interaction with your local colleagues.
     - Why do you think it was so successful?
2. Stories of unsuccessful communication with local workers:
   - How about one you feel was really unsuccessful?
     - Why do you think it was so unsuccessful?
     - What would you do differently in future?
   - Are there any other issues to do with communication with your local colleagues that are problematical or, on the other hand, useful?
3. Communication with local workers:
   - What are the most important areas of communication?
   - What are the challenges of communication with your local colleagues?
   - What has changed as a result of the communication?
4. Recommendations:

- You have talked about successful experiences and some problems you have encountered. What do you think are the most important factors in developing successful programme in this field in North Africa?

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY INFORMATION?

Our discussion will be tape-recorded. The recording will be kept secure and confidential. Copies of transcripts from the interview will be sent to you to view through email after the interview. You are welcome to make comments and changes or remove any information you want to have taken out. I am currently doing my Masters in Community Psychology at the University of Waikato and the interview will provide the basis of the write-up for my thesis. When I finish my thesis in July 2011, I may have opportunities to publish my findings in academic journals and books.

WILL READERS KNOW WHO I AM?

To protect your privacy, all identifiable information such as your name (you may choose your own alias) and title, the names and locations of the schools and centres, and the name of the country will be kept anonymous. The name of the country will be described as North Africa.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time up until you have checked and approved your transcript of interview. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question/s.

WHAT IF I HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS?

If you have other questions, please feel free to contact me or the following supervisors:

Dr Judith Macdonald (Chairperson of Anthropology Department)
Ph: +64 7 838 4466 ext. 8282
Email: jmac@waikato.ac.nz

Dr Neville Robertson (Chairperson of Psychology Department)
Ph: +64 7 838 4466 ext. 8300
Email: scorpio@waikato.ac.nz

Dr Robert Isler (Convenor of Psychology Research and Ethics Committee) for any ethical issues in this study or if there are any ethical issues in this study you feel need to be raised.

Ph: +64 7 838 4466 ext. 8401

Email: r.isler@waikato.ac.nz

IF I WANT TO BE INVOLVED, WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

If you want to be involved, please send me an email. We can then arrange a time for an interview. Please feel free to ask me any more questions you may have about the research.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yusuke

APPENDIX TWO: INFORMATION SHEETS FOR NORTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKERS

An investigation of successful and unsuccessful communication between international and North African social workers at centres for disabled children in North Africa

The topic of this study aims to identify culturally sensitive communication skills of international social workers working at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa. To do this, I would like to ask you to share your positive and negative experiences with international social workers.

WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?
You will be involved in a Skype interview, which is a discussion between you and me that will last for approximately one hour. We will do this at a time that suits us both.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED?
1. Stories of positive communication with international social workers:
   - Tell me about one really positive interaction with international workers.
     - Why do you think it was so positive?
2. Stories of negative communication with international social workers:
   - What negative stories have you heard?
     - Why it's negative?
     - What would be better ways?
   - Are there any other positive or negative stories of communication with international workers?
3. Communication with international social workers:
   - What are the most important areas of communication?
   - What are the challenges of communication with international social workers?
   - What has changed as a result of the communication?
4. Suggestions:

- You have talked about positive and negative stories. What would be the most important factors in developing successful programme in this field in North Africa?

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY INFORMATION?

Our discussion will be tape-recorded. The recording will be kept secure and confidential. Copies of transcripts from the interview will be sent to you to view through email after the interview. You are welcome to make comments and changes or remove any information you want to have taken out. I am currently doing my Masters in Community Psychology at the University of Waikato and the interview will provide the basis of the write-up for my thesis. When I finish my thesis in July 2011, I may have opportunities to publish my findings in academic journals and books.

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To protect your privacy, all identifiable information such as your name (you may choose your own alias) and title, the names and locations of the schools and centres, and the name of the country will be kept anonymous. The name of the country will be described as North Africa.

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Ph: +64 7 838 4466 ext. 8401

Email: r.isler@waikato.ac.nz

IF I WANT TO BE INVOLVED, WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

If you want to be involved, please send me an email.   We can then arrange a time for an interview. Please feel free to ask me any more questions you may have about the research.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yusuke

APPENDIX THREE: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

University of Waikato
School of Psychology
CONSENT FORM
PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project: An Investigation of Successful and Unsuccessful Communication between International and North African Social Workers at Centres for Disabled Children in North Africa

Name of Researcher: Yusuke Okuyama

Name of Supervisors: Dr Neville Robertson & Dr Judith Macdonald

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 838 4466 ext. 8401, e-mail r.isler@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant'sName:_____Signature:_____Date:_____

University of Waikato
School of Psychology
CONSENT FORM
RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: An Investigation of Successful and Unsuccessful Communication between International and North African Social Workers at Centres for Disabled Children in North Africa

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Name of Supervisors (if applicable): Dr Neville Robertson & Dr Judith Macdonald

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 838 4466 ext. 8401, e-mail r.isler@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant'sName:_____Signature:_____Date:_____

APPENDIX FOUR: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS

The purpose of this interview is to ask international social workers about their experiences of working with the local social workers at schools or centres for disabled children. The topic of this study is to identify culturally appropriate communication skills and possible pitfalls for international social workers working at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa.   The main aim of this interview is to explore the international NGO workers' stories of successful and unsuccessful cross-cultural communications with the local workers at schools and centres for disabled. The intention of this interview is to find out how to improve the culturally sensitive practices of international social workers at the centres for disabled children in North Africa.

1. Introductions

In the initial stages of the interview I will engage in small talk with interviewee/s and explain the research project. I will also:

- Explain the overview of the interview structure.
- Explain the intention of this research: to find out how to improve the culturally appropriate transformation of knowledge of international social work in institutes for disabled children in North Africa.
- Explain the approach of this research: in order to find culturally appropriate communication skills for international social workers working at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa, find out the international NGO workers' stories of successful and unsuccessful cross-cultural communications with the local workers at schools and centres for disabled children.
- Ensure that interviewee/s have understood the theme of this research.
- Explain the possibility of publication.
- Explain the measures that the researcher will take to protect interviewee/s: use of pseudonyms; omitting or disguising names of schools and centre

and any other identifying information; and that the country will be described as North Africa.

- Inform interviewee/s that they will have an opportunity to review a draft transcript of the interview and that the researcher will use it only if interviewee/s approves it.

- Inform interviewee/s that they do not have to answer any questions interviewee/s do not want to, that interviewee/s can end the interview at any stage and that interviewee/s have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage up until interviewee/s have checked and approved their transcript of interview.

- Inform interviewee/s that interviewer will reconfirm their participation for the research after interviewee/s have checked their transcript of interview.

- Gain consent for the interview to be audio taped and the verbal consent to be audio taped in accordance with the interviewee/s' cultural norm.

2. Stories of successful communication with local workers:
   - Tell me about one really successful interaction with your local colleagues.
     - Why do you think it was so successful?
   - Tell me about another successful story?
     - Why do you think it was so successful?
   - Tell me about another successful story?
     - Why do you think it was so successful?

3. Stories of unsuccessful communication with local workers:
   - How about one you feel was really unsuccessful?
     - Why do you think it was so unsuccessful?
     - What would you do differently in future?
   - Tell me about another unsuccessful story?
     - Why do you think it was so unsuccessful?
     - What would you do differently in future?
   - Tell me about another unsuccessful story?
     - Why do you think it was so unsuccessful?
     - What would you do differently in future?

- You have mentioned …(i.e., religion) as being a barrier/ problem
  - Could you tell me more about this?
  - Could you expand that?
- Are there any other issues to do with communication with your local colleagues that are problematical or, on the other hand, useful?

4. Communication with local workers:
- What are the most important areas of communication?
- What are the challenges of communication with your local colleagues?
- What has changed as a result of the communication?

5. Recommendations:
- You have talked about successful experiences and some problems you have encountered. What do you think are the most important factors in developing successful programme (i.e., training people) in this field in North Africa?

6. Closing
   In this part of the interview, the interviewer will:
- Check if there is anything else the interviewee/s wants to add.
- Negotiate safe and convenient arrangements for reviewing the transcripts of the interview, i.e., emailing.
- Ask permission for further communication opportunities through emailing or Skype in order to clarify comments made during the interviews or in order to receive more information from interviewee/s.

APPENDIX FIVE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NORTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKERS

The purpose of this interview is to ask North African social workers about their experiences of working with international social workers at schools or centres for disabled children. The topic of study is to identify the culturally appropriate communication skills and possible pitfalls for international social workers working at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa. The main aim of this interview is to explore positive and negative experiences with the international NGO workers in relation to cross-cultural communications. The intention of this interview is to find out how to improve the culturally sensitive practices of international social workers at the centres for disabled children in North Africa.

1. Introductions

In the initial stages of the interview the interviewer will engage in small talk with interviewee/s and explain the research project. Interviewer will also:

- Explain the overview of the interview structure.
- Explain the intention of this research: to find out how to improve the culturally appropriate transformation of knowledge of international social work in institutes for disabled children in North Africa.
- Explain the approach of this research: in order to find culturally appropriate communication skills for international social workers working at schools and centres for disabled children in North Africa, find out the international NGO workers' stories of successful and unsuccessful cross-cultural communications with the local workers at schools and centres for disabled children.
- Explain that researcher wants to ask interviewee/s particularly about positive and negative experiences of communication with international social workers at schools or centres for disabled children in North Africa.
- Ensure that interviewee/s have understood the theme of this research.
- Explain the possibility of publication.

- Explain the measures that the researcher will take to protect interviewee/s: use of pseudonyms; omitting or disguising names of schools and centre and any other identifying information; and that the country will be described as North Africa.

- Inform interviewee/s that they will have an opportunity to review a draft transcript of the interview and that the researcher will use it only if interviewee/s approve it.

- Inform interviewee/s that they do not have to answer any questions that interviewee/s do not want to, and that interviewee/s can end the interview at any stage. Also inform interviewee/s have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage until interviewee/s have checked and approved their transcript of interview.

- Inform interviewee/s that interviewer will reconfirm their participation for the research after interviewee/s have checked their transcript of interview.

- Gain consent for the interview to be audio taped and the verbal consent to be audio taped in accordance with the interviewee/s' cultural norm.

2. Stories of positive communication with international social workers:
   - Tell me about one really positive interaction with international workers.
     - Why do you think it was so positive?
   - Tell me about another positive story?
     - Why do you think it was positive?
   - Tell me about another positive story?
     - Why do you think it was positive?
   - How about if international workers have done…(ask about what international workers have said), is it positive?
     - Why do you think it was positive?

3. Stories of negative communication with international social workers:
   - What negative stories have you heard?
     - Why it's negative?
     - What would be better ways?
   - Tell me about another negative story?

        o   Why it's negative?

        o   What would be better ways?

- Tell me about another negative story?
  - o   Why it's negative?
  - o   What would be better ways?
- How about if international workers have done.....(ask about what international workers have said), what would be the better ways?
- Are there any other positive or negative stories of communication with international workers?

4. Communication with international social workers:
   - What are the most important area of communication?
   - What are the challenges of communication with international social workers?
   - What has changed as a result of the communication?

5. Suggestions:
   - You have talked about positive and negative stories. What would be the most important factors in developing successful programme in this field in North Africa?

6. Closing

In this part of the interview, the interviewer will:

- Check if there is anything else the interviewee/s wants to add.
- Negotiate safe and convenient arrangements for reviewing the transcripts of the interview, i.e., emailing.
- Ask permission for further communication opportunities through emailing or Skype in order to clarify comments made during the interviews or in order to receive more information from interviewee/s.