



The Impacts of Ethnocentrism and Stereotype on Inter-Cultural Relations of Ethiopian Higher Education Students

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Abstract

This research is intended to understand the impacts of ethnocentrism and stereotypes on the ICRs among students of higher education. Qualitative research method was used in data collection and analyses. The instruments were observation, interview, and FGD. 43 research participants were purposefully selected. The findings reveal that ethnic, cultural and religious dislikes on campuses are manifested in acts ranging from hateful speeches to physical violence. Besides, both verbal disputes and physical confrontations are the results of wrong perception, misunderstanding on certain issues, criticism, misbehavior, defamation, inflammatory words, wrong attributions, indirect domination, undermining cultures of other, humor, disrespect, ideological differences, lack of unity among students etc. Ignorance of the others' cultures, religions and identities, ethnocentric attitudes, bias, supporting political parties along ethnic lines and exaggerated group differences are, thus, the major causes of ICRs problems among the students. On top of these, the disturbing counterattacks consisting of incidents of bigotry and intergroup strife are also prevalent. Hence, these affect the integrity and performance of the students that will affect the society at large.

Keywords: Inter-Cultural Relations (ICRs), Focus-Group Discussion (FGD), Qualitative Research Methods (QRM), Inter-Cultural Communication (ICC), Ethnocentrism, Stereotypes, Addis Ababa University (AAU).



Introduction

An inter-cultural relation is committed to activities that provide students an opportunity to engage in meaningful inter-cultural dialogues around cultural, religious, ethnic and diversity issues in a multicultural environment. It is based on the belief that students must be provided with this opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations which broaden their inter-cultural competence of diversity to include the concept of inter-culturalism. Thus, the practical goal of ICRs is to overcome ethnocentrism and stereotype and to enable successful relationship and communication in such environment. Besides, the goal of improving students' understanding of cultural, religious, and ethnic difference is vital to the general education of university students. If students are to become successful in a diverse world, a large part of that source will be the ability to communicate and negotiate among diverse cultures (Banks, 2001) and brings about inter-cultural competence, which is the capacity to change one's attitudes, values, and behavior so as to be open and flexible with other cultures, religious and ethnic groups which have become increasingly crucial for individuals to survive in our increasingly globalized society. *What does the concept of inter-cultural competency mean to us?* Taylor (1994) defined intercultural competency as a transformative process whereby the "stranger" develops adaptive capacity, altering his or her perspective to understand and accommodate the demands of the host culture, religion and ethnic effectively. As such, inter-cultural competency is not a result of something, but an ongoing, individual internal process. An inter-culturally competent person manifests increased affective, behavioral, and cognitive abilities, such as empathy, adaptive motivation, an ability to tackle alternative perspectives, behavioral flexibility, and person-centered communication. Thus, inter-cultural competency can be defined as transformation of learning and a growth process where an individual's existing, often implicit, knowledge is diversified to inter-cultural knowledge, attitude, and behavior. The process allows individuals to incorporate inter-cultural knowledge into their high level cognitive schema.

Therefore, research into inter-cultural competence has identified a range of issues, including inter-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2002), inter-cultural effectiveness (Kealey, 1989), inter-cultural effectiveness (Cui & Van Den Berg, 1991), cultural shock, and inter-cultural communication competence (Wiseman, 2002), cultural adjustment (Benson, 1978), cultural communication effectiveness (Ruben, 1987), inter-cultural communication competence (Gudykunst, 2004; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Kim, 1991), and inter-cultural transformative



process (Taylor, 1994). The constructivist paradigm enables us to conceive different realities, to imagine how experience is different in those realities, and to apprehend to some degree that alien experience. This is the crux of ICC – the ability to transcend our own limited experience and imagine the world as another is experiencing it. Hence, the purpose of this study primarily evolved to determine the impact of ethnocentrism and stereotype on ICRs of AAU students. Students are affected by ethnocentrism and stereotype that had challenged their day-to-day activities across the campuses. These are the concern of the researcher in such a multicultural environments (Tilahun, 2007) where in the larger society-- the Afar, the Amhara, the Agnwak, the Dorze, the Gamo, the Gumuz, the Gurage, the Hadiya, the Keffa, the Kembata, the Komo, the Nuwer, the Oromo, the Siltie, the Somali, the Tigrian and the Wolaytta' etc -is found.

Study Area

On March 20, 1950, Emperor Haile Silassie I declared the foundation of the University College of Addis Ababa, which includes the faculties of Arts and Science. It was renamed Haile Selassie I University in 1962 and then AAU in 1975. At the time there were only 33 students enrolled compared to the current number of about 45,000 students which are composed of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. So, the universities in Ethiopia are assumed to be the representative of Ethiopia. The University today comprises more than 25 faculties. AAU aspires to be a pre-eminent African research university dedicated to ... academic community that cultivates and celebrates diversity. The mission of AAU is to foster a democratic university, which gives pride to its students in instruction and provision of services while encouraging the robust exercise of academic freedom. This will be achieved by developing vibrant graduate programs and by nurturing professional competence, a humanistic education, a scientific culture, academic excellence and a committed, ethical citizenship. The University is guided by commitment that embodies the following set of core values: academic freedom, excellence, integrity and professionalism, *diversity, tolerance and mutual respect*, social responsibility and public service, initiative, reliance on authority of reason, student-centeredness, efficiency and appreciation of African initiatives.



Theoretical Framework: Definitions and Concepts

Inter- Cultural Relations (ICRs)

The inter-cultural attitude approach (Fong et al., 2004) advocates understanding the culture, religion and ethnicity of those with whom one is communicating and stresses the impact of developing a positive attitude headed for another culture, religious and ethnic. The Reasoned Action Theory also states that (Gudykunst, 2003), it should be possible to increase positive inter-cultural behavior by modifying people's attitudes about the outcomes of such behaviors. Creating a positive atmosphere for cultural, religious and ethnic interactions can also change perceptions of the outcomes of ICIs and alter people's beliefs about the attitudes of important others. In addition, the conditions under which face-to-face interaction lead to changes in both cognition and affect. To bring this positive outcomes, ICRs programs has evolved from a method of helping members of one cultural, religious and ethnic group link up members of different cultural, religious and ethnic groups into a meta theoretical perspective that recognizes the centrality and primary importance of culture, religious and ethnic as an internalized subjective perspective that can maximize their effectiveness by fostering the favorable conditions. In such cases, the interactions should be cooperative in nature, and the cooperation's should be result in favorable outcomes. Moreover, the inter-cultural contact should offer people the opportunity to get to know one another as individuals.

To Ganon (2004:16), "culture is particularly important in inter-cultural negotiations. Understanding both the similarities and differences of the cultures, religious and ethnics represented by the negotiators is a good way to facilitate interaction and goal attainment". Individuals, however, differ as to how quickly they begin to overcome the inherent difficulties of ICRs and begin to obtain the advantage it offers (Cushner, 1996). However, ignorance of the other culture is a major cause of ICRs problems (Stephan & Stephan, 1984; cited in Gudykunst, 2003). In the inter-cultural context (Cushner, 1996) understanding, another's culture, religious and ethnic background can make us more accurate in our interactions of the attributions about that person's behavior. These are very much concerned with the consequences the cognition dimensions of ethnocentrism and stereotype. Let us discuss the perspectives of ethnocentrism in the preceding sections.



Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism refers to the wide-ranging belief in the cultural superiority of one's own ethnic group or, more loosely, an unusually high regard for one's own ethnic ,religious, cultural group. This method of using one's own culture is superior to all other cultures is called ethnocentrism (Samovar et al., 2010; DomNwachukwu, 2010). *Ethnocentrism* has been defined by some scholars (Cushner & Brislin, 1996,273-78; Kottak, 1996,69) as “the making of judgments” based on the criteria's of one's cultural groups by applying those criteria's in judging others behavior and beliefs of people who may be from different cultural backgrounds. Bennett (1993:30) defines ethnocentrism as “assuming that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality”. Bennett suggests that people tend to use their own worldview to interpret other's behavior and that the idea of a ‘universal truth’ is usually based on one's own values. *Ethnocentrism* is not only the tendency to view the world from the standpoint of one's own culture, but also the failure to understand, cultures that are different from one's own.

The central research question regarding the concept involves the assumption that *ethnocentrism* universally involves a rejection of out-groups in any of its aspects. Samovar et al (2010:331) emphasizes that “every culture, whether consciously or unconsciously, tends to glorify its historical, scientific, economic, and artistic accomplishments, frequently minimizing the achievements of other cultures. In this way, schools in all culture impart ethnocentrism.” In many ways, this is a natural human tendency. The difficulty, however, is that ethnocentrism also sets up standards of good and bad when in fact the issue should merely be noting differences.

Hence, the central themes of *ethnocentrism* are “the view” (Gudykunst: 2003; Kottak:1996 ;Gish et al.,2007), “the attitude” (Gish et al., 2007), “the judgment” (Cushner, 2003), “the belief” (Harris & Jonson, 2007), and “the description and judgment” (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2002) of one's own cultural values, traditions, customs and behaviors of others with regard to their cultural backgrounds. In other words, the in-group and out-group distinction is one of the core themes in ICR. Some definitions of ethnocentrism emphasizes on its negative aspects towards culturally different people.

The different perspectives of *ethnocentrism* is stated by Sculpin (Cited in Kushner, 2004:13)



Ethnocentrism is popular perceptions about other cultures have often been based on ethnocentric attitudes. Ethnocentrism is the practice of judging another society by the values and standards of one's own society. As humans learn the basic values, beliefs and norms of their society, they tend to think of their own culture as preferable, ranking other cultures as less desirable. Members of a society may be so committed to their own cultural traditions that they cannot conceive of any other way of life. They often view other cultural traditions as strange or alien, perhaps even inferior, crazy, or immoral.

Ethnocentrism is stated as cultural universal phenomena (Cushner,1996: 273-78; Kottak ,1996:69) that contributes to *social cohesiveness, a sense of value and community* among people who share a cultural tradition.

Some of the consequences of *ethnocentrism* (Gudykunst, 2003; Harris &Jonson, 2007; Jandt, 2004) are as follows:

- i. leads to an almost complete misunderstanding of values, intentions, statements, and actions of others, thereby, turning attempts at ICC into serious miscommunications.
- ii. accepts ones group's norms, values and behaviors seen as moral, good and proper where as those of groups that differ from one's own often are seen as immoral, wrong, and improper.
- iii. leads people to exaggerate group differences. Ethnocentric cultural groups see themselves as superior to other groups, which are treated, as inferior.
- iv. complicates ICIs and it creates ICRs problems in part because people expect others to think and behave as they do.
- v. hinders our understanding of the customs of other people, and at the same time, keeps us from understanding our own customs.
- vi. brings about negative affective reactions to out groups such as distrust, hostility, and contempt.
- vii. leads to intolerance of other cultures and is used to justify the mistreatment of others.
- viii. leads to a rejection of the richness and knowledge of other cultures. Furthermore, it impedes communication and blocks the exchange of ideas and skills among peoples.



According to Harris et al (2007: 12), however, “a certain degree of *ethnocentrism* is natural for people raised in single culture; their values and ways of behaving appear disable and superior to all others.” The positive functions of *ethnocentrism* for the in-group are understandable. High morale, group cohesiveness, devotion, pride, and loyalty often linked to a sense of in-group superiority. To Jandt (2004:54) “it is difficult to free oneself of all *ethnocentrism*”; however, overcoming *ethnocentrism* demands “conscious and continuing effort.”

Stephan and Stephan (Gudykunst, 2003) indicates that *ethnocentrism* is lower in countries with strong belief in tolerance of others, harmony with others than in countries with a sense of cultural superiority, respect for tradition. The concept has two components: (a) an exaggeration of the in-group’s position and cultural superiority and (b) a criticism of all out-group cultures. To Novinger (2001:43) “the quality of ethnocentrism probably relates to the complex psychological development of a tolerant and strong personality. According to student’s response, another problem associated with ethnocentrism is a phenomenon called ethnopaulism, using name calling or slurs for members of the out-group. The consequence of all this is greater social distance among cultural, religious, ethnic groups and less mutual understanding.

In general, ethnocentrism has been described as an individual psychological disposition which has both positive and negative outcome (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). On the one hand, ethnocentrism serves as an antecedent towards “patriotism and willingness to sacrifice for one’s central group” (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997:389) and helps in constructing and maintaining one’s cultural identity (Chen & Starosta,2004). On the other hand, ethnocentrism leads to misunderstandings (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997) and reduced levels of overcoming ethnocentrism intercultural-willingness-to-communicate (Lin & Rancer, 2003).

Stereotypes

Stereotype can have a potentially detrimental impact on ICR. Ganon (2004: 16) defines this element as “it represents a distorted view or mental picture of groups and their supposed characteristics, on the basis of which we tend to evaluate individuals from each other.” Sue and Sue (1990:47-8) on the other hand, defines stereotype as “rigid preconception we hold about all people who are members of a particular group.” Another scholar (Samovar et al., 2010:170-1) states stereotype as “a complex form of categorization”, “a cognitive structure



containing the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and experiences, and expectancies about some human social group", "a collection of false assumptions that people in all cultures make about the characteristics of members of various groups." Samovar & Porter (1991:280) also define stereotypes as "the perceptions or beliefs we hold about groups or individuals based on our previously formed opinions or attitudes". As the definition suggests, stereotypes do not develop suddenly but are formed over a period of time by our culture. They are made up of bits and pieces of information that we store and use to "make sense" of what goes on around us.

Psychologists (Jandt, 2004: 40) have tried to explain *stereotyping* as "mistakes our brains make in the perception of illusions". When the information is ambiguous and limited, the brain reacts in the wrong conclusion. In most general sense, the word *stereotype* refers "any summary generalization that obscures the differences within a group." (Cushner & Brislin, 1996:58).

The *stereotype*, hence, is an important concept (Pickering, 2001) in contemporary cultural analysis. Particularly in the field of communication, the processes and effects of *stereotyping* have long been of concern. Therefore, it is important to understand *stereotypes* as elements of broad cultural practices and processes, carrying with them quite definite ideological views and values. Most stereotypes end up as negative labels placed on individuals simply because they are members of particular group. These *stereotypes*, especially the negative ones, do have a negative out comes on the communication environment of diverse groups. It narrows our perceptions; they usually jeopardize intercultural communication and take on a negative tone. The agent of stereotype is socialization process. Many stereotypes are provided by the mass media and widely disseminated through a variety of media forms such as ads, movies, and TV sitcoms and soap opera.

Stereotypes can be either positive or negative and as (Barna,1997) points out they help us to "make sense" of the world by categorizing and classifying people and situations we encounter. We may revert to stereotyping, for example, when we are overseas and are faced with people and situations we are not accustomed to. While stereotyping may reduce the threat of the unknown, it interferes with our perceptions and understanding of the world, when applied to individuals or groups. When a person upholds the rigid negative *stereotypes*, they meant to discriminate and keep a person or a group at a distance. This may occur



because the person behind feels threats, fear, and lack of security and self-confidence, or simply holds prejudices and biases. According to Harris et al (2007) regardless of the cultural *stereotypes* every society, many individuals have personalities that deviate widely from the most frequent types. *Stereotyping* considered a natural human survival mechanisms as a generalization based on limited information, limited interaction, and limited experience with a person, group or situation.

On one hand, function of *stereotype* (Stephan & Stephan, 1996) is the creation of order out of the social reality. Moreover, *stereotypes* provide guidelines for ICRs and expectations for the behavior of others. In such cases, people base their behavior toward out-group members on *stereotype* related expectancies.

On the contrary, *stereotypes* are harmful to people because the *stereotyped*, person is not treated as a person with unique qualities (Fong et al., 2004). Particularly cultural *stereotypes* (Gudykunst et al., 2003:146) are “used to dominate, criticize, or dehumanize members of out-groups.” In broader term (Jandt, 1998: 70) *stereotype* “commonly used to refer to negative or positive judgments made about individuals based on any observable or believed group.”

Moreover, the other consequence (Gudykunst, 2004:115) of *stereotype* is “ineffective communication.” It occurs when the person who with whom they are communicating comes from another culture, religion and ethnic more than when the person comes from their own culture religion and ethnicity. One reason for this is that their *stereotypes* of groups in their cultures tend to be more accurate and favorable than their *stereotypes* of other cultures. In accurate and unfavorable than their *stereotypes* of other cultures and ethnic groups, cause them to misinterpret the messages they receive from members of those cultures and ethnic groups.

This problem of communication not only results in out-group members but also in the in-group members. *Stereotypes* are, however, less problematic in-group communication because the in -group *stereotypes* usually are more favorable and accurate than *stereotypes* of the out-group members. In order to improve, (Gudykunst, 2004) the effectiveness in communication with out-group members, we must understand how unfavorable and/or inaccurate *stereotypes* affect the way we communicate. Ganon (2004:16) also states, “the well known phenomenon of culture shock does occur and, if not handled properly, can lead to major problems.”



The impact of *stereotypes* on unconscious processes reveals that are aspects of prejudice and discriminatory actions that may take place beyond the conscious there knowledge of the individuals who harbors the *stereotypes* (Greenwald et al., 1995). Further, it leads to societal impressions regarding the violent behavior of other groups. Moreover, the consequence of being *stereotyped* as a cultural or ethnic minority has also been depicted particularly in regard to *stereotype* threat and its impact on academic performance.

The consequence of *stereotype* (Fong et al., 2004) is “when a person holds rigid negative *stereotypes* they are meant to discriminate and to keep a person or a group at distance.” This may occur because the discriminated person feels intimidation, fear, and lack of security and self- confidence, or simply holds prejudicial biases.

Jandt (2001) identified a number of ways in which stereotypes are harmful and impede communication. First, stereotypes can cause us to assume that a widely held belief is true, when it may not be. Second, the continual use of stereotypes reinforces our beliefs and can also cause us to assume a widely held belief is true of any one individual in the group. If a group is stereotyped as dishonest, for example, we tend to apply that stereotype to all members of that group, regardless of individual differences. Third, when we use negative stereotypes to interpret the behavior of individuals within a group, this further impedes inter-cultural communication by reinforcing those negative stereotypes. Such negative stereotyping can become a “self-fulfilling prophecy” for those who are stereotyped and hence place them at risk. An example of this would be the prevalent stereotype that women are not good at math and science, which in turn may cause women to internalize such beliefs and avoid studying or pursuing maths or science related professions. In general, in effective ICC, culture shock, impermeable to logic, or experience prejudice and discriminatory actions, societal impressions, impact on academic performance, inter-cultural misunderstanding and discrimination are the expected consequences of *stereotypes*. The summative results of the above consequences often lead to a breakdown in communication and deterioration in relationship among culturally or ethnically diverse groups. Gudykunst (2004) asserts that *stereotyping* as a natural result of the ICC process. It argued that people in all societies exposed to the widespread cultural *stereotypes* during socialization. In turn, it affects the current attitude of the individuals (Devine & Zuwerink, 1989).



Research Design and Methodology

According to Brown (2006), a significant work in socio-cultural studies is theoretical. “Theory can be understood as narratives that seek to distinguish and account for general features which describe, define, and explain persistently perceived occurrences”(p.156). It does not picture the world more or less accurately; rather, it is a tool, an instrument or logic for intervening in the world we are living. This will be achieved through the mechanisms of description, definition, prediction and control. Theoretical work thus can be thought of as a designing of the cultural, religious and ethnic signposts and maps by which we are guided. Indeed, the theory is precisely a story about humanity with implications for further action and judgments about some consequences of events and situations. For the same reason, most of the work written on inter-cultural research (Gudykunst, 2003) focuses on specific methods of data gathering strategies and data analysis. In the literature part, the researcher presented concepts and conceptual framework to help explain the ways in which ethnocentrism and stereotype influence ICRs.

Methodology

Inter-cultural studies involve persons from different cultures, religious or ethnic groups; to achieve this characteristic, most studies employ qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis. Unlike the quantitative research methodology the qualitative one is favored for it takes a socio- cultural phenomenon into parts and makes an effort to understand the connotation of an occurrence or experience in a given contexts and situations. Besides, qualitative research takes place in the natural setting (the case of AAU setting). Hence, the approach is naturalistic. It is a “research that represents human beings as whole persons living in dynamic, complex socio-cultural arrangements” (Rogers, 2000:51). This enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the case, the individual, or the place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003). Hence, the phenomenon under study is, therefore, the determining feature for choosing a method. The single case may be an individual, a group or an organization. For such reason, the AAU, among the other universities in Ethiopia, is selected as a case to provide an insight into the problem under investigation. Life occurs in context of the natural setting in which the people work, study, play, eat, and drink, love, in fact live. Hence, the researcher in the context tries systematically to understand students lived experiences through multiple methods of data collection.



Data Collection Methods

Qualitative research is evolving rather than tightly prefigured. Several aspects come out during a qualitative study. The research questions may change and be refined as the inquirer learns what to ask and to whom it asked. The data collection process might change as doors open and close for data collection (the difficulties of the research), and the inquirer learns the best sites (the natural setting) at which to learn about the central phenomenon or case of interest.

To engage in the setting and address the research questions, qualitative research as the approach is naturalistic, and interpretive, and as a result, it draws on multiple methods of data collection. The methods include FGD, interviewing, observation and questionnaire. FGD is useful in learning about social norms, values, and cultures of a group or community. The methods that we have described can serve as an opportunity to bring multicultural diverse students together to share perspectives and to work on common problems for the benefit of the students. Interviewing, for Rossman and Rallis (2003), is a primary way to discover and learn in the field. Therefore, it provides better inter-cultural experiences to interviewees' interpretation of events, understandings, experiences and opinions. As the research demands, 43 interviewees were responded. The researcher also used extensively the participant observation method (Pederson and Carey, 1994; Rossman and Rallis, 2005) and through observing students in various contexts in the university such as cultural centers, dormitory, dining hall, around classrooms and recreation sites. In the sites, the researcher observed actions, and interactions among students. To gather data in the natural setting observation (except the cultural centers) conducted without the knowledge of the population under study. The researcher's own past and current experience as a student in the same setting also helped a lot. To this end, the researcher was also taking the advantage of questionnaire as the most likely open-ended questions.

Sampling Techniques

The sample size decisions are a bit more dynamic in qualitative research than in quantitative research in that the number of observations is not determined in the former type of research prior to data collection. The researcher should select the persons, places, events under study. The Ethnographic research methods recommended approximately 30 to 50 interviews as the sample size. Thus, the optimum sample size is related to the type of research we are undertaking. In such cases, Van de Vijves and Leung (1997b) isolate three possible sampling



methods: Convenience, systematic, and random. Most qualitative inter-cultural studies use convenience sampling. Because convenience samples are as equivalent as possible is to gather as much data on the respondent that is relevant to the study and compare the data across samples. As a result, random sampling, generally are not feasible in inter-cultural research and in this research as well. Therefore, the researcher selected 43 interviewees in the same setting as the samples for the individual interview because of the accommodation of diversity.

Discussion

Manifestations of Ethnocentrism on the Campus

Ethnocentrism is one of the cognition dimensions that have impacts in ICRs. It refers to a belief in the cultural superiority of one's own cultural or ethnic group. It is negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standards of one's own. To be ethnocentric is to belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic and culture (Jandt, 2004; Gudykunst, 2003).

It, among the students, leads to a rejection of the diversity, knowledge, believes attitudes, judgments and worldviews or perspectives of other cultural and ethnic groups. It also denies the cultural background, perceptions, understanding of the significant others, and positive regard for others among the students which could be manifested in the cafeteria, classrooms, library etc. Further, it affects smooth ICRs and blocks cultural exchanges of the students. Thus, an ethnocentric orientation excludes the other points of view that affect CCR. Similarly, the factor affects their attitudes towards others, intergroup contact and breaks off ICRs. This, in turn, results in exaggerated group differences that complicate ICIs and misunderstandings among the students. It leads students to serious miscommunications. Consequently, it impedes communication means it blocks the inter-cultural exchange of ideas and skills among students. Hence, students are unable to be competent. Most of the time, they could be reluctant to cooperate in group assignments, discussions, and material exchange.

In accordance the data from the students this type of complexity is prevalent in the AAU setting where in diverse cultural groups are living. Interview with the respondents depicts the prevalence of ethnocentrism at AAU and shows how it affects their ICRs and there by turning attempts at ICC into serious miscommunications. The process often leads to misunderstanding of the values, intentions, statements and actions (cultural celebration) of others. Students, on one hand, support the cultural manifestations in the cultural shows; on



the other hand, they do not support because the groups stick to the manifestation of some culture to their ethnic group that excludes other cultural groups. One of the interviewee explained that the existence of grouping in the classes while they are sitting and doing for the group discussions and assignments. This grouping exaggerates group differences rather than cohesiveness. According to the respondent, hence, it may lead them to the loss of “nationalist feelings”.

According to students’ Dean and members of Nations Nationalities club, the AAU students are striving to participate in the extracurricular activities. The students have established own cultural and literature clubs, based on their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. On one hand, for instance, “The Addis Ababa University extracurricular clubs network” which was established in the 2001 E.C. Set annual schedules that have been implemented in the year 2002 E.C. This is intentionally, to bring the students together and minimize group differences. In addition, they also set peace club to mitigate some disputes among students and to hold certain discussions on sensitive issues on the campus. However, the assessment shows that the club failed to achieve for what has been already scheduled. On the other hand, The Amhara, the Oromo, the Tigrean and the Wolayita students have their cultural shows and literature clubs and have weekly presentation at cultural center of AAU. Since the presentation has been mediated through their respective language, the other cultural groups are not part of those programs. Consequently, this tends the other students to develop ethnocentric attitude, which exaggerate group differences, and ignores inter-cultural exchanges of the different cultural groups.

In addition, cultural members are observed moving and working together on the campus; according to my observation and the respondent’s data, the majority of the students are living, studying, eating, recreating and doing assignments with their religious, cultural or ethnic groups in the dormitories, classrooms and cafeteria in particular and in the university in general. They believe that grouping is a question of survival and religious, cultural or ethnic identity in the university as a whole.

The data (exclusive interview) indicates that religious, cultural or ethnic groups are ethnocentric; that is, they subscribe to the view that “students base their expectations regarding ICRs on their own culture’s norms and rules regarding their interaction.” For instance, students revealed the existence of cultural superiority in the manner that “our



cultural members came from a society who are cooperative, who support others, who have love for others... and as a result, absolutely, we cannot think about hating other cultural groups.” The student he tends to think of own culture as preferable, place other cultures as less desirable.

The students in AAU revealed that the prevalent of ethnocentrism that depicts us how it affects their ICC. Students who are highly ethnocentric, they see other cultural groups as contemptible and inferior, they reject out-groups’ religious, cultural, or ethnic values. They also blame out-groups for in-groups troubles, and they try to maintain distance from the out-groups. In addition, there is a tendency to interpret and evaluate out groups behavior using their standards. According to Gudykunst (2004) this tendency is natural and unavoidable. The major consequence of that inter-group context is that students tend to view their in-group’s ways of doing things as superior to out- group’s ways of doing things. In other words, ethnocentrism is a bias toward the in-group that causes students to evaluate different patterns of behavior negatively, rather than try to understand them. Ethnocentric attitudes also manifested in students’ toilet, on classroom walls, books in library etc. For instance, some graffiti are targeted at attacking a certain group. There are also graffiti that advocate isolation and political ideology of specific parties and that preach the superiority of a certain ethnic groups. The graffiti reflect the strong ethnic feeling of the students, ethnocentrism, and prejudices and stereotypes, which are prevalent at AAU. They also mirror how language use affects the students’ relations and can be a potential cause for intergroup conflict.

All situations emerged due to ethnocentric perception complicate CCI of the students of AAU and it created ICRs problems in part, because students expect others to view, do, think and behave as they do. This, as they mentioned it, hindered their understanding and sharing of the religious, cultures, norms and values of other cultural members, and at the same time, keeps them from understanding own, religions, cultures, norms, and values. Most of the time, when they meet other cultural groups, they are often characterized by negative affective reactions to them such as mistrust, hostility, and disrespect. Such conditions are potentially dangerous when it leads to intolerance of other religions and cultures and is used to justify the mistreatment of others. Therefore, ethnocentrism in AAU setting is highly marked by an exaggeration of the in-group’s position and cultural superiority and a criticism of all out-group religions, cultures, norms and values. In other words, the ignorance of the other cultural group is a major cause of ICRs problems in the settings. Besides, students remind



themselves not to interpret acts and experiences of students from a different cultural group as wrong or inappropriate just because they are not the same as other cultural groups.

Manifestations of Stereotype on the Campus

Stereotype is the second cognitive element that can have a potentially detrimental impact on ICRs of the students. It is a distorted view or mental pictures of groups and their supposed characteristics, it is a rigid preconception and mistakes our brains make. In most general sense, any summary generalization, which obscures the cultural or ethnic differences within a cultural group, is stereotype. It, in cultural analysis, is an element of broad cultural practices and processes that carry definite ideological views and values. Generalization based on limited information, limited interactions, limited experience and negative labels, discrimination, expectations, ineffective communication, domination, and violent behavior are the remarkable features of stereotypes (Ganon, 2004; Sue & Sue, 1990; Jandt, 2004; Cushener et al., 1996).

Most stereotypes end up as negative labels placed on individuals simply because they are members of a particular group. Therefore, it is important to understand stereotypes as elements of broad cultural practices and processes, carrying with them quite definite ideological views and values. Most stereotypes end up as negative labels placed on individuals simply because they are members of particular group. These stereotypes, especially the negative ones, do have a negative out-comes on the communication environment of diverse cultural groups. Hence, negative stereotypes giving rise to negative expectations about members of out-groups.

According to Sencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) stereotypes are the cognitive manifestation of prejudice and discrimination. When a person maintains the rigid negative stereotypes, they are meant to discriminate and to keep a person or a group at a distance. The AAU students informed me that when some groups get academic material they do not share them except their ethnic or cultural groups. It shows the gap among each cultural group. This may occur because the person behind feels threats, fear, and lack of security and self-confidence, or simply holds prejudicial and biases. Some students consider it as a survival mechanism to exceed others.



On one hand, function of stereotype (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; cited in Gudykunst, 2003) is the creation of order out of the social reality. Moreover, stereotypes provide guidelines for ICRs and expectations for the behavior of others. In such cases, students base their behavior toward out-group members on stereotype related expectancies. On the contrary, stereotypes are harmful to people because the stereotyped person is not treated as a person with unique qualities. Stereotypes are “used to dominate, criticize, or dehumanize members of out-groups.” In broader term (Jandt, 2004: 70) stereotype “commonly used to refer to negative or positive judgments made about individuals based on any observable or believed group.”

It occurs when the student who with whom they are communicating comes from another culture more than when the person comes from their own culture. One reason for this is that their stereotypes of groups in their cultures tend to be more accurate and favorable than their stereotypes of other cultures. The root causes of this belief tend towards the socialization of students in exclusively to their cultural society that may not have exposure to other cultural group till they joined the campus life. As a result, inaccurate and unfavorable than their stereotypes of other cultures and ethnic groups, cause them to misinterpret the messages they receive from members of those cultures and ethnic groups. Generally, students agree on the notion that stereotypes can blinker student’s judgments and overlook other out-group students.

Students agree on the idea that, this problem of communication not only results in out-group members but also in the in-group members. Stereotypes are, however, less problematic in-group communication because the in -group stereotypes usually are more favorable and accurate than stereotypes of the out-group members. In order to improve, the effectiveness in communication with out-group members, students must understand how unfavorable and/or inaccurate stereotypes affect the way they communicate. At the beginning of student’s life in the campus they experience cultural shock which will be adjusted through their stay. At the beginning this simple exposure to another culture does not guarantees better ICRs. Such encounters may results only in culture classes and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes (Novinger, 2001). Ganon (2004) also asserts, the phenomenon of culture shock, if not handled properly, can lead to major problems. Further, it affects student’s performance. Generally, stereotypes cannot easily be divorced from more ‘normal’ ways of thinking about people.



Conclusions

Based on the above qualitative analysis the researcher came up with the following conclusions:

- Misunderstanding and miscommunication are prevalent among students of the university.
- Students have high self-esteem that manifests greater social distance among cultural, religious, ethnic groups and less mutual understanding.
- All cultures, religions and ethnics suffer from ethnocentrism when attempting to ICRs.
- All cultural, religious and ethnic groups suffer to some degree from this attribute that impedes ICRs.
- Ethnocentrism leads students to a rejection of the diversity, knowledge, believes attitudes, judgments and worldviews or perspectives of other cultural, religious and ethnic groups in general.
- Ethnocentrism denies the cultural background, perceptions, understanding of the significant others, and positive regard for others among the students which could be manifested in the cafeteria, classrooms, library etc.
- The existence of grouping in the classes while they are sitting and doing for the group discussions and assignments discourage students.
- Most of the time, students could be reluctant to cooperate in group assignments, discussions, and material exchange.
- The majority of the students are living, studying, eating, recreating and doing assignments with their religious, cultural or ethnic groups in the dormitories, classrooms and cafeteria in particular and in the university in general.
- Some graffiti are targeted at attacking a certain group of students which may have potential of conflicts.
- Ethnocentrism in AAU setting is highly marked by an exaggeration of the in-group's position.
- Inaccurate and unfavorable than their stereotypes of other cultures, religious and ethnic groups, cause them to misinterpret the messages they receive from members of those cultures and ethnic groups.
- Problem of stereotype and communication not only results in out-group members but also in the in-group members.
- Students usually face cultural shock at the beginning of their campus life.



- racial, cultural and religious dislikes on campuses are manifested in acts ranging from hateful speech to physical violence
- Conflicts which are due to ethnocentric attitudes among students were observed between two ethnic groups in the year 2010.



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