

## *An empirical analysis of the effects of humor on communication satisfaction and job performance in international joint ventures in Iran*

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the relationships between humor (frequency and effectiveness), communication satisfaction (informational and relational), and employee job performance (task and contextual) in international joint ventures in Iran. Based on a survey of 375 employees and their supervisors in two of the biggest joint ventures in the automotive industry in Iran, the results indicate that the frequency of humor had significant positive effects on contextual and task performance as well as on informational and relational communication satisfaction. In addition, informational communication satisfaction was significantly related to both contextual performance and task performance, whereas relational communication satisfaction was related only to task performance. Finally, informational communication satisfaction mediated the relationship between the frequency of humor and job performance (task and contextual), while relational communication satisfaction mediated the relationship between the frequency of humor and task performance.

**Keywords:** job performance, communication satisfaction, humor, joint venture, Iran

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Numerous studies have highlighted that ~37–70% of all international joint ventures (IJVs) face performance problems (e.g., Pothukuchi, Damanpour, Choi, Chen, & Park, 2002; Meschi & Riccio, 2008). Barkema and Vermeulen (1997) found that issues pertaining to cultural differences may impact IJV performance, highlighting that IJVs typically face many challenges associated with business performance, staffing, communication, human resource (HR) management, and cultural issues, among others. Khorassani (2012) examined the factors influencing the performance of IJVs in Iran and found a high failure rate. It is known that IJVs are likely to face problems in human relations. In addition, Namazie and Frame (2007) considered Iranian managers and supervisors and found that multinational firms, particularly IJVs, are likely to face low productivity and performance. Following Khorassani (2012) and Namazie and Frame (2007), many studies have examined various dimensions of human factors, including humor, communication satisfaction, and job performance. The present study

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investigates this topic because, based on interviews with three Iranian HR managers, failed IJVs are likely to have problems with employee job performance.

This study investigates the relationships between humor, communication satisfaction, and job performance and contributes to the literature in several ways. First, this study considers humor from a fairly straightforward perspective. Thus, the results could provide guidelines for lightening the atmosphere at work. It should be noted that Iranians tend to be not only friendly but also humorous but that they are likely to be serious in the workplace (Ali & Kandlusi, 2010). This study conceptualizes humor based on Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) definition, which considers humor in terms of its frequency and use. Furthermore, few studies have considered humor in the context of organizations in Iran (Kandlousi & Sheykh, 2010). The present study contributes to the literature by addressing these limitations and by considering humor as a two-dimensional construct that can boost employees' job performance in Iran's IJVs.

Second, scholars such as Pearce and Segal (1998) have called for a better understanding of the relationships between communication satisfaction and job performance. When business partners come from different cultures (national and organizational), the underlying cultural inconsistencies in their communication can limit the development of effective business relationships (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). Therefore, communication satisfaction is an important topic for IJVs.

Third, as mentioned earlier, applying humor in a positive manner can facilitate comfortable and effective communication and thus communication satisfaction (Barbato, Graham, & Perse, 1997). The existing studies (e.g., Cascio, 2006) found that when employees make positive use of humor, management procedures, and business performance are likely to improve. In addition, humor can reduce stress among managers and supervisors and enable them to enhance their performance (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by being the first to investigate the mediating effect of communication satisfaction on the relationship between humor and job performance.

The main goal of this study is to close the aforementioned gaps in the literature and investigate the relationships between humor, communication satisfaction, and employee job performance in IJVs in Iran. The next section of the paper provides information about IJVs and employees' job performance, while the subsequent section discusses the research methodology and design. The following section presents the analytical results and the final section concludes the study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### IJVs

To explain the nature of joint ventures, it is important to define the term 'joint' which refers in this context to a separate organizational entity with two or more firms as parent companies (Harrigan, 1985). It is evident that the given definition refers to a legal and governing structure of cooperation. However, some factors are not sufficiently covered by this definition, namely differences in the focus, risks, benefits, and complexities across alliances (Kaufmann & O'Neill, 2007). In this regard, a joint venture can be described as a procedure used to respond to certain business phenomena such as new markets, specific government policies, business capacity, and technology transfer.

Joint ventures have been recognized as an elegant and deliberate choice for various industries, including telecommunications, automotive manufacturing, and service-oriented industries, among others (Adnan & Morledge, 2003). Consequently, an IJV refers to a separate legal organizational entity held by two or more parent companies, provided that the head office of at least one parent company is situated outside the country of origin in which the IJV operates. In this case, this entity is jointly controlled by parent companies that are financially and legally independent of each other (Shenkar & Zeira, 1987).

## Employee job performance

Recent decades have witnessed broader definitions of job performance. This study defines job performance as 'actions and behaviours that are under the control of the individual that contribute to the goals of the organization' (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002: 66). Performance is defined as a set of behaviors with evaluative elements that can be recognized to be positive or negative for an employee. These behaviors can be distinguished based on their effectiveness, which is the impact that they have on outcomes (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). According to Kane (1984), job performance refers to the recording of attained results for multiple examples of completing a job dimension over a certain period of time. In other words, performance is known as the determination of outcome levels obtained (per dimension) within a particular time period.

Researchers have moved away from definitions of job performance in which job-specific tasks represent the only measure of overall job performance. Some researchers (William & Anderson, 1991; Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) have recognized two broad classes of employee behaviors, namely task performance and contextual performance (also referred to as citizenship performance). Many studies have suggested that task performance is the most important feature of work behaviors and that it is recognized in many cases as a synonym for the term 'overall job performance.' However, other studies have well documented the significance of non-task behaviors in overall job performance (Dunlop & Lee, 2004). Task performance is known as the behaviors and activities that maintain an organization's technical core, involve the implementation of technical processes (transforming raw materials into the goods or services of the organization), and preserve these processes. Supplying raw materials, sharing products, and planning and coordinating tasks are some activities in this process (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmitt, 1997).

Contextual performance refers to the personal efforts of employees that are not directly related to their main tasks but are important because such efforts shape the organizational, social, and psychological background to task activities and processes (Werner, 2000). Although task performance has been explained in a more conventional manner in comparison with contextual performance, scholars have started to empirically demonstrate that contextual performance leads to competitive benefits for firms (Witt, Kacmar, Carlson & Zivnuska, 2002). On the other hand, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) verified that contextual performance contributes to organizational efficiency by serving the organizational, social, and psychological mechanisms through which practical and technical core functions are performed. Van Scotter, Motowidlo, and Cross (2000) acknowledged that those employees who follow commands, display initiatives, persevere with hard tasks, cooperate with others efficiently, and voluntarily act on the organization's behalf are more likely to contribute to the organization's goals.

## Humor

Humor has been defined differently by various authors. Smith, Harrington, and Neck (2000: 607) define humor as 'any communication (joke, witicism, etc.) that results in laughter or fun.' Based on McIlheran (2006), humor is an attempt to communicate with others and have a message interpreted as being funny. Lee and Kleiner (2005: 180) defined humor as 'a message whose creativity and verbal skill or incongruity has the power to evoke laughter.' These definitions mostly highlight that the nature of humor is happiness and joy. In addition to the above definitions, Miller (1996) proposed an organizational view of humor and states that humor is a consistent behavior in individuals working in organizations which truly provides an environment of empowerment. When employees use humor, they obtain influence over others that is a type of power in an organizational setting.

Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) is interested in the frequency and effectiveness of humor. The frequency of humor consists of several factors, including the regularity of telling jokes and funny stories (e.g., how often people tell jokes and funny stories) and the possession of a good memory for jokes and funny stories. Here a good memory means that some people can quickly refer to jokes that fit given situations, whereas others are not as adept at this. In addition, some people have the ability to be funny or are naturally funny and interesting when communicating. For example, some people may tell a funny story but cannot make people laugh, whereas humorous people can tell the same story and elicit laughter because they are naturally funny and interesting. In addition, some people have the ability to use funny stories in various situations. More specifically, some people have to wait for a specific situation to be funny, whereas others can be funny in just about any situation. That is, they do not have to wait for a certain occasion to arise. In terms of the effectiveness of humor, some people can make others laugh when telling a joke, whereas others do not have this effect. In other words, the former can tell jokes well. Having this effect on people is likely to make others consider the former as funny. Even when unfunny jokes or stories are told by a funny person, people may still laugh. This suggests that some people are more effective than others in using humor.

### **Communication satisfaction**

According to Hecht (1978), communication satisfaction is generally regarded as an affective response when expectations are met in the process of exchanging messages and is considered to denote a pleasant, satisfying experience. To many researchers in organizational contexts, communication satisfaction can be defined as an outcome of an individual who is satisfied with various features of communication in interpersonal, group, and organizational contexts (Downs & Hazen, 1977; Hecht, 1978; Crino & White, 1981). Clampitt and Downs (1993) and Downs and Hazen (1977) declared that communication satisfaction suggests eight consistent dimensions, namely personal feedback, supervisory communication, subordinate communication, co-worker communication, organizational integration, corporate information, communication climate, and media quality.

Downs and Hazen (1977), known communication satisfaction as instrument developers, recognized eight factors verified in Crino and White (1981) and Downs (1988). Several researchers discovered two dimensions of organizational communication, namely informational and relational (Pincus, 1986; Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990; Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). The present study considers communication satisfaction as a two-dimensional variable including informational and relational communication satisfaction because this classification is best known.

The informational (communication climate, organizational perspectives, and organizational integration) dimension of communication satisfaction refers to satisfaction with organizational content and the exchange of information among employees, supervisors, and other organizational members in the workplace. Informational communication satisfaction focuses on the communication environment, the organizational standpoint, and organizational integration (Goldhaber, Porter, Yates, & Lesniak, 1978; Pincus, 1986; Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990; Gray & Laidlaw, 2004).

The relational (media, horizontal communication, personal feedback, and relationships with supervisors) dimension of communication satisfaction refers to satisfaction with relationships among employees, managers, and other organizational members in the workplace. The relational dimension focuses mainly on relational communication, which reflects the perceptions and attitudes of employees, supervisors, and other organizational members. The relational dimension refers to employees' perception of one another in the workplace and consists of media quality, personal feedback, horizontal communication, and relationships with supervisors (Goldhaber et al., 1978; Pincus, 1986; Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990; Gray & Laidlaw, 2004).

## **Humor and job performance**

In the field of organizational behavior, it is assumed that there is a relationship between employees' positive feelings and their performance (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994; Wright & Staw, 1999). Therefore, considerable attention has been paid to the value of constructs, pertain to positive support, emotions, and especially humor (Luthans, 2002). Hurren (2006) demonstrated that the simple incorporation of humor by school authorities has a significant effect on teachers and students. Humor can improve employees' morale and make work environments more pleasant. Williams and Clouse (1991) stated that humor can be regarded as a 'wonderful addition to an administrative style.' Blase (1984) considered stress or stressful positions as something that can reduce job performance. On the other hand, a pleasant approach to life-related issues, whether personal or professional, can promote an individual's creative potential, reduce stress, and create better living conditions (Blase, Dedrick, & Strathe, 1986). In this regard, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1a: The effectiveness of humor is positively related to the contextual performance of Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 1b: The effectiveness of humor is positively related to the task performance of Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 1c: The frequency of humor is positively related to the contextual performance of Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 1d: The frequency of humor is positively related to the task performance of Iranian employees of IJVs.

## **Communication satisfaction and job performance**

Job performance is an important topic in communication literature (Ehlers, 2003). Like practitioners, management and communication scholars have taken an interest in achieving higher employee performance and satisfaction because these factors can enhance an organization's corporate culture and improve its capacity to meet its goals (Pettit, Goris, & Vaught, 1997). Therefore, organizational endeavors designed to enhance or develop organizational communication may have positive effects on both employees and the organization (Chen, Silverthorne, & Hung, 2006).

Scholars have been interested in organizational communication satisfaction and its relationship to job performance for nearly three decades, although most studies have been subjective and quasi-experimental or have provided meta-analyses (Downs & Hain 1982). For example, Jain (1973) applied a questionnaire-based interview format to examine the relationship between the communication effectiveness of hospital supervisors and their job performance as perceived by their subordinates. Jain's (1973) effectiveness criteria included the supervisor's communication behavior, the frequency and level of supervisor-subordinate communication, employees' knowledge of policies and procedures, employees' communication satisfaction, and the application of nonsupervisory formal communication channels. Jain (1973) found positive correlations between communication effectiveness and job performance; between the frequency and level of communication and job performance; and between the employee's communication satisfaction and the supervisor's job performance. In this regard, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2a: There is a positive relationship between informational communication satisfaction and contextual performance for Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 2b: There is a positive relationship between informational communication satisfaction and task performance for Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 2c: There is a positive relationship between relational communication satisfaction and contextual performance for Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 2d: There is a positive relationship between relational communication satisfaction and task performance for Iranian employees of IJVs.

### **Humor and communication satisfaction**

In the field of organizational behavior, the relationship between humor and communication satisfaction is a new topic of research. Unfortunately, there is little literature to indicate the nature of the relationship between these constructs. However, as humor has been proposed as a type of communication by McIlheran (2006) and because communication is necessary for communication satisfaction, we can propose that humor can be the originator of communication satisfaction of employees in an organizational setting. In addition to the above, previous literature has divided the outcomes of humor into three categories. At the psychological level, the benefits of humor are decreased tension; increased joy and communication skills; increased well-being; and reduced anxiety levels (Ford, McLaughlin, & Newstrom, 2003; Szabo, 2003; Lee & Kleiner, 2005). At the physical level, the benefits of humor can increase the sense of well-being and decrease stress (Sokol, 2002 in Lee & Kleiner, 2005). Finally, at the organizational level, the benefits of humor can be reduced feelings of anxiety and stress at work for employees (Lee & Kleiner, 2005). Therefore, if we look at humor in the context of communication, the positive effects of humor should lead to increased communication satisfaction. In this regard, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 3a: The effectiveness of humor is positively related to the informational communication satisfaction of Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 3b: The effectiveness of humor is positively related to the relational communication satisfaction of Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 3c: The frequency of humor is positively related to the informational communication satisfaction of Iranian employees of IJVs.

Hypothesis 3d: The frequency of humor is positively related to the relational communication satisfaction of Iranian employees of IJVs.

In addition, the discussion suggests that the two dimensions of communication satisfaction (informational and relational) may mediate the relationship between the two dimensions of humor (effectiveness and frequency) and the two dimensions of job performance (contextual and task). In this regard, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4a: Informational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the effectiveness of humor and contextual performance.

Hypothesis 4b: Informational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the effectiveness of humor and task performance.

Hypothesis 4c: Informational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the frequency of humor and contextual performance.

Hypothesis 4d: Informational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the frequency of humor and task performance.

Hypothesis 4e: Relational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the effectiveness of humor and contextual performance.

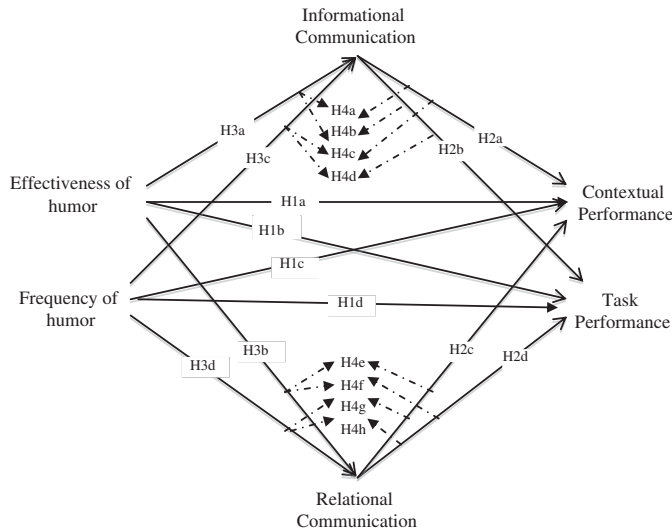


FIGURE 1. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Hypothesis 4f: Relational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the effectiveness of humor and task performance.

Hypothesis 4g: Relational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the frequency of humor and contextual performance.

Hypothesis 4h: Relational communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between the frequency of humor and task performance.

## RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature review, a research framework was developed to examine the relationships between humor (effectiveness and frequency), communication satisfaction (informational and relational), and job performance (contextual and task) for Iranian employees of IJVs (Figure 1). This model suggests that humor influences communication satisfaction and job performance, that communication satisfaction has a positive relationship with job performance, and that communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between humor and job performance.

## METHODOLOGY

### Procedure

The analysis focused on two groups of employees as respondents: subordinates and their direct supervisors. The Set A questionnaire measured humor and communication satisfaction and was completed by subordinates. The Set B questionnaire measured the job performance of subordinates and was completed by the employees' direct supervisors. Both questionnaire sets were distributed with permission from the HR departments of two of the biggest IJVs in the automotive industry in Iran. Data were obtained by distributing the questionnaires to a total of 1,100 potential respondents from a random sample of subordinates and their supervisors. The procedure was as follows: First, the researcher delivered the questionnaires to the HR department, and the HR department provided the

Set A questionnaires with envelopes to subordinates. Then the HR department asked the subordinates to complete the questionnaires, put them in the envelopes, seal the envelopes, and write their names on the envelopes. Through this procedure, the HR department ensured that the responses would be kept totally confidential. Subsequently, subordinates submitted the completed questionnaires (placed inside the sealed envelopes) to their direct supervisors, who were asked by the HR department to complete the Set B questionnaires. Specifically, Set B had to be answered by the supervisor of each specific subordinate whose name was written on the envelope. Then HR attached the completed Set B questionnaires together with the Set A questionnaires and returned them to the researcher. From the 1,100 individuals in both groups (A and B), there were some respondents who returned incomplete responses. Therefore, the matching process and eliminating invalid responses reduced the number of usable responses to 375 sets.

### **Questionnaire and measurement**

The questionnaire consisted of four sections: (1) humor (frequency and effectiveness), (2) communication satisfaction (informational and relational), (3) job performance (contextual and task), and (4) demographic information. Selected measurement items must ensure sufficient content validity. Therefore, to ensure content validity, this study's measurement items were adapted mainly from previous studies. More specifically, the scales for humor were adapted from Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991), while communication satisfaction was measured using 35 items adapted from Downs and Hazen (1977). The measures for job performance were adapted from Williams and Anderson (1991). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

### **Analysis**

The partial least squares technique was applied to analyze the causal relationships between constructs using SmartPLS 3.0 software. The partial least square approach was selected because of the exploratory nature of this study (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013) and a two-step approach was used in the data analysis, as suggested in Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009). The first step involved the analysis of the measurement model, and the second step tested the structural relationships between latent constructs. The two-step approach aimed to establish the reliability and validity of measures before assessing the model's structural relationships.

## **RESULTS**

### **Profile of respondents**

In terms of the demographic profile of the respondents, 5.6% (375 respondents) were aged 50 and over; 25.6% were between the ages of 40 and 49; 44.27% were between the ages of 30 and 39; and 24.53% were 29 or younger. There were more males (246; 65.6%) than females (129; 34.4%). In terms of marital status, the majority were married (70.4%), followed by those who were single (21.07%), and divorced (8.53%). In terms of the level of education, the majority had a bachelor's degree (60.53%), followed by a master's degree (22.4%), and a certificate/diploma (17.07%), implying that most had a high level of education.

### **Measurement model analysis**

The reliability and validity of reflective constructs were assessed. Composite reliability was assessed with respect to internal reliability, which is similar to Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . The composite reliability of all



constructs exceeded 0.7 (Table 1), satisfying the recommended threshold (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) suggested accepting items with loadings  $\geq 0.6$ . All loadings for each scale exceeded 0.6, indicating sufficient reliability for individual items. Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted. The average variance extracted exceeded 0.5 for all constructs, indicating sufficient convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Two approaches were employed to test the discriminant validity of the constructs. First, the cross-loadings of indicators were checked, and according to the results no indicator loaded higher on an opposing construct (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). Second, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion was employed to test whether each construct's average variance extracted exceeded its squared correlation with remaining constructs (Table 2). The results of both analyses indicate sufficient discriminant validity across all constructs.

### Assessment of the structural model

With satisfactory results for the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated. The predictive accuracy of the model was evaluated based on the percentage of the variance explained. According to the results, the model explained 62.1% of the variance in contextual performance, 61.5% in task performance, 9.5% in informational communication satisfaction, and 54.5% in relational communication satisfaction. The predictive relevance developed by Stone (1974) and Geisser (1975) was used as an additional measure of the model fit. This technique shows the adequacy of a model in predicting manifest indicators of each latent construct. Stone-Geisser  $Q^2$  (cross-validated redundancy) was computed to examine predictive relevance based on the blindfolding procedure in partial least square. Based on the guidelines in Chin (2010), a  $Q^2$  value  $> 0$  implies the model to have predictive relevance. In the present study, a value of 0.274 was obtained as average cross-validated redundancy (for all endogenous variables), which is far greater than zero. In summary, the model showed an acceptable fit and a high level of predictive relevance.

Nonparametric bootstrapping was applied (Wetzels, Odekerken-Schroder, & van Oppen, 2009) using 2,000 replications to test the structural model. Table 3 summarizes the structural model from the PLS analysis. The results for direct effects provide support for Hypothesis 1c, Hypothesis 1d, Hypothesis 2a, Hypothesis 2b, Hypothesis 2d, Hypothesis 3c, and Hypothesis 3d but not for Hypothesis 1a, Hypothesis 1b, Hypothesis 2c, Hypothesis 3a, and Hypothesis 3b (Figure 2).

Table 3 estimates eight indirect effects. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013) outlined three steps of the mediation analysis. In the first step, the direct effect is significant if the mediator is not included in the model. Although Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013) suggested the need for a significant direct effect for meditation to occur, some researchers have argued this to be unnecessary (MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). In the second step, the indirect effect is significant when the mediator is included. To estimate the significance of the indirect effect, many researchers have employed Sobel's (1982) test, the major flaw of which is that it requires the normality assumption of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2009), whereas the  $ab$  sampling distribution tends to be asymmetric with nonzero values for skewness and kurtosis (Stone & Sobel, 1990). According to Hayes (2009), tests that assume the normality of the sampling distribution should not be used to assess indirect effects.

Hayes (2009) suggested the bootstrapping procedure as an alternative approach to test indirect effects. The  $t$ -values for both direct and indirect effects were computed through the bootstrapping procedure with 375 cases and 2,000 samples. It should be noted that  $t$ -values for indirect effects were obtained by dividing the indirect effect ( $ab$ ) by the standard error of the indirect effect. The standard error is the standard deviation of repeated bootstrap estimates of the indirect effect. In the third step, the variance accounted for should exceed 20%. Based on Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2013 mediator analysis

**TABLE 1. MEASUREMENT MODEL EVALUATION**

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Factor loadings</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Effectiveness of humor	People usually laugh when I tell a joke or story	0.869	0.916	0.610
	I cannot tell a joke well	0.887		
	People don't seem to pay close attention when I tell a joke	0.761		
	Even funny jokes seem flat when I tell them	0.761		
	My friends would not say that I am a funny person	0.713		
Frequency of humor	I tell stories and jokes very well	0.726	0.934	0.616
	Of all of the people I know, I am one of the funniest	0.731		
	I regularly tell jokes and funny stories when I am with a group	0.994		
	I have no memory for jokes or funny stories	0.753		
	I can be funny without having to rehearse a joke	0.797		
	Being funny is a natural communication style with me	0.749		
	People seldom ask me to tell stories	0.672		
	I can easily remember jokes and stories	0.778		
	People often ask me to tell jokes or stories	0.723		
	I do not tell jokes or stories even when asked to	0.781		
Informational communication satisfaction	I use humor to communicate in a variety of situations	0.775	0.920	0.534
	It motivates and stimulates enthusiasm for meeting its goals	0.735		
	Extent to which communication in the company makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it	0.742		
	Extent to which conflicts are handled appropriately through proper communication channels	0.776		
	Extent to which the people in the company have great ability to communicate	0.611		
	Information about changes in the company	0.720		
	Information about company policies and goals	0.784		
	Information about the government's regulatory action affecting the company	0.618		
	Information about profits and/or financial standing	0.819		
	Information about departmental policies and goals	0.755		
	Information about my progress in my job	0.711		
	Personnel news	0.768		
	Relational communication satisfaction	Extent to which the company's communication is interesting and helpful		
Extent to which our meetings are well organized		0.821		
Extent to which the level of communication in the company is about right		0.761		
Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the organization are basically healthy		0.723		
Extent to which informal communication is active and accurate		0.709		
Extent to which my work group is compatible		0.695		
Extent to which the grapevine is active in the company		0.716		
Extent to which my managers/supervisors understand the problems facing the staff		0.742		
Information about how I am being judged		0.741		
Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas		0.696		
Extent to which my supervisor listens and pays attention to me		0.660		
Extent to which my supervisor offers guidance for solving job-related problems		0.868		
Extent to which my supervisor trusts me		0.873		
Extent to which the amount of supervision given to me is about right	0.631			
Contextual performance	Helps others who have been absent	0.971	0.907	0.586
	Helps others who have heavy workloads	0.760		
	Assists supervisor with his/her work (when not asked)	0.760		
	Takes time to listen to co-workers' problems and worries	0.716		
	Goes out of way to help new employees	0.648		
	Takes a personal interest in other employees	0.777		
	Passes along information to co-workers	0.686		
Task performance	Adequately completes assigned duties	0.977	0.910	0.596
	Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description	0.745		
	Performs tasks that are expected of him/her	0.663		
	Meets formal performance requirements of the job	0.763		
	Aware of aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform	0.676		
	Successfully performs essential duties	0.805		
	Adequately completes assigned duties	0.730		

Note. AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

**TABLE 2. DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS**

	<i>FH</i>	<i>EH</i>	<i>ICS</i>	<i>RCS</i>	<i>CP</i>	<i>TP</i>
<i>FH</i>	<b>0.785</b>					
<i>EH</i>	0.436	<b>0.781</b>				
<i>ICS</i>	0.305	0.173	<b>0.731</b>			
<i>RCS</i>	0.519	0.699	0.233	<b>0.746</b>		
<i>CP</i>	0.379	0.209	0.696	0.415	<b>0.766</b>	
<i>TP</i>	0.683	0.385	0.449	0.542	0.527	<b>0.772</b>

Note. CP = contextual performance; EH = effectiveness of humor; FH = frequency of humor; ICS = informational communication satisfaction; RCS = relational communication satisfaction; TP = task performance.

**TABLE 3. PATH COEFFICIENTS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i>	<i>VAF</i>	<i>Decision</i>
<b>Direct effects</b>				
Hypothesis 1a	EH → CP	0.075	–	Not supported
Hypothesis 1b	EH → TP	0.072	–	Not supported
Hypothesis 1c	FH → CP	0.183*	–	Supported
Hypothesis 1d	FH → TP	0.306***	–	Supported
Hypothesis 2a	ICS → CP	0.661***	–	Supported
Hypothesis 2b	ICS → TP	0.434***	–	Supported
Hypothesis 2c	RCS → CP	0.093	–	Not supported
Hypothesis 2d	RCS → TP	0.248**	–	Supported
Hypothesis 3a	EH → ICS	0.083	–	Not supported
Hypothesis 3b	EH → RCS	0.049	–	Not supported
Hypothesis 3c	FH → ICS	0.311***	–	Supported
Hypothesis 3d	FH → RCS	0.583***	–	Supported
<b>Indirect effects</b>				
Hypothesis 4a	EH → ICS → CP	0.055	0.407	Not supported
Hypothesis 4b	EH → ICS → TP	0.036	0.300	Not supported
Hypothesis 4c	FH → ICS → CP	0.206***	0.465	Supported
Hypothesis 4d	FH → ICS → TP	0.135**	0.230	Supported
Hypothesis 4e	EH → RCS → CP	0.005	0.037	Not supported
Hypothesis 4f	EH → RCS → TP	0.012	0.100	Not supported
Hypothesis 4g	FH → RCS → CP	0.054	0.122	Not supported
Hypothesis 4h	FH → RCS → TP	0.145**	0.247	Supported

Notes. CP = contextual performance; EH = effectiveness of humor; FH = frequency of humor; ICS = informational communication satisfaction; RCS = relational communication satisfaction; TP = task performance; VAF = variance accounted for.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$  (one-tailed).

procedure, the results provide support for Hypothesis 4c, Hypothesis 4d, and Hypothesis 4h but not for Hypothesis 4a, Hypothesis 4b, Hypothesis 4e, Hypothesis 4f, and Hypothesis 4g (Figure 2).

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The empirical results for the relationship between humor and job performance demonstrate that frequency of humor is significantly related to both contextual and task performance. The significant

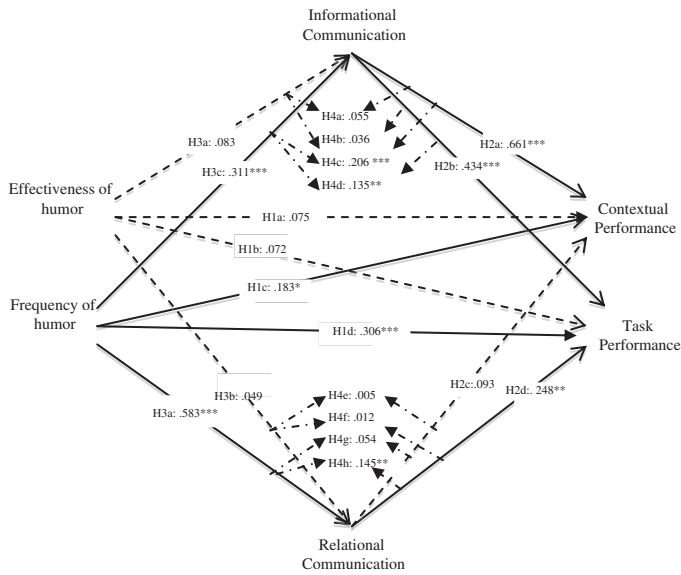


FIGURE 2. PATH ANALYSIS. DOTTED LINES DENOTE INSIGNIFICANT IMPACT. \* $P < .05$ ; \*\* $P < .01$ ; \*\*\* $P < .001$

relationship between humor and contextual and task performance is consistent with the findings of Lovorn (2008), who suggested that humor plays an effective role in enhancing employee performance within an organization. It is also consistent with Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Duncan (1982) who claimed that, when positively applied to work environments, humor has a direct positive effect on job performance. When an employee uses humor during work frequently, he or she fosters a pleasant job atmosphere to accomplish his or her job. Thus, the ability to use funny stories in various situations can help employees to successfully achieve contextual performance. Similarly, the frequent use of humor by employees fosters a pleasurable space to enjoy their work; thus, they can finish their tasks more easily.

Based on the existing literature, it was proposed that the effectiveness of humor would have a positive effect on job performance. However, in the present study, the relationship between effectiveness of humor and job performance (contextual and task) was not supported. The lack of a significant relationship between the effectiveness of humor and job performance may be due to the setting of this study, namely IJVs. Specifically, some IJV employees hailed from different cultures from all parts of Iran. When someone uses humor in Iran, he or she should be very careful about various issues related to the country's cultural and social conditions. There are some old and popular jokes that people from one region make about people from another region. For example, people who live in the capital (Tehran) tell jokes about people who live in Tabriz and other cities, and people from Tabriz tell jokes about people in Tehran and other cities.

These jokes are not favorable and do not have positive effects on the people who are made fun of. Employees who work at IJVs in Iran are from different cities and represent certain local cultures. These employees may not want to make their colleagues unhappy, but when the essence of a funny story they tell is about others' local culture, it can make their colleagues unhappy. When such humor is used, the effectiveness of humor may no longer enhance job performance.

As hypothesized, this study found a significant relationship between informational communication satisfaction and task performance in line with Ehlers (2003), who asserted that job performance is an interesting issue associated with communication. This finding suggests that when employees receive the necessary information for their jobs, they are more likely to perform their tasks better.

This highlights the fact that, in cases where the flow of information on personnel news, employee job progress, benefits, changes, achievements, profits, financial standing, policies, goals, and failures within the IJV is sufficient, employees are more likely to use all of the valuable information and show better task performance.

Further, the results show a positive relationship between informational communication satisfaction and contextual performance. This suggests that the flow of useful information on personnel news, employee benefits, job requirements, organizational achievements and failures, changes in the organization, organizational policies, and organizational goals, as well as the presence of proper communication channels for addressing conflicts within the organization, can help employees boost the level of their useful communication within the organization and can increase their contextual performance.

The results also verify a significant positive relationship between relational communication satisfaction and employee task performance in the context of Iran's automotive IJVs. This suggests that when employees' relational communication satisfaction is fulfilled, they are likely to show better task performance. Therefore, it indicates that the flow of valuable relational communication satisfaction in the organization positively results in employees' task performance. When employees feel that the meetings in the organization are well organized; written directives and reports in the organization are clear and concise; and the relationship between employees and their supervisors/managers is at an acceptable level, they are likely to show better task performance.

Based on the findings of this study, there was a significant positive relationship between the frequency of humor and informational as well as relational communication satisfaction, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies. This result suggests that the positive application of humor is likely to facilitate comfortable and effective communication. In other words, comfortable and pleasant communication is directly related to the positive application of humor (Barbato, Graham, & Perse, 1997). As mentioned in the existing literature, humor is believed to reduce tension and anxiety and increase a sense of health and happiness (Sokol, 2002, in Lee & Kleiner, 2005), communication aptitudes, and joy (Ford, McLaughlin, & Newstrom, 2003). In particular, Lee and Kleiner (2005) claimed that applying humor in a positive manner reduces employees' nervousness and stress. Therefore, when considering humor in a communication context, reinforcing outcomes of humor should facilitate communication satisfaction.

Finally, the results of this study did not find a significant relationship between effectiveness of humor and communication satisfaction (informational and relational). The first reason for this insignificant relationship could be that there are some employees who tell jokes, but they may not be humorous. Therefore, when such people tell jokes, they cannot positively affect other employees. The second reason might be due to the fact that there are some special situations in which people are not ready to hear a joke (e.g., they may be in a difficult financial situation and thus do not want others know about it). In such rare situations, telling jokes may not be acceptable for those facing such problems.

The third reason might be that there are some jokes which are very funny, but these jokes are about impolite issues in Iranian culture. Some employees may enjoy hearing them, but there are other employees who do not and with the latter, the positive effect that the joker aims to reach is not provided. The fourth reason is that there may be both male and female employees in an organization. Some jokes told in the workplace are those which male employees tell about females. These types of jokes might be funny for men, but Iranian women typically do not like them when they are expressed by men. Hence, telling these kinds of jokes in the workplace not only makes the joker look foolish or insensitive but also can create an unpleasant environment that impacts employees' communication satisfaction. This is consistent with the existing literature about Iranian women, who tend to be formal and polite.

The significant effects of frequency of humor on communication satisfaction (contextual and task) as well as job performance have implications for managers in IJVs in Iran. They suggest that managers and decision makers should encourage their employees to use humor in the workplace and convert the

organizational culture to a humorous one to enhance the level of their satisfaction with communication with others. In addition, it suggests that that humor should be used to effectively boost employees' job performance. More precisely, humor should be used at an appropriate time, place, or occasion and by an appropriate individual.

The significant relationship between communication satisfaction and job performance also has implications for managers. It suggests that managers and decision makers should apply an effective communication process to achieve their objectives and to obtain and maintain competitive advantages. The present study asks managers and practitioners in IJVs to focus on the motives that generate positive attitudes among organizational members such as communication satisfaction, which is an easy way to gain a positive attitude on the part of subordinates. Satisfaction with the communication process in an organization can gradually lead to a positive attitude toward the organization's atmosphere, and employees will try to reciprocate to the company by being more fully engaged in their jobs. Therefore, decision makers and managers should be careful not to take things lightly, especially when they are practicing, training, setting goals, and designing a communication path; and attempting to influence employees' work values and plan career paths for their employees.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study possesses some limitations. First, the data were collected from two of the largest IJVs in Iran, which may limit the generalization of the results to non-IJVs in Iran. Second, humor as a major variable is influenced by the culture and cultural background of a firm's location. This may limit the generalizability of the results to other settings. In this regard, future research should consider other countries with different cultures to validate the proposed model. Third, most of the measures of this study were adopted from previous studies in western settings, and it is not clear whether the findings are generalizable to non-western settings. Future research should develop questionnaires suited to non-western environments. Finally, the role of gender (differences between male and female employees) in the relationships between humor, communication satisfaction, and job performance should be examined.

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