Pangasinense faculty in a Kapampangan workplace: A case study on cultural adaptation

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Abstract

Aim: This case study examines how a Pangasinense faculty member adapts to a Kapampangan cultural environment in a university in Pampanga. The study explores the factors influencing cultural adaptation, particularly the inhibiting and supporting forces experienced by the faculty member while working within a predominantly Kapampangan academic community. The analytical framework is based on the cultural adaptation model of Zulueta and De Lara (2002), which identifies key forces influencing individuals' adjustment to new cultural environments.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the respondent's experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on the respondent's challenges, experiences, and coping strategies in adapting to the Kapampangan workplace culture. Observational notes and a review of institutional cultural programs were also utilized to triangulate the data and strengthen the validity of the findings.

Results: The findings revealed three key themes. First, several inhibiting forces such as individual differences, ethnocentrism, culture shock, and cultural distance posed challenges during the respondent's early adjustment, particularly in understanding the Kapampangan language and workplace communication. Second, supporting forces including careful workplace selection, compatible teaching assignments, and institutional orientation and support significantly facilitated the respondent's adaptation. Third, the evaluation of the respondent's cultural adaptation indicates successful integration into the Kapampangan workplace, although language proficiency remains an area for further development.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that cultural openness, institutional support, and workplace collaboration play a crucial role in facilitating intercultural adaptation in Kapampangan academic institutions. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of Kapampangan cultural interaction in professional environments and highlights the importance of cultural awareness and language engagement in strengthening intercultural relationships within the workplace.

Keywords: *Cultural Adaptation, Kapampangan Culture, Workplace Culture, Pangasinense, Intercultural Interaction*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural adaptation in the workplace refers to the process through which individuals adjust their behaviors, communication styles, values, and social interactions in order to function effectively within a new cultural environment. As globalization increases mobility and interaction among people from different cultural backgrounds, workplaces have become increasingly diverse. In such environments, cultural adaptation becomes an essential competence that enables employees to communicate effectively, collaborate with colleagues, and perform their professional responsibilities successfully.

In the Philippines, cultural diversity is reflected in the presence of numerous ethnolinguistic groups with distinct languages, traditions, and social practices. Among these groups are the Kapampangans, who originate from the province of Pampanga in Central Luzon. The Kapampangan language is one of the major Philippine languages and serves as an important marker of regional identity and cultural heritage. Kapampangan communities are known for their strong cultural traditions, distinctive linguistic expressions, culinary heritage, and community-centered values that influence social interactions in both everyday life and professional environments (Cruz, et al., 2026; Cruz & Monforte, 2026; Sanchez, et al., 2026).

Understanding Kapampangan culture is therefore important in examining intercultural interaction within institutions located in Pampanga. Individuals who are not native Kapampangans may encounter cultural differences in communication styles, workplace norms, language use, and social expectations. Such differences may influence how employees integrate into institutional communities and develop professional relationships. In this context, cultural adaptation becomes a critical process that allows individuals from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds to navigate and participate effectively in Kapampangan cultural spaces.

Scholars have long emphasized that culture influences communication patterns, authority relationships, and teamwork dynamics in organizations. Hofstede (2011) explains that cultural values shape how individuals perceive hierarchy, cooperation, and decision-making processes. Similarly, Hall (1976) distinguished between high-context and low-context communication styles, explaining that some cultures rely heavily on shared cultural understanding and indirect communication while others prefer direct and explicit expression. These perspectives highlight the importance of recognizing cultural differences in workplace environments.

In multicultural institutions, cultural awareness and organizational support can help employees adapt to unfamiliar environments. Inclusive workplace practices, mentorship programs, and intercultural training initiatives allow individuals to develop cultural sensitivity and improve communication with colleagues from different backgrounds. Research by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2019) also shows that inclusive workplaces enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational productivity.

Within the context of Pampanga, educational institutions often serve as meeting points for professionals from different Philippine regions. Faculty members who come from other ethnolinguistic groups, such as Pangasinense professionals from Pangasinan province, may experience the process of cultural adaptation when working within a predominantly Kapampangan academic environment. These interactions provide valuable opportunities to examine how individuals negotiate cultural differences, learn new linguistic expressions, and adapt to local workplace norms.

Despite the presence of multicultural academic communities in Pampanga, limited research has examined how non-Kapampangan professionals adapt to Kapampangan cultural environments in the workplace. Existing studies on intercultural adaptation have primarily focused on international expatriates or global teams, leaving local ethnolinguistic interactions within Philippine institutions relatively underexplored. This gap highlights the need to document the experiences of individuals who navigate cultural adaptation within regional cultural settings such as Kapampangan academic institutions.

This study therefore examines the experience of a Pangasinense faculty member who works in a university environment where Kapampangan culture and language are prevalent. Specifically, the research explores the inhibiting forces that create challenges in cultural adaptation and the supporting forces that facilitate successful integration. By examining these experiences, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of intercultural interaction within Kapampangan institutional settings and provides insights that may support cultural awareness and inclusive practices in academic workplaces.

Through documenting these experiences, the research contributes to the broader field of Kapampangan cultural studies by highlighting how language, social norms, and workplace interactions shape intercultural engagement in Pampanga. The study also offers practical insights that may help institutions strengthen programs that support intercultural understanding and cultural integration among professionals working in Kapampangan communities.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Cultural adaptation has been widely examined in studies of intercultural communication, organizational behavior, and multicultural workplaces. Scholars emphasize that individuals entering a new cultural environment must adjust their communication patterns, workplace behaviors, and social expectations in order to function effectively within unfamiliar cultural contexts.

Studies based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions demonstrate that cultural values such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism significantly influence how individuals interact within organizations. According to Cseh Papp and Surányiné Kis (2025), differences in these cultural dimensions shape employees' perceptions of authority, teamwork, and communication styles. These cultural factors play an important role in determining how individuals respond to new cultural environments in professional settings.

Research on cross-cultural workplace adaptation also emphasizes the role of organizational support. Kunasegaran et al. (2016) found that Malaysian professionals returning from international assignments experienced smoother workplace reintegration when organizations provided clear guidance, supportive leadership, and mentoring structures. Such institutional support helps employees understand workplace expectations and cultural norms.

Similarly, Wang, Duisenbayev, and Zhou (2026) examined expatriate faculty members working in foreign universities and found that cultural adaptation significantly influenced job satisfaction and professional performance. Their findings suggest that institutional incentives, cultural orientation programs, and peer support are crucial in helping professionals adjust to new cultural environments.

These studies demonstrate that both individual openness and organizational support play important roles in cultural adaptation. Employees who are willing to learn new cultural practices and organizations that provide supportive environments create conditions that facilitate successful integration.

While these studies provide valuable insights into intercultural adaptation, most of them focus on international contexts or expatriate professionals. Comparatively fewer studies explore intercultural adaptation within local ethnolinguistic contexts such as interactions between Philippine regional cultural groups.

In the Philippines, the interaction among ethnolinguistic communities such as Kapampangans, Pangasinenses, Ilocanos, and Tagalogs reflects the country's rich cultural diversity. Each group possesses distinct linguistic expressions, social norms, and cultural traditions that influence everyday communication and professional relationships. Understanding how individuals adapt to these cultural differences within local institutions provides important insights into Philippine cultural dynamics.

Examining the experience of a Pangasinense faculty member adapting to a Kapampangan workplace therefore contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Philippine cultural interaction. Such studies help document how regional cultures influence communication practices, workplace relationships, and professional integration.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature highlights that cultural adaptation in the workplace is influenced by both individual factors and organizational support systems. Cultural values shape communication patterns, while institutional guidance and inclusive practices help individuals adjust to new environments.

However, most existing research focuses on international expatriates and global multicultural teams. Limited studies examine intercultural adaptation within Philippine regional cultural contexts, particularly within Kapampangan academic institutions.

This gap highlights the need to explore how individuals from other Philippine ethnolinguistic groups adapt to Kapampangan cultural environments in the workplace. By examining the experiences of a Pangasinense faculty member working within a Kapampangan academic setting, this study provides new insights into intercultural interaction within regional Philippine institutions and contributes to the documentation of Kapampangan cultural engagement in professional environments.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the cultural adaptation framework proposed by Zulueta and De Lara (2002) in their work on human behavior in organizations. The framework explains how individuals adjust to new cultural environments through the interaction of two major forces: inhibiting forces and supporting forces.

Inhibiting forces refer to factors that may create challenges in the process of cultural adaptation. These include differences in language, cultural values, communication styles, and social expectations. Individuals entering a new cultural environment may initially experience culture shock, misunderstandings, or uncertainty when interacting with members of the host culture.

Supporting forces, on the other hand, refer to factors that facilitate successful cultural adaptation. These include institutional orientation programs, mentorship, supportive colleagues, and the individual's willingness to learn and engage with the new cultural environment. These forces help individuals gradually develop familiarity with cultural practices and build positive relationships within the workplace.

In the context of this study, the framework helps explain how a Pangasinense faculty member adapts to a predominantly Kapampangan workplace culture. The model allows the researcher to analyze the challenges encountered by the respondent and the supportive mechanisms that helped facilitate cultural integration.

The theoretical framework also guides the research design by shaping the interview questions and the analysis of the respondent's experiences. The study examines how inhibiting forces and supporting forces interact to influence the overall process of cultural adaptation within the Kapampangan academic workplace

Acronyms and Cultural Terms

To assist international readers, key acronyms and cultural terms used in this study are defined below.

- **SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management)** – an international professional organization that conducts research and provides resources on workplace management, human resources, and organizational development.
- **Kapampangan** – an ethnolinguistic group native to Pampanga province in Central Luzon, Philippines. Kapampangans possess a distinct language, cultural traditions, and regional identity.
- **Pangasinense** – a member of the ethnolinguistic group originating from Pangasinan province in the northern part of Luzon, Philippines, with its own language and cultural heritage.

Statement of the Problem

Educational institutions in Pampanga often bring together professionals from different Philippine ethnolinguistic groups. While this diversity enriches academic environments, it may also present challenges as individuals adapt to the cultural norms, language, and social practices of the host community. In particular, non-Kapampangan professionals working in Kapampangan institutions may encounter differences in communication styles, cultural expectations, and workplace interactions.

Understanding how individuals from other ethnolinguistic groups adjust to Kapampangan cultural environments is important in promoting intercultural awareness and inclusive institutional practices. Cultural adaptation involves navigating both challenges and supportive mechanisms that influence how individuals integrate into a new cultural setting.

This study focuses on the experience of a Pangasinense faculty member working in a university where Kapampangan culture and language are prevalent. Specifically, the study examines the challenges encountered during the process of cultural adaptation as well as the supportive factors that facilitate integration into the Kapampangan workplace.

By examining these experiences, the research aims to contribute to the understanding of intercultural interaction within Kapampangan academic institutions and provide insights that may help educational organizations strengthen programs that support cultural awareness and adaptation among faculty members.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To analyze how a Pangasinense faculty member adapts to Kapampangan culture within a university workplace.

Specific Objectives
1. To identify the inhibiting forces experienced by the respondent during the process of adapting to Kapampangan workplace culture.
2. To examine the supporting forces that facilitate the respondent's adjustment to the Kapampangan cultural environment.
3. To evaluate the overall level of the respondent's cultural adaptation within the Kapampangan academic workplace.

Research Questions

This study sought to examine the cultural adaptation of a Pangasinense faculty member working within a Kapampangan academic environment. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:
1. What inhibiting forces does the respondent experience during the process of adapting to the Kapampangan workplace culture?
2. What supporting forces help the respondent adjust to the Kapampangan cultural environment?
3. How can the respondent's overall cultural adaptation within the Kapampangan workplace be evaluated?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to examine the cultural adaptation of a Pangasinense faculty member working within a predominantly Kapampangan academic environment in Pampanga. Qualitative case study research is appropriate for investigating complex social experiences and cultural

interactions within a specific context. The design allows the researcher to explore in depth how individuals interpret their experiences and adapt to new cultural environments.

The case study approach was selected because the research aims to understand the respondent's lived experiences, challenges, and coping strategies while interacting with Kapampangan colleagues and institutional culture. Rather than seeking statistical generalization, the study focuses on obtaining detailed insights into intercultural interaction within a Kapampangan workplace. Through this approach, the researcher was able to document how the respondent navigated language differences, cultural expectations, and workplace practices.

The case study also allowed the researcher to examine patterns of cultural adaptation, particularly the inhibiting forces that created challenges and the supporting forces that facilitated adjustment within the Kapampangan academic setting.

Participants and Sampling

This study focused on a single Pangasinense faculty member employed in a university located in Pampanga where Kapampangan culture and language are widely practiced in the institutional environment.

The participant was selected through purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess direct experience with the phenomenon being studied. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select a participant who had firsthand experience of entering and adapting to a Kapampangan cultural workplace.

The selected participant began working at the university in June 2014 and has extensive interaction with Kapampangan colleagues, students, and institutional programs. These experiences provided rich insights into the respondent's cultural adaptation process within the Kapampangan academic environment.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide**.** The interview guide was designed to explore the participant's experiences in adapting to the Kapampangan cultural environment.

The interview questions focused on three major areas:
- inhibiting forces encountered during cultural adaptation
- supporting forces that facilitated adjustment
- the respondent's overall evaluation of cultural integration in the workplace

The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions and probe for additional explanations when necessary. This flexibility enabled the collection of detailed narratives describing the participant's experiences with language, cultural interaction, and workplace adaptation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth, one-on-one interviews with the selected participant. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and comfortable location within the university to allow the respondent to freely share personal experiences and reflections regarding cultural adaptation.

With the participant's consent, the interviews were audio recorded to ensure accurate documentation of responses. The researcher also asked follow-up questions to clarify statements and obtain deeper insights into situations involving language use, workplace communication, and cultural interaction with Kapampangan colleagues.
The collected data focused on the participant's lived experiences of adapting to a Kapampangan workplace environment, particularly the challenges encountered and the supportive mechanisms that facilitated integration.

Data Analysis

The collected interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis**,** a widely used qualitative method for identifying and interpreting patterns in textual data.

The analysis followed the six phases:
1. Familiarization with the data – The researcher repeatedly reviewed the interview transcripts to become fully familiar with the participant's narratives and identify meaningful statements related to cultural adaptation.
2. Initial coding – Segments of the interview data were coded according to their meanings, particularly statements describing language challenges, workplace interactions, and institutional support.
3. Generating initial themes – Related codes were grouped into preliminary themes reflecting patterns in the respondent's experiences.

4. Reviewing themes – The researcher examined whether the themes accurately represented the data and refined them when necessary.
5. Defining and naming themes **–** Final themes were identified as Inhibiting Forces in Cultural Adaptation**,** Supporting Forces Facilitating Adjustment, and Evaluation of Cultural Integration**.**
6. Writing the report – The themes were organized into a narrative discussion supported by verbatim excerpts from the interview to illustrate the respondent's experiences.

An audit trail of coding decisions and theme development was maintained to ensure transparency and credibility in the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. The participant was provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and expected outcomes before participation.

The participant gave informed consent and was informed that participation was voluntary and that he could withdraw from the study or decline to answer any question at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that personal identifying information was not disclosed in the research report. All interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored and used solely for academic research purposes.

The researchers also maintained cultural sensitivity and respect during the research process, recognizing that the study involves intercultural interaction within a Kapampangan institutional environment.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the findings regarding the cultural adaptation of a Pangasinense faculty member working within a predominantly Kapampangan academic environment. The discussion focuses on the inhibiting forces that created challenges during the adaptation process and the supporting forces that facilitated the respondent's integration into the Kapampangan workplace culture.

1. Inhibiting Forces Experienced During Cultural Adaptation

The findings show that several factors initially influenced the respondent's adjustment to the Kapampangan workplace environment.

Individual Differences

One of the initial challenges encountered by the respondent involved differences in language and communication patterns. During the early months of employment, the respondent observed that the Kapampangan language sounded unfamiliar and difficult to understand. He described the language as having a distinctive pronunciation pattern that differed significantly from his native Pangasinense language.

The respondent gradually learned several commonly used Kapampangan words such as **mekeni** (come here), **nukarin** (where), and **pota** (later). These expressions illustrate how everyday workplace communication exposes non-native speakers to local linguistic practices. The respondent also observed that Kapampangan vocabulary contains noticeable Spanish linguistic influence, which reflects the historical development of the Kapampangan language.

Beyond language, the respondent also observed cultural elements related to food practices within the community. He noted the frequent presence of **sisig**, a well-known Kapampangan culinary dish, in local food stalls. This observation illustrates how Kapampangan culinary traditions function as visible expressions of regional identity within everyday community life. These experiences demonstrate how cultural identity is expressed not only through language but also through culinary traditions that form part of daily life in Pampanga.

Ethnocentrism

The findings indicate that the respondent displayed a low level of ethnocentrism during the adaptation process. Rather than comparing his culture to Kapampangan culture in a competitive manner, he expressed respect for cultural differences and acknowledged that each culture possesses its own strengths and traditions.

This openness toward cultural differences facilitated positive interactions with Kapampangan colleagues and contributed to smoother workplace integration. The respondent's perspective reflects the importance of intercultural openness in multicultural institutional environments.

Culture Shock

Interestingly, the respondent reported experiencing minimal culture shock. He explained that certain aspects of workplace organization and professional conduct in Pampanga were similar to those in his previous work environment. This similarity reduced the level of adjustment required and helped the respondent adapt more quickly to the new cultural setting.

Cultural Distance

Despite the relatively smooth transition, the respondent observed certain behavioral differences in workplace dynamics. For instance, he perceived Kapampangan colleagues as displaying a strong sense of confidence and competitiveness, particularly in professional environments.

While these observations reflect the respondent's personal perceptions, they also illustrate how individuals interpret cultural behaviors when interacting with members of another ethnolinguistic group. Such perceptions highlight the importance of cultural awareness and communication in multicultural institutions.

2. Supporting Forces Facilitating Cultural Adaptation

In addition to the challenges encountered, several factors significantly facilitated the respondent's successful integration into the Kapampangan academic environment.

Careful Selection of Workplace

Before accepting the teaching position, the respondent conducted preliminary research about the institution and its environment. He gathered information from official websites and consulted individuals who were familiar with the university.

This preparatory process helped the respondent develop an initial understanding of the institutional culture and expectations within the Kapampangan community.

Compatible Teaching Assignment

The respondent's teaching assignment also contributed to his successful adaptation. He was assigned to teach Speech Communication and Literature, subjects that aligned with his academic specialization.

This compatibility allowed the respondent to perform confidently in his professional role while gradually learning the cultural context of his new workplace.

Orientation and Institutional Support

Institutional programs also played an important role in facilitating cultural adaptation. The respondent mentioned the presence of a Kapampangan Center, which displays historical materials, cultural artifacts, and educational resources related to Kapampangan culture.

In addition, informal support from colleagues helped the respondent learn Kapampangan words and understand local cultural practices. Daily interactions during faculty discussions and break times provided opportunities for intercultural learning and cultural exchange.

3. Evaluation of Cultural Adaptation

Overall, the respondent demonstrated successful adaptation to the Kapampangan workplace culture. His willingness to learn and maintain an open perspective toward cultural differences helped him navigate challenges related to language and communication.

Language remained the primary area of adjustment, particularly in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary differences. Similar observations have been noted in studies on migrant worker adaptation, where language barriers often become the most significant challenge during cultural integration (Niehoff & Maciocha, 2008).

The respondent's positive adaptation also reflects the importance of collaborative workplace environments. Supportive institutional practices and intercultural cooperation among colleagues contribute to successful integration in multicultural settings (Cramton & Hinds, 2014).

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding cultural adaptation within Kapampangan academic workplaces.

First, the study demonstrates that individuals entering a Kapampangan cultural environment may initially encounter inhibiting forces such as language differences, unfamiliar communication styles, and perceived cultural distinctions. Among these factors, language adaptation remains the most significant challenge for the respondent.

Second, the presence of supporting forces such as institutional orientation programs, collegial support, and compatible professional assignments plays an important role in facilitating successful cultural integration.

Third, the respondent's experience illustrates that intercultural openness and willingness to learn local language and cultural practices contribute significantly to successful adaptation within Kapampangan institutions.

Overall, the study contributes to Kapampangan cultural scholarship by documenting how intercultural interaction occurs within academic workplaces in Pampanga. The findings highlight the role of language, institutional culture, and social interaction in shaping professional relationships within Kapampangan communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Educational institutions in Pampanga may strengthen language awareness initiatives by offering introductory Kapampangan language sessions for non-Kapampangan faculty members to facilitate everyday communication within the workplace.
2. Universities may sustain and expand cultural orientation programs that highlight Kapampangan heritage, including exhibits, cultural centers, and educational materials that introduce employees to local traditions, language expressions, and cultural practices.
3. Future studies may further examine intercultural adaptation among other professionals, including foreign faculty members and individuals from different Philippine ethnolinguistic groups working within Kapampangan communities.

Such initiatives may contribute to promoting cultural understanding and strengthening intercultural collaboration within Kapampangan academic institutions.

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