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## ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA KHOẢNG CÁCH VĂN HÓA LÊN HIỆU QUẢ HOẠT ĐỘNG CỦA NHÂN VIÊN TẠI CÁC CÔNG TY ĐA QUỐC GIA

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### Tóm tắt

Nền kinh tế Việt Nam đang phát triển nhanh chóng và thu hút một lượng lớn sự quan tâm của các nhà đầu tư nước ngoài. Tuy nhiên, hiệu quả lao động ở Việt Nam vẫn là một rào cản đối với các nguồn vốn từ nước khác. Qua nghiên cứu của này, mối quan hệ tiêu cực giữa khoảng cách văn hóa và hiệu quả làm việc của nhân viên tại các công ty đa quốc gia đã được chứng minh. Biến ngành công nghiệp là một biến kiểm soát đối với hiệu quả làm việc của nhân viên. Đồng thời biến khoảng cách thể chế điều tiết tiêu cực đối với mối quan hệ này. Từ kết quả nghiên cứu, các khuyến nghị được đưa ra cho các công ty đa quốc gia bao gồm nên chú ý lựa chọn địa điểm để mở rộng quy mô, nên ưu tiên những quốc gia có văn hóa tương đồng với công ty mẹ để giảm khoảng cách văn hóa. Bên cạnh đó, nhà quản lý có thể giảm bớt tác động của khoảng cách văn hóa bằng việc lựa chọn phương thức thâm nhập phù hợp, các phương thức thâm nhập ít sự kiểm soát và ít rủi ro thấp như cấp phép, liên doanh, hay mua lại và sáp nhập sẽ phù hợp hơn khi tham gia vào các thị trường có khoảng cách văn hóa cao.

**Từ khóa:** Công ty đa quốc gia, kinh doanh quốc tế, hiệu quả hoạt động, nhân viên

### IMPACTS OF CULTURAL DISTANCE ON PERFORMANCE OF EMPLOYEES IN MNCs' SUBSIDIARIES

#### Abstract

Performance of employees is described as the “ultimate dependent variable” in human resource management, enhancing it is the priority of corporations to create long-term competitive advantages. Furthermore, recent literature stated that cultural distance is an important determinant of employee performance. This paper aims to clarify the impacts of the cultural distance between home and host country on the performance of employees in multinational corporations' subsidiaries in Vietnamese market. This study also investigates the moderation effect of career

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experience and institutional distance on the mentioned relationship. Our results support the hypothesis that cultural distance has a significant negative impact on employee performance and this relationship is affected by the industry sector. In addition, the relationship is also moderated by experience and institutional distance. These findings will contribute in helping MNCs improve their employee performance by mitigating the impact of cultural distance through choosing a suitable country and entrance modes to expand.

**Keywords:** Cultural distance, employee performance, MNCs, institutional distance

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## 1. Introduction

Culture has long been proven as a barrier to the internationalization process of multinational corporations (MNCs) in the world (Beugelsdijk, 2018). Companies have to deal with several critical decisions such as entry modes (Tihanyi et al., 2005), international diversification (Grosse and Trevino, 1996), subsidiary management (Roth and O'Donnell, 1996), and human resources management (Morosini et al., 1998). Failure to understand elements surrounding the subsidiary national culture would lead to an adaptation crisis (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). In addition, in order to evaluate the efficiency of a subsidiary, performance of employees is among the most essential aspects when operating business (Brayfield & Crockett, 1955). As a result, more and more scholars have been drawn attention to the relationship between employee performance and cultural distance (Shenkar, 2001; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011; Ahammad et al., 2016).

Additionally, in previous studies, the main concern of the authors was the relationship between cultural distance and job performance (Morosini, 1998; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011). However, the effects of control and moderate variables have not been mentioned (Dikova & Sahib, 2013; Shahzadi et al., 2014; Meyerson & Dewettinck, 2012) in these researches. Therefore, this research aims to observe these variables: whether they have an effect on the relationship and how the impact is as well as whether there are other factors moderating this relationship such as industrial, direct manager's nationality, etc. Because there are studies only mention a relationship but not take into account the external environment, including many factors that can moderate this relationship, which results in impurity in research (Chen et al., 2010). If the result supports our hypothesis, it will be an important contribution for MNCs in Vietnam to find solutions to optimize employee's productivity.

To bridge the mentioned gaps above, this research aims to discover the direct relationship between cultural distance and performance of employees on subsidiaries of multinational corporations. Consequently, this paper gives a firm positive statement on the relation between the two variables. Finally, based on the results, MNCs can take into account the suggested implications when expanding to other territories.

This study uses the standard framework of Perry (1998) which has 5 sections widely applied in academic literature. In detail, section 1 identifies the elements that make the topic worth researching and deliver contexts as well as rationale for the research. Section 2 provides review of current literature on the contexts: Employee performance and cultural distance. From that, a theoretical model with hypotheses was proposed to bridge the gaps of those literatures. It is followed by section 3 which justifies the methodology and the data analysis process used to examine the proposed theoretical model. A report of the results is presented and key findings are also highlighted in section 4. Eventually, section 5 consists of the conclusion with a brief summary

of the paper. It also proposes implications for MNCs when expanding to other countries and discusses limitations as well as suggestions for further research.

## 2. Literature review

Kogut and Singh are the firsts to lay the foundation of cultural distance when they mention the differences in entry modes because of the influence of culture factors (Kogut and Singh, 1988). It was described to be the extent to which the cultural norms in one country have a significant difference when compared to another country (Kogut and Singh, 1988). Using Hofstede's multidimensional culture framework, Kogut and Singh (1988) introduced a Euclidean distance measure to capture cross-country cultural differences in one index. The Euclidean distance index takes the difference on the national score on each of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) and then aggregates these differences in one overall index. Cultural distance is calculated as the distance to a single country. The vast majority of cultural-distance studies follow this approach in operationalizing and measuring cultural distance (Kirkman et al., 2006; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2017).

Culture governs the way of thinking and the soul of humans (Hofstede, 2010). Hofstede identified six major dimensions to explain differences among cultures. These are: (1) Power distance; (2) Individualism and collectivism; (3) Masculinity; (4) Uncertainty avoidance; (5) Long-term orientation; (6) Indulgence.

Employee performance is the process of an individual using his/her own skills, experience, knowledge, personality and abilities (Vroom, 1964; Hunter, 1986) with a view to reach their goals. In other words, Azar & Shafighi (2013) described that job performance is a set of behavioural and functional patterns involving knowledge, skills, managerial competence, conscience and cognitive abilities in the work environment - the same words of Rothmann et al. in 2002. Employee performance has been also described by Motowidlo (2003) as the overall values accumulated by an individual during a specified period of time as discrete pieces of behaviours expected by the organization. Employee's performance is the combining of quality and quantity of the work or task that employees executed to fulfill a specific target (Shahzadi et al, 2014).

The final strand examines the influence of cultural distance on subsidiary performance. Accordingly, the major studies indicate that due to the complexity and uncertainty of doing business in a distant host country, cultural distance is expected to have a negative effect on employee performance. This perspective is proved through the studies of Maseland et al. 2018; Beugelsdijk et al. 2018; Brouthers, Marshall & Keig, 2016; Harzing & Pudelko, 2016; van Hoorn & Maseland, 2016). In addition, there are a number of factors studied that have an impact on employee performance and are influenced by cultural distance as well, such as organizational culture (Kawiana, et.al., 2018; Szydło & Grześ-Bukłaho, J., 2020), cross-cultural training (Shahzadi et al., 2014; Kempf, & Holtbrügge, 2020), interests and reward management system (Lent et al., 1994; Sullivan & Hansen, 2004; Mehmood et. al., 2013) and so on.

Based on previous literature, this research predicts a negative relationship between cultural distance and employee performance in MNCs. With the different approaches mentioned above and with gap not being studied, we hypothesize that:

**H1:** Cultural distance between home-host countries has a significant negative impact on employee performance of MNCs' subsidiaries.

There is a large number of studies on employee age and performance, and they seemed to fail to identify a clear relationship between them. While some research showed a positive relationship between the performance of employees and their age, the others showed a negative one (Ng and Feldman, 2008). Waldman and Avolio (1986), in their meta-analysis with 40 samples in 13 empirical studies, found that age has a positive impact on employee performance at productivity measures but a negative impact on employee performance at supervisor ratings. Thus, we also consider age is one control variable and it is necessary to delete its impacts from employee performance.

According to Wang and Giouvris (2020), each different industry has its own characteristics. And foreign firms belonging to different industries (manufacturing vs non-manufacturing) are differently affected by cultural distance and country risk (Wang and Giouvris, 2020). Specifically, according to Drogendijk and Slangen (2006), the impact of cultural distance and country risk on manufacturing companies is less than non-manufacturing companies. Through this, we come to a conclusion that each industry has its own characteristics and this affects the impact of the independent variables (in this paper, cultural distance).

A number researchers suggest explanations for these findings that women have more sensitiveness and interests in developing relationships with colleagues than their man counterparts (Major and Adams, 1983; Major et al., 1984; Rosener, 1990) or men have a higher level of participation and performance along with the competitiveness than women do (Croson and Gneezy, 2009). These gender differences in abilities, skills, style of work, orientation, participation make each gender employee performance different (Croson and Gneezy, 2009), so that we consider it is also one control variables which we need to remove to purify the relationship between to our independent variables (cultural distance) and employees performance

For the above reasons, the hypotheses are formulated:

**H2:** The relationship between cultural distance and MNCs employee performance is significantly controlled by industry.

**H3:** The relationship between cultural distance and MNCs employee performance is significantly controlled by gender.

**H4:** The relationship between cultural distance and MNCs employee performance is significantly controlled by age.

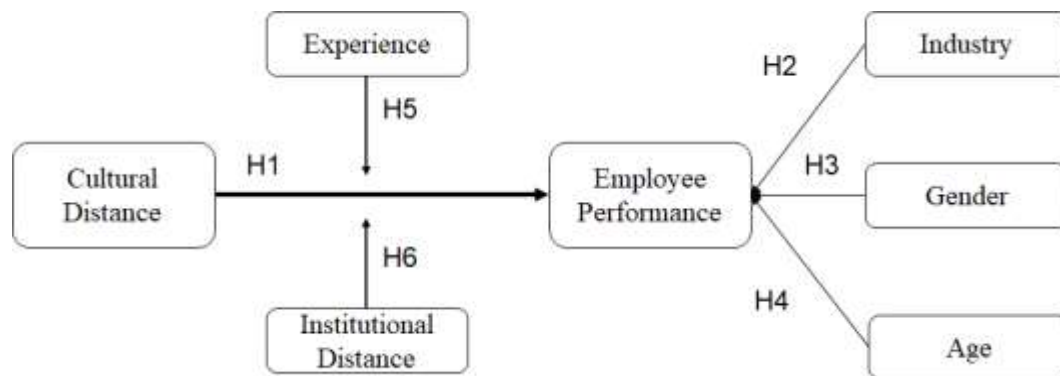
Several theories have laid the foundation of perception about the relationship between job experience and performance. If employees can exploit themselves in experience, they can improve their ability, and in progress influence employees' job performance (employee performance) (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2000). Employee experience is also predicted to be able to enhance performance of employees (Weiss & Bloom, 1990). Both opinions have the same idea that employee performance changes overtime because individuals accumulate job experience.

In this paper, we will only mention the first aspect of institutional distance, scholars have argued that focussing on all three pillars of institutional distance rather provides a broad basis for analysis, thus leading to oversimplification (Zaheer et al., 2012). Differences in the regulative pillar of institution between the home and host countries have influence on how economic actors interact (North, 1990). One of the cultural orientations that helps explain a key difference between the United States and Germany, for example, is the attitude towards uncertainty. In Hofstede's

study (1980) Germany has an uncertainty avoidance index of 67, whereas the United States has an uncertainty avoidance index of 43. That means Americans are more comfortable with uncertainty than Germans such as they will have fewer laws in comparison with Germans wanting certainty and protection from risk. Hence, we hypothesize:

**H5:** Job experience significantly negatively moderates the relationship between culture distance and employee performance.

**H6:** Institutional distance significantly negatively moderates the relationship between culture distance and employee performance.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model

**Source:** Authors

### 3. Methodology

To measure the employee performance, this research uses surveys as the main source to collect primary data from employees of MNCs’ subsidiaries in Viet Nam. Two parts are included in the instrument survey. Section A covers the demographic of both the respondent and the company where he/she works. The objective of this part was to collect the control variables data and demographic information. Section B is a range of criteria to assess employee performance (employee performance), these criteria are based on the past literature. There are 6 criteria with sub-criteria written in statements. These statements will be graded through a 5-point Likert scale. These points in the scale are “Strongly Disagree” (1), “Disagree” (2), “Uncertain” (3), “Agree” (4), “Strongly Agree” (5).

**Table 3.** Sources of questionnaire

No.	Items	Content	References
EP1	Task evaluation	<p>I was able to schedule my job so that it was finished on time.</p> <p>I adequately performed all the tasks assigned</p> <p>I carried out duties that are required of me</p>	Kiker & Motowidlo, 1999

No.	Items	Content	References
		<p>I managed to distinguish between main issues and side issues</p> <p>My work is done with an optimal efficiency</p> <p>I engage in activities that will directly affect my performance's evaluation</p> <p>My attendance at work is above the norm</p>	
EP2	Practice to higher result	<p>get I assumed additional duties.</p> <p>I do not wait for instruction to start my next tasks</p> <p>When available, I took on demanding work duties</p> <p>I actively involved in challenging projects/tasks at work</p> <p>I performed extra duties at work</p>	Arvey and Mussio (1973)
EP3	Innovate to higher result	<p>get I've been trying to keep my job skills and knowledge up-to-date</p> <p>I contributed creative solutions to fresh issues</p> <p>I have been constantly searching for new ways to enhance my results.</p> <p>I learned how to easily overcome tough circumstances and setbacks.</p>	Feirong Yuan and Richard W. Woodman (2010)
EP4	Team's performance	<p>I passed along information to coworkers effectively</p> <p>I actively help other team members with heavy workload</p> <p>I made effort to contribute in the company's result</p> <p>I satisfy in my team's result</p> <p>I confidently persuade and defend my idea</p>	Lecturers, Institute of Management Sciences, Kohat University of Sciences & Technology (2011)

No.	Items	Content	References
		I teamwork with other colleagues very well	
EP5	Counterproductive work behavior	<p>I grumbled at minor problem at work</p> <p>I exaggerated the problem at work</p> <p>I should have paid more attention to the positive aspects of a work situation</p> <p>I talked about the negative aspects of my job with colleagues.</p> <p>I didn't complete the assigned task</p> <p>I am able to refuse doing tasks easily</p>	Koopmans et al. (2014)
EP6	Compare colleague	<p>with I receive a higher bonus/commission due to exceeding kpi than other colleagues with the same position.</p> <p>I work more efficiently than most of my colleague</p> <p>My performance is better than that of my colleagues with similar qualifications.</p> <p>I receive promotion faster than those colleagues who entered the company at the same time with me</p> <p>My overtime hours is higher than the average of that of my coworkers</p> <p>I have better skills in communication and socialization than other colleagues in my department</p>	Bishop (1987)

The current research adopts six dimensions of national culture measurement which is based on extensive research done by Professor Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov and their research teams (2006). In order to calculate the distance in terms of each cultural dimension between the parent firm and its subsidiary in Vietnam, we use the absolute value of the result taken from indicators of Vietnam that subtracts the equivalent cultural dimension indicators of the host country (so that a positive real number of distances will be collected). We shall take the data of each cultural dimension index on the scale of 100 in each country on Hofstede Insight. Before analyzing data, we also normalise all results of distance calculated above with a logarithm (Quackenbush, 2002).

After completing the description analysis, Cronbach Alpha is applied to judge the reliability of a measurement which is set to the internal consistency of this measurement (Hair et al, 2016), all of the variables were gone into exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to investigate the information and propose the number of components expected to represent the data (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2014). Afterward, Confirm factor investigation (CFA) was implemented to assess a confirmatory test of appraisal (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016), which guarantees that the deliberate factors are convincing and consistent to represent constructs related to the hypothetical model (MacCallum and Austin, 2000). The next step is structural equation modeling (SEM) technique to determine the extent of fit of the entire model consisting of all the constructs (Hair et al, 2006). Followingly, bootstrap embedded methods are carried out to define the model fit. After that, multigroup analysis (MGA) is conducted to evaluate whether two or more variables have the same relation in groups. Finally, we test the effect of the control and moderating variables for justifying hypotheses H2, H3, H4 and H5.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sample profile

Our sample profile classification is based on the country of the parent company (which have subsidiaries in Vietnam), industry in which employees work, gender and age of employees, and their experience in the MNCs subsidiary also. The detailed sample descriptions are present in table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Sample profile

	Dimensions	Number of observation	Percent (%)
Home country	Number of home country	21	
	Highest percentage home country	United States	30.28
Industry	Primary	25	11.5
	Secondary	43	19.7
	Tertiary	37	17.0
	Quaternary	113	51.8
Age	From 18 to 24	86	39.4
	From 25 to 34	79	36.2
	From 35 to 44	53	24.3
Gender	Male	92	42.2
	Female	126	57.8
Experience	Less than 1 year	158	72.5
	From 1 to 5 years	51	23.4
	From 5 to 10 years	9	4.1

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics



	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Employee performance</b>				
Task evaluation	1.04	4.93	2.7948	.85954
Practice to get higher result	1.03	4.91	2.8842	.90210
Innovate to get higher result	1.03	4.91	2.6983	.79482
Team's performance	1.16	4.91	2.9964	.87270
Counterproductive work behavior	.98	4.91	2.8107	.79882
Compare with colleague	1.03	5.00	2.8786	.83180
<b>Cultural Distance</b>				
Power distance	.05	3.55	1.2993	.75829
Individualism distance	.00	3.55	1.5482	1.08592
Masculinity distance	.05	3.55	1.4234	.96451
Uncertainty avoidance distance	.00	3.55	1.6089	1.14650
Long term orientation distance	.00	3.55	1.5089	1.05717
Indulgence distance	.00	3.55	1.3998	.88705
<b>Institutional Distance</b>				
Institutional Distance	.59	4.36	2.2608	.76021
<b>Total observations</b>	<b>218</b>			

On the hand, about cultural distance among observations in this paper, the smallest one is 0 and the highest one is 3.55 in Likert scale 5-point and 71 in 0-100 scale. Identically, institutional distance respectively is 11.8 and 87.2 in 0-100 scale or 0.59 and 4.36 in Likert scale 5-point. Details and statistical description are presented in table 1 and table 2.

#### **4.2. Testing measurement model: Confirm factor analysis (CFA) result**

The following step after descriptive statistics analyses is accessing Cronbach Alpha. As introduced in section 3, Cronbach Alpha is commonly applied to assess the reliability of a measurement which determines the internal consistency of this measurement. According to Hair et al. (2016), Cronbach Alpha needs to be above 0.7 and low item total correlations (less than 0.3) and low factor loadings (less than 0.4) must be removed. Applying this model, we can conclude that the measurement constructs meet the reliability requirement as all construct measurements had Cronbach Alpha (0.903) above 0.7 and item total correlations above 0.3.

Next, with the aim of exploring the data and providing information about how many factors are needed to best represent the data based on the statistical method, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Maximum Likelihood Method is carried out. The Kaiser Meyer-Olkin Measure of

Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) were assessed to ensure the appropriateness of the data for EFA. The KMO coefficient was higher than 0.80 and BTS was significant at the 0.05 level, indicating the adequacy of the items (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). The break in the scree plot and extracted eigenvalues (greater than 1) suggested a six-factor solution. The items with factor loadings lower than 0.50 or cross-loaded items were removed one at a time and remaining items were factor analyzed again (Hair et al., 2010).

In this model, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index is 0.871 (above 0.5) and Bartlett's test has  $p < 0.001$  (smaller than 0.05). The total variance elaborated was approximately 60.5% which exceeded the threshold value of 60% and thus suggested that the total validity of the scales was reasonable (Hu, 1999). The EFA results satisfied the requirement for the reliability coefficient of the measurement scales, indicating high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010). Subsequently, the factors suggested from the EFA based on empirical data and the items associated with each factor are similar to that of the proposed measurement model for CFA.

**Table 3.** KMO and Bartlett's Test

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		.871
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	1609.039
	<b>df</b>	66
	<b>Sig</b>	.000

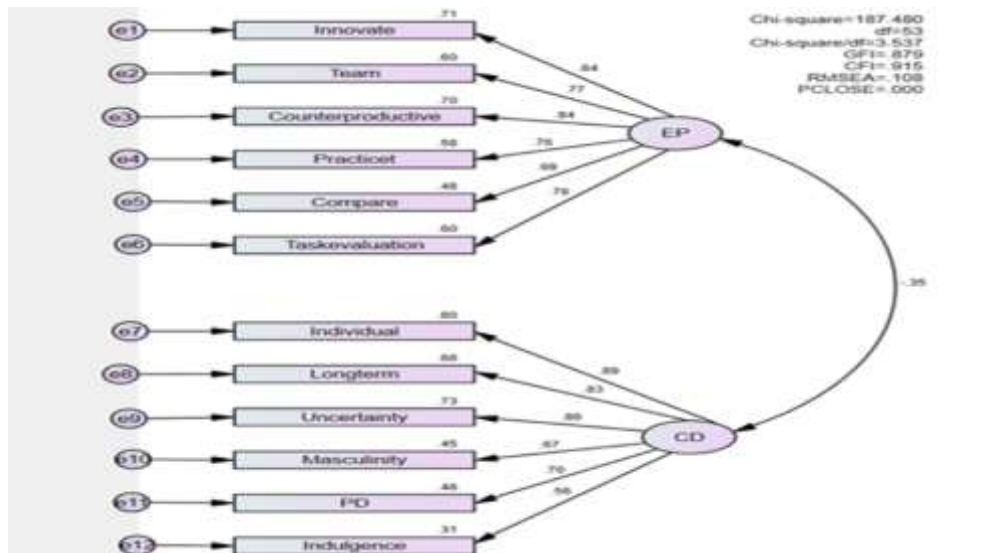
As suggested at section 3, CFA is accessed with a view to providing a confirmatory test of the measurement theory (Hair et al. 2014). In reality, CFA is used to test how well the measured variables represent the pre-specified constructs (variables load on specific constructs). While EFA enables the statistical method to determine the number of factors and loadings, CFA articulates how well our conceptual specification of the factors matches with the actual data. In other words, researchers can apply CFA to confirm to reject the predetermined theory (Hair et al. 2014).

**Table 4.** Total Variance Explained

<b>Total Variance Explained</b>						
<b>Component</b>	<b>Initial Eigenvalues</b>			<b>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</b>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
1	3.998	66.637	66.637	3.998	66.637	66.637
2	.623	10.381	77.018			
3	.428	7.137	84.155			
4	.387	6.456	90.611			
5	.339	5.648	96.259			
6	.224	3.741	100.000			

**Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.**

Specifically, the test for single constructs (Inno, Counter, Prac, Task, Team, Compare) performed a significant fit to the data with all model fit index meeting the requirement  $N=218$ ,  $2/df < 2$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $GFI > 0.9$ ,  $CFI > 0.9$ , and  $RMSEA < 0.8$ , (Hair et al, 2010). However the Goodness of fit is designed for testing the entire model, not an individual construct at a time, therefore it is poor practice to evaluate the measurement model fit through a separate analysis for each construct instead of one analysis for the entire model (Hair et al, 2014).

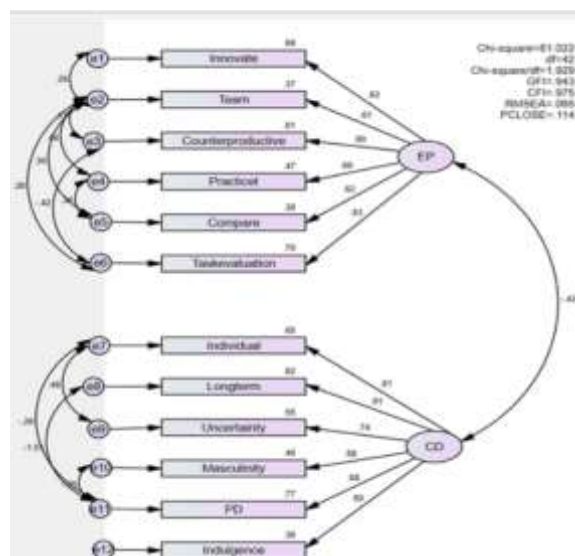


**Figure 3.** Initial CFA

( $\chi^2 = 187.480$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 3.537$ ;  $DF = 53$ ;  $N=218$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $GFI = 0.879$ ;  $CFI = 0.915$  and  $RMSEA = 0.108$ )

The model fit index told that the measurement model fit did not fit the data well. The 2/df and GFI indicators do not meet the requirement of Hair et al. (2010).

Therefore, model diagnostics, namely path estimates, standardized residuals, and modification indices were employed to improve the model fit (Hair et al. 2006). The final result is reported in the figure below:



**Figure 4.** Final CFA

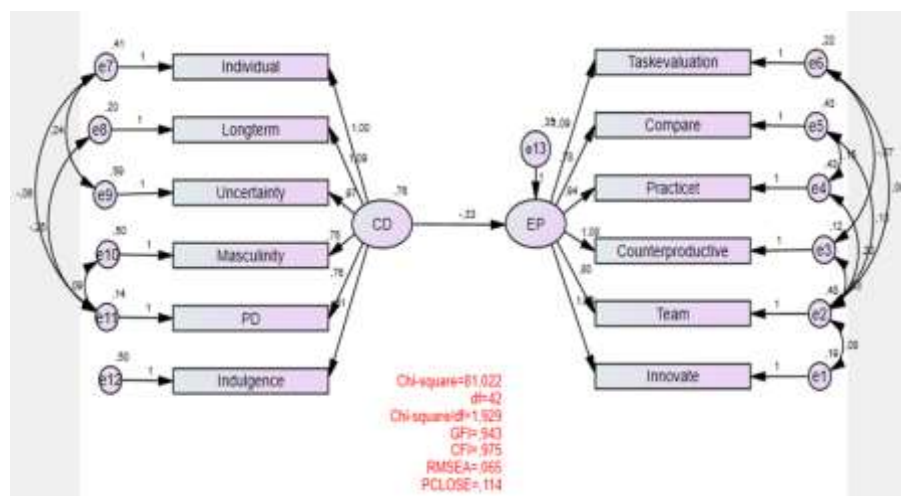
( $\chi^2 = 81.022$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 1.929$ ;  $DF = 42$ ;  $N=218$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $GFI = 0.943$ ;  $CFI = 0.975$  and  $RMSEA = 0.114$ ).

After modification, both GFI and CFI exceeded the 0. thresholds while 2/df, p, RMSEA are all under the thresholds required by Hair et al, 2010.

In conclusion, these results above of the model fit and construct validity present an appropriate measurement model (which meets all the requirements). The measurement model, therefore, is acceptable for hypothesis testing step.

#### 4.3. Hypotheses testing results

The following figure illustrates the SEM result:



**Figure 5.** SEM

According to the CFA outcome, statistic of maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) of estimating the parameters of a probability distribution by maximizing a likelihood function (Myung, I. J., 2003), so that under and specify the thesis structural model. Consequently, these control variables: Gender (female or male), experience (work longevity) and industry (a dummy variable) are demonstrated. In overall, not only does the index meet the acceptable benchmark (according to Bauldry, 2015 and Brett, 2010, acceptable benchmark should be above 0.8) but it also qualifies for a well fit model (above 9.0) (Hair et al, 2014):  $CFI=0.975$ ,  $GFI=0.943$ .

**Table 5.** Regression Weights of the sample

Dependent variables			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p	Result
EP	<---	CD	-,326	,053	-6,205	***	Supported
EP5	<---	EP	1,084	,077	14,032	***	
EP2	<---	EP	,938	,083	11,316	***	
EP1	<---	EP	,777	,079	9,842	***	
EP4	<---	EP	,970	,059	16,401	***	
CD3	<---	CD	,748	,072	10,458	***	

Dependent variables			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p	Result
CD4	<---	CD	,763	,066	11,499	***	
CD1	<---	CD	1,085	,086	12,689	***	
CD2	<---	CD	,803	,138	5,808	***	
EP3	<---	EP	1,000				
EP6	<---	EP	1,093	,079	13,903	***	
CD5	<---	CD	1,000				
CD6	<---	CD	,605	,063	9,670	***	

**Table 6.** Standardized Regression Weights and Squared Multiple Correlations

Dependent variables		Estimate		Variables		Estimate	
EP	<--- CD	-,432		EP		,187	
EP5	<--- EP	,897		CD6		,357	
EP2	<--- EP	,688		CD1		,766	
EP1	<--- EP	,617		CD3		,460	
EP4	<--- EP	,741		CD4		,549	
CD3	<--- CD	,679		CD5		,819	
CD4	<--- CD	,875		CD2		,652	
CD1	<--- CD	,835		EP1		,697	
CD2	<--- CD	,608		EP6		,381	
EP3	<--- EP	,832		EP2		,473	
EP6	<--- EP	,905		EP5		,805	
CD5	<--- CD	,807		EP4		,369	
CD6	<--- CD	,597		EP3		,692	

Within the model, the negative impacts of cultural distance on employee performance in MNC's subsidiary have been confirmed. To be specific, the Regression Weights index proves that there is a meaningful relationship between cultural distance and employee performance ( $p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, the estimates index of this table also demonstrates the negative relationship ( $< 0$ ). As such, hypotheses H1 (Cultural distance between home-host country has a significant negative impact on employee performance of MNC's subsidiary) is accepted.

We use the Standardized Regression Weights table to assess the impact level of the independent variables (cultural distance) on the dependent variable (employee performance). The table indicates that by increasing or decreasing one standard deviation in the cultural distance

variables, the employee performance would react in the opposite direction with a 0,432 standard deviation change. The R-Squared index ( $R^2 = 0,187$ ) shows that 18.7% of the variance of the employee performance is explained by the cultural distance.

#### 4.4. Robustness check (Moderation analysis)

Robustness check is used to define the model fit and there are many methods to conduct it. In this paper, we test the robustness of the model by using bootstrap method. The result of Bias/SE-Bias is 1 and it is less than 1.96, which means the using model is optimal to represent the relationship of cultural distance and EP. Details are represented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Bootstrap results

Parameter			SE	SE-SE	Mean	Bias	SE-Bias
EP	<---	CD	.062	.001	-.325	.001	.001
Counterproductive	<---	EP	.091	.001	1.089	.005	.002
Practicet	<---	EP	.080	.001	.939	.000	.001
Compare	<---	EP	.076	.001	.778	.002	.001
Uncertainty	<---	CD	.064	.001	.972	.002	.001
Masculinity	<---	CD	.084	.001	.751	.003	.002
PD	<---	CD	.077	.001	.766	.003	.001
Taskevaluation	<---	EP	.090	.001	1.088	.003	.002
Team	<---	EP	.157	.002	.805	.003	.003
Innovate	<---	EP	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000
Longterm	<---	CD	.075	.001	1.100	.007	.001
Individual	<---	CD	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000
Indulgence	<---	CD	.066	.001	.607	.002	.001

#### 4.5. Multigroup covariances

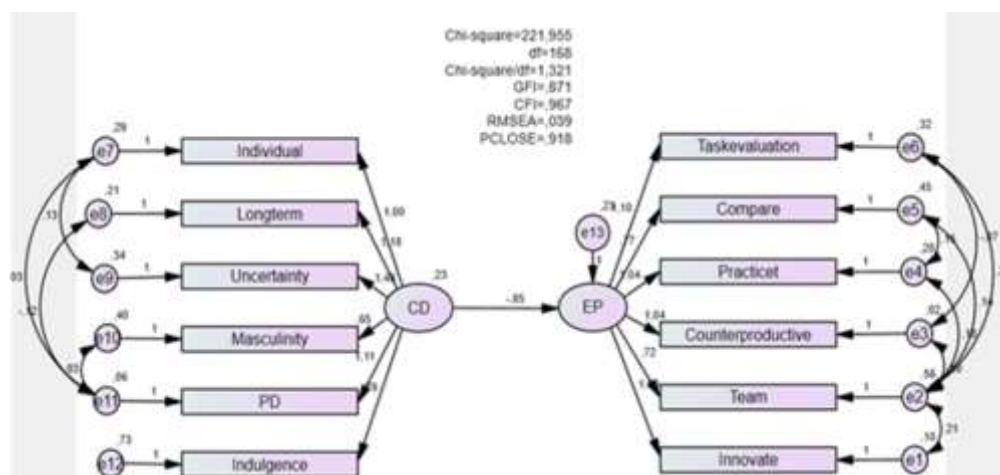
**Table 8.** Control effect of gender, age and industry on employee performance in subsidiaries results

Value	Control effect of gender		Control effect of age		Control effect of industry	
	Chi-square	df	Chi-square	df	Chi-square	df
Constrained model	151,461	85	228,340	128	232,436	171
Free model	151,461	84	225,299	126	221,955	168

<b>Difference</b>	1,067	1	3,041	2	10,481	3
<b>P-value</b>	0,3016		0,2186		0,01489	

With regard to control variables, a multigroup structural equation modeling approach was used to compare gender, industry and age on the relationship of cultural distance and employee performance. The empirical results revealed that correlation between gender ( $p=0.3016>0.05$ ), age ( $p=0.02186>0.05$ ) and employee performance appears to be not supported ( $p=0.858>0.05$ ). Therefore, this study does not accept H3 (the relationship between Cultural distance and MNCs Employee performance is significantly controlled by gender) and H4 (the relationship between Cultural distance and MNCs Employee performance is significantly controlled by age).

On the other hand, p-value of industry as a moderating variable is 0.034 ( $p<0.05$ ). Hence, this study chooses the free model to read the results because of the higher compatibility. In conclusion, industry has a positive influence on performance of employees in MNC's subsidiary which support hypothesis H2 (the relationship between Cultural distance and MNCs Employee performance is significantly controlled by industry). In detail, the difference when using industry as a control variable is shown and interpreted below.



**Figure 6.** Free model of the relationship between Cultural distance and MNCs Employee performance with respect to industry as a control variable

**Table 9.** Multigroup model result when control variable of industry is added

Dependent variables	Industry 1		Industry 2		Industry 3		Industry 4	
	SRW value	p	SRW value	p	SRW value	p	SRW value	p
EP ← CD	-,651	,006	-,389	,026	-,620	***	-,358	***
EP5 ← EP	,980	***	,946	***	,850	***	,922	***
EP2 ← EP	,779	***	,480	,002	,872	***	,651	***
EP1 ← EP	,582	***	,460	,002	,779	***	,605	***

Dependent variables	Industry 1		Industry 2		Industry 3		Industry 4	
	SRW value	p	SRW value	p	SRW value	p	SRW value	p
EP4 ← EP	,774	***	,708	***	,669	***	,762	***
CD3 ← CD	,440	,058	,807	***	,844	***	,614	***
CD4 ← CD	,912	***	,861	***	1,014	***	,830	***
CD1 ← CD	,777	***	,876	***	,812	***	,909	***
CD2 ← CD	,516	,006	,418	,092	,896	***	,524	,005
EP3 ← EP	,889		,667		,995		,793	
EP6 ← EP	,776	,003	,939	***	,838	***	,941	***
CD5 ← CD	,670		,757		,793		,814	
CD6 ← CD	,409	,050	,696	***	,703	***	,580	***
Squared multiple Correlation (R <sup>2</sup> )	,423		,151		,385		,128	

According to the multigroup structural equation modeling results, industry operates primary activities ( $p=0,06>0.001$ ) and secondary activities ( $p=0,026>0.001$ ) seems not subjected to the impact of cultural distance. It can be explained that primary industry which includes agriculture, forestry; fishing and mining (Kelton et al., 2008; Dalziel, 2007) has the characteristic of heavy workload with very little need of creativity to fulfil the task (Yletyinen et al., 2019). Employees in this type of industry need to strictly follow the procedure so that they could harvest the best cereal crop or catch the biggest fish in the sea, ect. (Tukel & Rom, 1998). This leads to a standardized procedure applying for everyone in the corporation. Eventually, when everyone knows what they need to do thoroughly. Their performances are no longer affected by cultural distance. The same reason can be referred to secondary industry (construction and manufacturing activities), where standardization is the core key to operate effectively. Another reason may be derived from the small amount of respondents collected. Lacking of sufficient samples can lead to failure in getting the real insights through the data (Morse, 2000).

As for industries operating tertiary activities and quaternary activities, employee performance in subsidiaries of the two industries depends heavily on cultural distance. The R-squared index of the correlation in industry type 3 is higher than the constraint model,  $R^2=0,385$  which means that 38.5% changes in the variance of the employee performance is explained by the cultural distance in the tertiary industry. Quaternary industry saw a smaller R-squared index compared to industry type 3. 12.8% of changes in variance of employee performance is explained by the cultural distance ( $R^2=0,128$ ) in industry type 4.

#### 4.6. Moderation analysis



**Table 10.** Interaction between cultural distance and employee performance when adding institutional distance to the model

Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
ZEP $\leftarrow$ ZCDxID	-.200	.062	-3.225	.001
ZEP $\leftarrow$ ZCD	.337	.118	2.853	.004
ZEP $\leftarrow$ ZID	1.012	.076	13.277	***

**Table 11 & 12.** Standardized Regression Weights and Squared Multiple Correlations when adding institutional distance to the model

Standardized Regression Weights Estimate			Squared Multiple Correlations Estimate	
ZEP	$\leftarrow$ ZCDxID	-.351	ZCDxID	.000
ZEP	$\leftarrow$ ZCD	.337	ZCD	.000
ZEP	$\leftarrow$ ZID	1.012	ZCDxID	.000
			ZEP	.680

To test the hypothesis that clarify impact of cultural distance on employee performance and more specifically whether work experience and institutional distance moderate the above relationship, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. When the interaction term between institutional distance was added to the regression model, which accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in employee performance evaluation,  $\Delta R^2 = 0,187$ ,  $p = 0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ),  $b = -0.351$ . Examination of the interaction plot showed a diminishing effect that as institutional distance between the home and host country increased, their performance decreased in that subsidiary. The higher the institutional distance presented, the lower effectiveness of the employee performance and vice versa. Therefore, the results of interaction analysis of moderate effects of institutional distance support hypothesis H6.

**Table 13.** Interaction between cultural distance and employee performance when adding work experience to the model

Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
ZEP $\leftarrow$ ZEXP	.174	.141	1.235	.217
ZEP $\leftarrow$ ZCDxEXP	-.157	.219	-.714	.475
ZEP $\leftarrow$ ZEXP	-.254	.166	-1.527	.127

In the meanwhile, results show that there is no significant effect of work experience in moderating the main relationship. When the interaction term between work experience was added to the regression model, the main relation remained substance. Examination of the interaction plot

showed an enhancing or decreasing effect of work experience ( $p=0.732>0.05$ ) shows no changes in the relation of cultural distance and employee performance ( $p = 0,0217, p > 0,05$ ). Therefore, the results of interaction analysis of moderate effects of institutional distance and work experience in hypotheses H5 are not accepted. However, by not changing the impact of cultural distance on employee performance when adding these elements into the regression model, the result strengthens the relationship between cultural distance and employee performance.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1. Result summary**

The existing literature of MNC internationalization recognizes the strategic importance of cultural distance in employee performance; however the topic is still under debate. Acknowledge the gap, this dissertation is carried out to answer the question “What is the impact of cultural distance between home and host country on performance of employees in MNC’s subsidiaries?”.

In short, to investigate the relationships between cultural distance of host and home country with employee’s performance, an in-depth literature review is conducted. Accordingly, the conceptual model is established with three hypotheses below:

H1: Cultural distance between home-host countries has a significant positive impact on employee performance of MNCs’ subsidiaries.

H1: Cultural distance between home-host countries has a significant negative impact on employee performance of MNCs’ subsidiaries.

H2: The relationship between Cultural distance and MNCs Employee performance is significantly controlled by Industry

H6: Institutional distance significantly negatively moderates the relationship between culture distance and employee performance

Overall the result indicates that the hypothesis mentioned above is acceptable. In other words, cultural distance has remarkable impacts on performance of employees in MNC. Particularly, cultural distance affects employee’s performance in MNC’s subsidiaries in a negative trend. Furthermore, Industry is a significant control variable in this relationship. And institutional distance moderates negatively to the relationship between cultural distance and employee performance. This result is consistent with the dominant prior research related to these contexts.

### **5.2. Theoretical contributions**

Firstly, all previous studies have been done in leading developed countries (mostly are the United States, Japan and the European Union where multinational companies are headquartered according to Kim & Park, 2014) and subsidiaries of MNCs there. This paper is conducted in the context of subsidiaries in Vietnamese, a developing country, which contribute to the study of CDs and their effects to be more comprehensive.

Secondly, there is a fact that cultural distance's impact is positive or negative on the global operations of multinationals is still under arguments. Some believe that cultural distance has a negative impact on most of these activities, others believe that these effects are positive, while the rest think that cultural distance has no impact at all or that these effects are declined (Stöttinger and Schlegelmilch, 1998; Mitra and Golder, 2002; Sethi et al., 2003). By affirming the negative

impact of cultural distance on employee performance, this study contributes to give more points and evidence to resolve the arguments above.

Thirdly, studying the factors affecting employee performance but not eliminating the effects of the control variable may be the reason for the inconsistent results of these studies (Dikova & Sahib, 2013; Shahzadi et. al., 2014; Meyerson, & Dewettinck, 2012). Accordingly, this paper uses the multigroups method to remove these noises from the measurement results, making conclusions more accurate, then contributing to explain the current inconsistent results.

Finally, by incorporating moderating variables and controlled variables in one model, this paper contributes to the development of these quantitative methods which are commonly used (Wu & Zumbo, 2007). The incorporation of moderators and controllers in the model also contributes to clarify the relationship of cultural distance and employee performance as well as the effects of other factors on this relationship.

### ***5.3. Implications***

From the paper and literature review, the following section provides some implications for management in multinational corporations. As a result of the current research sample, the suggestion focuses on how to mitigate the impact of cultural distance so that the employee can work more efficiently.

Overall, MNCs should pay attention to cultural distance, especially MNCs that operate in the tertiary and quaternary industry, to achieve the best outcome when expanding to a new international market. Firstly, cultural distance has a significant negative impact on employee performance; therefore, worsening the outcome of organization. It is advised that when choosing a location to operate a new subsidiary, the priority should be placed on those countries that have similar culture to the headquarters to reduce the cultural distance. However, after considering all advantages and disadvantages of entering a new market among other available options, under the circumstances of having no choice but to enter a country with high cultural distance, managers can reduce the negative impact of cultural distance by choosing the right entry modes.

Gatignon and Anderson (1988) stated that MNEs may require greater flexibility when the cultural distance between the home and host country is high. Therefore, modes of entry with low control and low risk, such as licensing, joint venture, merger and acquisition are preferred when it comes to enter high cultural distance markets (Brouthers and Brouthers, 2003). These modes allowed corporations to leverage the domestic firms' experience, network of customers, suppliers and distributors (Brouthers & Hennart 2007). It is crucial to keep in mind that cooperating with local partners makes MNCs' subsidiaries exposed to a threat of getting in conflict with local stakeholders (Li & Shenkar, 1997). While licensing, joint venture, merger and acquisition can help MNC to minimize the negative impact of cultural distance (Brouthers and Brouthers, 2003), when expanding and growing to a certain level, MNCs must take full control of the business in order to standardize the image and optimal the business performance (Hennart and Reddy, 1997). One way to adapt better in this state is to put more effort into enhancing the efficiency of the operational system. One outstanding example can be mentioned is Toyota, Monden (2011) described Taiichi Ohno Toyota as a genius by inventing the Toyota Production System and Lean manufacturing. By standardizing and automating the manufacturing with constant improvement the process, Toyota factories are placed widely all over the world and yet they still grow rapidly without getting into

conflict with other stakeholders in the host country (Spear & Bowen, 1999). In conclusion, corporations should carefully take into account different aspects to choose the suitable strategy for operating in a high cultural distance country.

On the other hand, several studies found a positive effect of cultural distance on the performance of the subsidiary in general (Morosini et al., 1998). Managers can use this point of view to leverage the potential benefit of learning from the host counterpart. This increases the competencies, capabilities and even ideas for creative decision making situations which eventually contribute to new competitive advantages for the parent corporation.

In summary, acknowledging the critical impact of cultural distance on performance of employees, MNCs should carefully consider the difference between the MNCs home nationality and Vietnam. In case Vietnam is so far the best option, having considered all aspects including policy, economic distance, and other variables, high cultural distance MNCs with Vietnam should have action plans to mitigate the impact with the above suggestion.

#### ***5.4. Limitations and suggestions for future research***

Due to lack of time and resources, this paper is not without its limitations that should be taken into consideration for further studies in the future.

First of all, even though the sample is representative of employee performance in MNCs in Vietnam context, the modest sample size presents some problems regarding the power of statistical analysis. According to Bryman & Bell (2015), to achieve random samples for conducting research is a popular problem of research. Furthermore, although this paper also investigates employee performance in different sectors, the data from the services sector contributes the most to the collected data. Therefore, future studies may repeat the findings of this study on a larger sample of the same population. And reducing the generalisability for service industries and diversifying the sample with a variety of sectors should be made to ensure the analysis's results.

Regarding employee performance scale, we want to concede that our study is based only on self-report measures and there are differences according to the rater (Adler et al., 2016). Thus, further research should analyse whether our findings are replicated with different raters, such as supervisor or peers. We also suggest the study of content validity of the questionnaire applying some coefficients such as Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio and Aitken's (1980) coefficients to give more evidence about its fit to the performance domain.

Finally, the current paper applies the cultural distance of Hofstede (2010) which is usually employed in most research using cultural distance for analysis. Based on this dimension, the paper can achieve a comprehensive evaluation of cultural distance on employee performance. However, there is not enough measurement of cultural distance between Vietnam and some countries, such as Vietnam and Cambodia. Future researchers may put more effort to utilise more specific indicators to use a variety of cultural distance measurements to gain a more comprehensive consideration.

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