High-Speed Railway Project of a Chinese State-Owned Enterprise in Indonesia: A Cross-Cultural Management Assessment

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ABSTRACT: This study examined cross-cultural management in a diverse organization. Employees (varying in age, sex, background, etc.) disagreed on the company's cultural competence, particularly in communication, trust, and leadership. Further analysis revealed discrepancies in communication styles, values, business practices, and navigating regulations. Interestingly, age seemed to influence how employees viewed these issues. While cultural intelligence, communication, and open-mindedness on their own didn't necessarily improve specific areas, a more positive and collaborative work environment with increased trust did bridge cultural divides. Based on these findings, the study proposes a comprehensive Cross-Cultural Management Plan including diversity training, improved communication initiatives, leadership development focused on inclusivity, and activities fostering a positive workplace culture. This plan aims to address the identified challenges and create a more inclusive and successful organization.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural management, cultural diversity, cultural competence, organizational challenges, strategic improvement plan

I. INTRODUCTION

In a globalized world, cross-cultural management, encompassing diverse cultural values and practices (Adler & Aycan, 2018), is crucial for business success. Individual (e.g., communication styles), organizational (e.g., training programs), and environmental factors (e.g., societal norms) (Adler, 2015) influence cross-cultural interactions. The Jakarta Bandung HSR project exemplifies this, as effective management of cultural differences between Indonesian and Chinese teams is critical for project achievement. This research, drawing on the author's experience, highlights the importance of cross-cultural management for Chinese enterprises operating in new geographic contexts.

Cross-cultural management (CCM) is essential for international projects, especially high-speed rail construction, despite limited research in this specific context. This study on an Indonesian high-speed railway project proposes four key CCM factors: building trust, establishing a shared vision, effective cross-cultural communication, and culturally sensitive conflict resolution. The study emphasizes understanding cultural differences, highlighting the contrast between Chinese collectivism and Indonesian individualism to tailor effective CCM strategies.

This study aimed to investigate the intricate role of cross-cultural management in the success of the high-speed railway project undertaken by a Chinese enterprise in Indonesia,

focusing on the specific mechanisms and strategies employed to effectively bridge cultural gaps, foster harmonious collaboration, and navigate the complexities of managing a multicultural workforce within this transnational project context.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How may the profile of the respondents be described in terms of nationality, age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, & number of years working on the project?

2. How may cross-cultural management be described in terms of cultural intelligence, communication, open-mindedness, environment, trust and collaboration, and support from leadership?

3. How may the challenges in cross-cultural management of a high-speed railway system be described in terms of differences in communication styles, differences in cultural values, differences in business practices, language barriers & regulatory and legal framework?

4. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the factors affecting cross-cultural management?

5. Is there a significant relationship between the factors affecting cross-cultural management and the difficulties encountered in cross-cultural management in the high-speed railway project?

6. What cross-cultural management improvement plan may be formulated based on the findings of this study?

II. METHODS

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design which included quantitative data relevant to the study. A descriptive correlational research design is a type of research design that is used to describe the relationship between two or more variables without making any claims about cause and effect (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A. Locale of the Study

This study examines the cross-cultural management of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway (HSR) project in Indonesia, the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. Constructed by a Chinese-Indonesian consortium led by China Railway International (CRIC), the 142.3 km line will significantly reduce travel time between the two cities. Indonesia's rich cultural diversity presents both opportunities (innovation, creativity) and challenges (communication gaps, cultural sensitivities) for cross-cultural management. Additionally, the evolving regulatory landscape necessitates constant adaptation for businesses to operate smoothly.
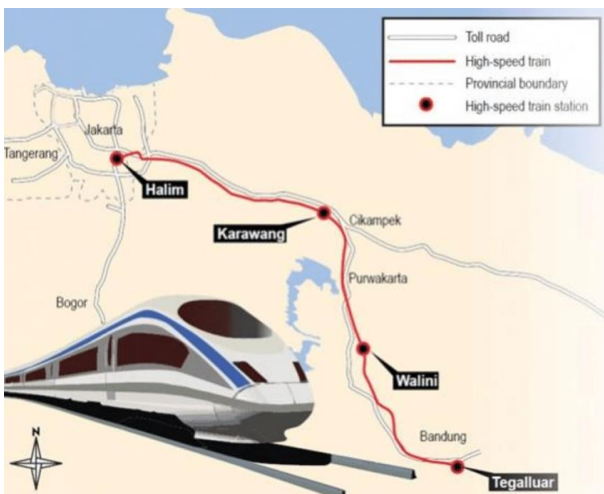
Figure 1. High-Speed Railway Project

B. Respondents

The respondents of the study consisted of 128 employees of the high-speed railway project. They were selected through random sampling.

C. Data Gathering Instrument

The instrument was researcher-made and was designed in three parts. The first part gathers respondents' profiles (age, education, etc.). The second part evaluates respondents' cultural intelligence (CQ), communication effectiveness, and open-mindedness. The third part surveys challenges faced in cross-cultural communication, business practices, etc. It was validated and tested for reliability. The computed Cronbach's alpha of the instrument was 0.856 which signifies a robust level of internal consistency.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Profile of the Respondents

The study surveyed a diverse group of employees for their perspectives on cross-cultural management. Ages ranged from 18 to over 60, with the most common being 31 to 40. Men were slightly more represented than women. Most employees were married and had college degrees. They typically had 3 to 4 years of experience on the project. The majority were Chinese, with nearly half being Indonesian. This well-rounded sample strengthens the study's findings.

B. Cross-Cultural Management

B.1 Cultural Intelligence

The survey results reveal a notable trend among participants who generally exhibit disagreement with the statements assessing cultural intelligence.

Table 1. Cultural Intelligence

Cultural Intelligence	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am able to understand and adapt to different cultural contexts.	2.33	0.92	Disagree
2. I am comfortable communicating with people from different cultures.	2.04	0.87	Disagree
3. I am able to build relationships with people from different cultures.	1.97	0.92	Disagree
4. I am able to lead teams effectively in cross-cultural settings.	2.33	0.88	Disagree
5. I am aware of my own cultural biases.	2.21	0.87	Disagree
6. I am patient and understanding with people from different cultures.	2.26	0.96	Disagree
7. I am willing to learn about the cultures of my team members.	2.00	0.89	Disagree
8. I am adaptable and willing to change my approach depending on the culture of my team members.	2.12	0.95	Disagree

9. I celebrate the diversity of my team members.	2.15	0.89	Disagree
10. I feel confident in my ability to manage cross-cultural teams effectively.	2.10	0.91	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.15**	**0.91**	**Disagree**

Table 2. Communications

Communications	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am comfortable communicating with people from different cultures.	2.34	0.93	Disagree
2. I am aware of the different communication styles of different cultures.	2.15	0.91	Disagree
3. I am able to adapt my communication style to different cultures.	2.12	0.92	Disagree
4. I am able to avoid misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication.	2.20	0.85	Disagree
5. I am able to build relationships with people from different cultures through communication.	2.24	0.86	Disagree
6. I am able to resolve conflicts effectively in cross-cultural communication.	2.19	0.94	Disagree
7. My organization provides training on cross-cultural management communication.	2.14	0.98	Disagree
8. I feel supported by my organization in communicating effectively with people from different cultures.	2.23	0.96	Disagree
9. Cross-cultural management communication is important for the success of my organization.	1.99	0.90	Disagree

10. I am confident in my ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures.	2.16	0.95	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	2.18	0.92	Disagree

Table 3. Open-mindedness

Open-mindedness	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am open to learning about different cultures.	2.30	0.99	Disagree
2. I am willing to consider different perspectives and viewpoints.	2.12	0.93	Disagree
3. I am able to challenge my own assumptions and biases.	2.14	0.87	Disagree
4. I am respectful of people from different cultures, even if I don't agree with their beliefs or practices.	2.18	0.92	Disagree
5. I am able to adapt my behavior to different cultural contexts.	2.09	0.92	Disagree
6. I am able to see the world from the perspective of others.	2.15	0.92	Disagree
7. I am interested in learning more about different cultures.	2.10	0.88	Disagree
8. I am comfortable interacting with people from different cultures.	2.07	0.92	Disagree
9. I believe that cultural diversity is an asset.	2.09	0.88	Disagree
10. I am committed to building relationships with people from different cultures.	2.18	0.85	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.14**	**0.91**	**Disagree**

Table 4. Environment

Environment	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. My organization is committed to creating a cross-culturally inclusive environment.	2.27	0.91	Disagree
2. My organization provides opportunities	2.15	0.85	Disagree

	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
for employees to learn about different cultures.			
3. My organization encourages employees to share their cultural perspectives and experiences.	2.12	0.90	Disagree
4. I feel valued and respected at my organization, regardless of my cultural background.	2.25	0.87	Disagree
5. I feel comfortable raising concerns about cross-cultural issues at my organization.	2.09	0.84	Disagree
6. My organization is responsive to feedback on cross-cultural issues.	2.12	0.92	Disagree
7. I feel supported by my manager in communicating and working effectively with people from different cultures.	2.06	0.80	Disagree
8. I feel that my organization's culture is welcoming and inclusive of people from different backgrounds.	2.23	0.93	Disagree
9. I feel that my organization's policies and procedures are fair and equitable to people from different cultures.	1.98	0.86	Disagree
10. I am proud to work for an organization that is committed to cross-cultural management.	2.13	0.93	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.14**	**0.88**	**Disagree**

	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
3. I am willing to collaborate with colleagues from different cultures on projects and tasks.	2.08	0.85	Disagree
4. I believe that cross-cultural collaboration can lead to better results than working independently.	2.21	0.89	Disagree
5. My organization encourages cross-cultural collaboration.	2.05	0.84	Disagree
6. I feel supported by my organization in collaborating with colleagues from different cultures.	1.98	0.93	Disagree
7. I have had positive experiences collaborating with colleagues from different cultures in the past.	2.09	0.85	Disagree
8. I am confident in my ability to collaborate effectively with colleagues from different cultures.	2.06	0.88	Disagree
9. I believe that cross-cultural trust is essential for effective collaboration.	1.93	0.86	Disagree
10. I am committed to building trust and collaborating effectively with colleagues from different cultures.	2.08	0.87	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.09**	**0.88**	**Disagree**

Table 5. Trust and Collaboration

Trust and Collaboration	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I trust my colleagues from different cultures to be honest and reliable.	2.31	0.93	Disagree
2. I feel comfortable sharing information and ideas with my colleagues from different cultures.	2.08	0.92	Disagree

Table 6. Support from Leadership

Support from Leadership	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. My leadership team is committed to creating a cross-culturally inclusive workplace.	2.26	0.97	Disagree
2. My leadership team provides clear and visible support for cross-cultural management initiatives.	2.06	0.88	Disagree

3. My leadership team provides employees with the resources and training they need to be successful in cross-cultural management.	2.08	0.88	Disagree
4. My leadership team empowers employees to make decisions about cross-cultural management issues.	2.36	0.87	Disagree
5. My leadership team holds employees accountable for promoting cross-cultural inclusion and collaboration.	2.10	0.85	Disagree
6. I feel supported by my leadership team in communicating and working effectively with people from different cultures.	2.09	0.95	Disagree
7. My leadership team values and respects cultural diversity.	2.08	0.81	Disagree
8. My leadership team is open to feedback on cross-cultural management issues.	2.18	0.89	Disagree
9. My leadership team is committed to creating a global mindset throughout the organization.	2.09	0.89	Disagree
10. I am confident in the leadership team's ability to lead the organization to success in a globalized world.	2.18	0.90	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.15**	**0.89**	**Disagree**

C. Challenges in Cross-Cultural Management

Table 7. Differences in Communications Style

Differences in Communications Style	Mean	SD	V.I.
1. I find it difficult to communicate with people from different cultures because of our different communication styles.	2.27	0.97	Disagree
2. I am often unsure of how to interpret the communication	2.13	0.91	Disagree

of people from different cultures.			
3. I have had misunderstandings with people from different cultures because of our different communication styles.	2.12	0.86	Disagree
4. I find it challenging to build rapport with people from different cultures because of our different communication styles.	2.36	0.92	Disagree
5. I feel less confident in my communication skills when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.18	0.86	Disagree
6. I have experienced cultural stereotypes and biases in my cross-cultural communication.	2.05	0.95	Disagree
7. I have found it difficult to adapt my communication style to different cultural contexts.	2.13	0.86	Disagree
8. I have had difficulty communicating with people from different cultures in virtual settings.	2.33	0.90	Disagree
9. I have found it difficult to communicate complex ideas with people from different cultures.	2.07	0.89	Disagree
10. I feel that my cross-cultural communication skills could be improved.	2.17	0.91	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.18**	**0.90**	**Disagree**

Table 8. Differences in Cultural Values

Differences in Cultural Values	Mean	SD	V.I.
1. I find it difficult to understand the cultural values of people from different cultures.	2.37	0.96	Disagree
2. I have had disagreements with people from different cultures because of our different cultural values.	2.17	0.94	Disagree
3. I have felt uncomfortable or offended by the cultural values of people from different cultures.	2.23	0.90	Disagree

4. I have found it difficult to build trust with people from different cultures because of our different cultural values.	2.52	0.82	Disagree
5. I have had difficulty motivating and leading people from different cultures because of our different cultural values.	2.00	0.89	Disagree
6. I have found it difficult to make decisions in cross-cultural teams because of our different cultural values.	2.19	1.00	Disagree
7. I have had difficulty managing conflict in cross-cultural teams because of our different cultural values.	2.18	0.83	Disagree
8. I have found it difficult to negotiate with people from different cultures because of our different cultural values.	2.22	0.90	Disagree
9. I feel that my cultural values have been a barrier to success in my cross-cultural work.	2.19	0.95	Disagree
10. I feel that my organization could do more to help me manage the challenges of cross-cultural management.	2.28	0.88	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.24**	**0.91**	**Disagree**

Table 9. Differences in Business Practices

Differences in Business Practices	Mean	SD	V.I.
1. I find it difficult to navigate the different business practices of different cultures.	2.23	0.98	Disagree
2. I have had misunderstandings with people from different cultures because of our different business practices.	2.12	0.94	Disagree
3. I have found it challenging to build relationships with people from different cultures because of our different business practices.	2.22	0.88	Disagree
4. I feel less confident in my ability to do business in different cultures because of different business practices.	2.39	0.90	Disagree
5. I have experienced cultural stereotypes and biases in my	2.17	0.91	Disagree

cross-cultural business dealings.			
6. I have found it difficult to adapt my business practices to different cultural contexts.	2.27	0.98	Disagree
7. I have had difficulty managing projects and teams in different cultures because of different business practices.	2.14	0.88	Disagree
8. I have had difficulty negotiating contracts with people from different cultures because of different business practices.	2.30	0.93	Disagree
9. I feel that my business practices have been a barrier to success in my cross-cultural work.	2.17	0.94	Disagree
10. I feel that my organization could do more to help me manage the challenges of cross-cultural business practices.	2.25	0.92	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.23**	**0.93**	**Disagree**

Table 10. Language Barrier

Language Barrier	Mean	SD	V.I.
1. I find it difficult to communicate with people from different cultures because of language barriers.	2.32	0.88	Disagree
2. I am often unsure of how to interpret the communication of people from different cultures due to language barriers.	2.13	0.87	Disagree
3. I have had misunderstandings with people from different cultures due to language barriers.	2.11	0.87	Disagree
4. I find it challenging to build rapport with people from different cultures due to language barriers.	2.28	0.86	Disagree
5. I feel less confident in my communication skills when interacting with people from different cultures due to language barriers.	2.08	0.80	Disagree
6. I have experienced cultural stereotypes and biases in my cross-cultural communication due to language barriers.	2.09	0.94	Disagree

7. I have found it difficult to adapt my communication style to different cultural contexts due to language barriers.	2.13	0.80	Disagree
8. I have had difficulty communicating with people from different cultures in virtual settings due to language barriers.	2.19	0.87	Disagree
9. I have found it difficult to communicate complex ideas with people from different cultures due to language barriers.	1.99	0.89	Disagree
10. I feel that my language skills could be improved to better manage the challenges of cross-cultural management.	2.15	0.85	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.15**	**0.86**	**Disagree**

Table 11. Regulatory and Legal Framework

Regulatory and Legal Framework	Mean	SD	V.I.
1. Differences in national laws and regulations can create significant challenges for multinational companies operating across borders.	2.41	0.86	Disagree
2. The lack of international harmonization of laws and regulations can hinder cross-cultural management practices.	2.03	0.81	Disagree
3. The complexity and ambiguity of legal systems in some countries can make it difficult for multinational companies to navigate the regulatory landscape.	2.17	0.92	Disagree
4. 4. Cultural differences in interpretations of laws and regulations can lead to misunderstandings and disputes between multinational companies and local authorities.	2.40	0.89	Disagree
5. The enforcement of laws and regulations can vary significantly across countries, creating uncertainty for multinational companies.	2.23	0.93	Disagree

6. The lack of transparency in legal systems in some countries can make it difficult for multinational companies to identify and comply with legal requirements.	2.22	0.88	Disagree
7. The high cost of legal compliance can be a burden for multinational companies operating in multiple countries.	2.08	0.78	Disagree
8. The lack of legal expertise in cross-cultural management can lead to costly mistakes for multinational companies.	2.12	0.95	Disagree
9. The need to adapt corporate policies and procedures to comply with local laws and regulations can be a time-consuming and resource-intensive process.	2.14	0.87	Disagree
10. The regulatory and legal framework of cross-cultural management is constantly evolving, making it difficult for multinational companies to keep up with the latest changes.	2.22	0.83	Disagree
Overall Mean & SD	**2.20**	**0.87**	**Disagree**

D. Relationship between the Respondent's Profile and Cross-Cultural Management

Table 11. Correlation between profile and cross-cultural management

Profile	Cultural Intelligence	Communications	Open Mindedness	Environment	Trust and Collaboration	Support from Leadership
Age (Kendall's Tau) p value	0.101 0.257	**0.224** 0.011	**0.306** 0.000	**0.218** 0.013	**0.212** 0.016	**0.233** 0.008
Sex (Spearman's rho) p value	0.008 0.932	-0.158 0.075	0.121 0.175	-0.025 0.780	0.108 0.226	0.164 0.065

Civil Status (Kendall's Tau) p value	0.150 0.091	0.066 0.457	0.151 0.088	0.095 0.285	**0.191** 0.031	0.168 0.058
Highest Educational Attainment (Kendall's Tau) p value	-0.131 0.141	-0.124 0.164	-0.059 0.512	-0.098 0.272	**-0.248** 0.005	-0.030 0.737
Number of Years Working for the Project (Kendall's Tau) p value	0.064 0.474	0.079 0.378	0.051 0.564	-0.052 0.564	-0.068 0.445	0.054 0.547
Nationality (Kendall's Tau) p value	**-0.201** 0.023	-0.066 0.460	-0.062 0.489	-0.013 0.888	-0.013 0.245	-0.030 0.733

p value			0.922	-0.077 0.388	
Open Mindedness (Pearson's r) p value	-0.105 0.239	-0.086 0.336	-0.059 0.512	0.071 0.426	-0.029 0.742
Environment (Pearson's r) p value	**-0.175** 0.049	-0.119 0.182	-0.111 0.212	0.014 0.873	-0.038 -0.671
Trust and Collaboration (Pearson's r) p value	**-0.182** 0.040	0.078 0.384	-0.147 0.097	0.115 0.197	**0.182** 0.040
Support from Leadership (Pearson's r) p value	0.019 0.830	-0.051 0.571	0.026 0.770	0.123 0.168	-0.042 0.637

Table 12. Correlation between Cross-Cultural Management and Difficulties Encountered

Cross Cultural Management	Differences in Communication	Differences in Cultural	Differences in Business	Language Barriers	Regulatory and Legal Framework
Cultural Intelligence (Pearson's r) p value	-0.003 0.972	0.002 0.979	-0.040 0.652	0.090 0.313	0.108 0.224
Communications (Pearson's r)	0.015 0.865	0.112 0.207	0.009		-0.056 0.530

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the respondents' demographic profile reveals a diverse sample, with a range of ages, predominantly male participants. The majority of respondents are married, and a significant proportion are college graduates. In terms of project involvement, a substantial number of participants have 3 to 4 years of experience. The nationality distribution indicates a mix of Chinese and Indonesian respondents. This demographic diversity enhances the richness of the study's findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural management within a varied participant context.

The evaluation of cross-cultural competence dimensions reveals a prevalent trend of disagreement among participants. Cultural intelligence, communication, open-mindedness, environment, trust and collaboration, and leadership support all exhibit consistent disagreement, indicating potential challenges in these areas within the cross-cultural context. The diverse perspectives within the sample are underscored by individual item scores, emphasizing the nuanced nature of participants' perceptions. These dimensions are notably to enhance project processes if given vital importance and attention.

The assessment of various aspects in cross-cultural management highlights a consistent trend of disagreement within the organization. Differences in communication styles, cultural values, business practices, language barriers, and the regulatory and legal framework all demonstrate verbal interpretations indicating prevailing disagreement across statements. The overall mean scores and standard deviations underscore the collective perception that challenges associated with these aspects of cross-cultural management are not considered highly serious or significant within the organization.

The study's correlations reveal that age is positively associated with key aspects of cross-cultural competence, including communication, open-mindedness, environment, trust & collaboration, and support from leadership. No significant correlations were found between sex and cross-cultural competence. Civil status is positively linked with support from leadership. Higher educational attainment negatively correlates with trust & collaboration. The number of years working on the project has no significant correlation with cross-cultural competence. Nationality is associated with age but shows no significant correlations with other cross-cultural competence dimensions. These findings suggest that age and certain demographic factors may influence aspects of cross-cultural competence, providing valuable insights for understanding these dynamics within the studied context.

The analysis suggests that while Cultural Intelligence, Communication, and Open Mindedness may not significantly influence specific aspects of cross-cultural management, an improved cross-cultural environment is associated with decreased differences in cultural values. Furthermore, enhanced trust and collaboration are correlated with reduced differences in communication style, environment, and regulatory and legal frameworks. The absence of significant correlations with Support from Leadership implies that leadership support may not strongly influence these specific dimensions of cross-cultural management.

The comprehensive Cross-Cultural Management Plan is strategically designed to address identified challenges within the organization, fostering a more inclusive and effective workplace. By prioritizing Diversity Sensitivity Training, the plan aims to promote cultural intelligence and open-mindedness among employees, considering demographic factors. Communication Enhancement Initiatives focus on improving cross-cultural communication, while Inclusive Leadership Development equips leaders with skills for a supportive cross-cultural environment. Trust and Collaboration Building Activities, Cultural Environment Enhancement, and Continuous Monitoring contribute to a positive workplace culture. Cross-Functional Collaboration and Leadership Support Assessment ensure comprehensive strategies, while Educational Programs and Cultural Sensitivity Training bridge potential gaps and celebrate diversity. The plan adopts a holistic approach, strategically addressing challenges at individual and organizational levels for continuous improvement.

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