

Optimizing the Performance of Multinational Business Organizations through Cross-Cultural Communication Management: Review and Recommendations

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Abstract - Multinational companies face challenges in understanding and managing cultural differences. Cross-cultural communication becomes a crucial issue that affects organizational performance. This research aims to investigate the cross-cultural communication problems faced by multinational companies, focusing on identifying the factors influencing cross-cultural communication, their impact on company performance, and strategies that can be adopted to address these challenges. The research method used is a literature review involving critical analysis of journals and related research findings sourced from Google Scholar. Previous studies utilized should highlight various factors affecting cross-cultural communication, including language differences, cultural norms, stereotypes, and differences in non-verbal communication patterns. The research findings indicate that multinational companies need to adopt a holistic and proactive approach in managing cross-cultural communication, such as employee training to enhance cross-cultural awareness, strategic approaches in recruiting personnel with diverse cultural backgrounds, and the development of inclusive communication policies sensitive to cultural differences. Failure to manage cultural differences can lead to conflict, decreased productivity, and failure to achieve business goals. Academic suggestions include the need for further research to explore effective communication strategies in different cultural contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies can help understand the dynamics of cross-cultural communication evolution in the long term. Practical suggestions include the need for management commitment to create an inclusive work environment that supports all team members, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Companies should also integrate cross-cultural communication training into their employee development programs to enhance communication effectiveness in an increasingly complex global context.

Keywords: Organizational Communication, Multinational Company, Cross-Cultural Communication, Inclusive Working Environment, Organizational Performance.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of economic globalization, multinational business organizations (MBOs) have become key players in the global economy. Multinational business organizations operate in various international markets, running business units in different countries with diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and social norms. This global presence enables multinational business organizations to access resources, markets, and opportunities that are

not available locally. However, alongside this potential for global success, multinational business organizations also face various unique challenges, especially concerning the management of cross-cultural communication.

Even though communication technology has advanced, there are often barriers in cross-cultural communication among multinational team members. Differences in language, social norms, values, and communication styles can lead to misunderstandings or even failure to achieve business goals. Additionally, language differences, social norms, cultural values, and understanding of communication often slow down the decision-making process, hinder innovation, and even trigger conflicts among multinational business team members. Barriers caused by language will have implications for cross-cultural business transactions (Adanlawo et al, 2021).

When companies internationalize, the complexity of internal organization will increase. Additionally, the company's operations will cross national boundaries and external complexities will involve dealing with different country environments. Thus, multinational business organizations will face different organizational and managerial challenges compared to purely domestic companies (Piekkari, et al, 2022).

Cross-cultural communication is at the core of multinational business activities. In cross-cultural communication, interactions occur between individuals with different cultural backgrounds (Singh, 2020). Within this business realm, individuals from various cultures must interact, collaborate, and communicate effectively to achieve established business goals. However, the complexity of cross-cultural communication often presents a significant barrier to achieving desired business objectives. Inability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural business transactions can pose distinct challenges within multinational business organizations (Adanlawo et al, 2021).

According to Susanto et al (2023), effective communication is crucial in the workplace, especially when involving different cultures. To avoid cultural conflicts, those involved in communication should be aware of the barriers that hinder the communication process. Failure to understand and manage cultural differences can result in decreased productivity, decreased employee morale, loss of customer trust, and ultimately, decreased performance of multinational business organizations. The challenges of cross-cultural communication in multinational business organizations not only affect operational efficiency but also directly impact organizational performance. Misunderstanding or ignorance of local cultures can lead to poor decisions, marketing strategy failures, or even cultural violations damaging the company's reputation.

The research findings by Abugre (2018) indicate that cross-cultural communication competence is highly important for employees in multinational organizations. Additionally, it is emphasized that cross-cultural communication skills are crucial for adaptation to ensure good work outcomes. Therefore, it is important to deeply understand the challenges and opportunities associated with cross-cultural communication in the context of multinational business organizations and to identify effective strategies to optimize organizational performance.

Cross-cultural communication in multinational business organizations involves various complex factors that influence interactions and understanding among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. One of the key factors is language differences. Language is the primary tool of communication, while multinational business organizations often operate in countries with different languages. Language differences can complicate verbal and non-verbal communication, increase the risk of misunderstandings, and hinder team collaboration (Luqman and Agathsya, 2024).

Furthermore, social norms and cultural values also play a crucial role in cross-cultural communication. What is considered polite or impolite, the way criticism or feedback is

delivered, and the use of body language and facial expressions can significantly differ across the cultures brought by employees. Social norms and cultural values of each community guide how people interact with each other. In other words, they shape varying understandings. (Khosh et al, 2020). Misunderstanding or ignorance of these social norms and cultural values can lead to conflicts or tensions among employees in multinational businesses.

Furthermore, differences in understanding and perception of communication can also pose challenges in multinational businesses. Concepts such as the use of humor and metaphors may be interpreted differently by individuals from different cultures. Lack of understanding of these differences can hinder collaboration and disrupt workflow within multinational business organizations.

In addition to interpersonal conflicts, cultural mismatches can also lead to decreased productivity and loss of talented employees. When team members feel unappreciated or misunderstood by colleagues from different cultural backgrounds, they may become less motivated and less engaged in their work, ultimately resulting in turnover intention (Elsafty and Oraby, 2022).

From a customer perspective, the inability of multinational business organizations to effectively communicate with local audiences can lead to decreased sales, loss of market share, and even product boycotts. Customers tend to choose brands they trust and brands that have a strong relationship with them. Poor cross-cultural communication can damage the relationship between the company and its customers. This is in line with Sulaiman's (2022) assertion that the most acute impact of poor cross-cultural communication is misinterpretation, followed by conflicts among communicating parties, including customers.

From previous relevant research, it is indicated that barriers to cross-cultural communication caused by language differences will have implications on cross-cultural business transactions (Adanlawo et al, (2021); Luqman and Agathasya, (2024)), while the findings of Piekari et al (2022) suggest that the impact of organizational internationalization is increased complexity internally and externally as organizations operate in different country environments.

The research by Susanto et al (2023) emphasizes the need for effective communication in diverse cultural environments to avoid conflicts among communicating parties. Additionally, Abugre's study (2018) highlights the importance of cross-cultural communication skills possessed by employees of international business organizations to facilitate adaptation, thus resulting in good performance. The research by Khosh et al (2020) and Sulaiman (2022) states that ignorance of social norms and cultural values can lead to conflicts among employees of multinational companies. Cultural mismatches can also cause employee demotivation and ultimately lead to turnover.

Compared to previous research, this study brings novelty as its aim is to explore forms of managing cross-cultural communication in international business for optimal organizational performance. It starts by identifying factors influencing cross-cultural communication in multinational businesses and their impact on company performance.

Research on managing cross-cultural communication in multinational businesses is necessary due to the highly complex nature of the multinational business environment. It faces unique cross-cultural communication challenges, which directly impact business performance, driven by technological advancements, globalization, increasing workforce diversity, and the potential to create innovation and competitive advantage. Additionally, this research is needed to understand the dynamics of cross-cultural communication in multinational businesses and develop effective strategies to enhance performance for organizational success.

Cross-cultural communication can complicate situations for multinational business organizations, as there are many issues and challenges to be addressed. When cross-cultural communication is not managed effectively, significant threats to an organization's success can

arise, making it important for organizations to understand the challenges that may emerge from such situations (Shahid, 2022).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Importance of Intercultural Communication in Multinational Business Organizations

Intercultural communication is the process of exchanging information, values, norms, and perceptions between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. Such communication involves interactions among people from different cultures. These differences may include language, social norms, beliefs, and values. Additionally, there are differences in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic background, or a combination of these factors, which can influence how they understand and convey messages (Ayuni et al, 2022).

According to Shahid (2022), communication serves as a bridge that can unite different cultures, but it requires continuous refinement, support, and teamwork spirit. Effective communication among employees within an organization is crucial for enhancing employee engagement and motivation to drive goal achievement.

Intercultural communication is bound to occur in multinational businesses. Through effective communication, companies can avoid misunderstandings, foster increased cooperation, and build strong relationships with employees and business partners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Effective communication within multinational business organizations will occur if every employee in an organization possesses Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICC), enabling them to collaborate and interact with each other (Kukko et al, 2020). Ineffective communication, on the other hand, will limit interpersonal communication within a multicultural organization.

By understanding different norms, values, and communication practices, companies can strengthen their operational sustainability, achieve competitive advantages, and explore new business opportunities in the global market. Intercultural communication in the context of multinational business organizations is particularly intriguing due to its relevance to enhancing teamwork, innovation, and cross-cultural synergy (Luqman and Agathsy, 2024). The performance of multinational business organizations is heavily influenced by their ability to manage intercultural communication effectively.

The Impact of Intercultural Communication on Organizational Performance

Intercultural communication has a significant impact on organizational performance. When members of an organization are able to understand and appreciate cultural differences, it enables the creation of an inclusive and collaborative work environment. However, misunderstanding of norms, values, and language can hinder effective communication, affecting productivity and efficiency. Cultural conflicts and misunderstandings often arise, disrupting team coordination and creating tension among organizational members. Therefore, investment in developing intercultural communication competence becomes crucial to enhancing performance and effectively achieving organizational goals (Abugre & Debrah, 2019).

According to Trisasanti et al (2020), in intercultural communication, the greater the uncertainty a person experiences during intercultural communication, the higher the level of anxiety they feel, resulting in an increase in Intercultural Communication Apprehension (ICA) and a decreased desire to participate in such communication. This can lead to a decrease in respect and tolerance towards individuals from different cultures, ultimately resulting in tension among employees and a decline in organizational performance. However, individuals' willingness to interact with other cultures can increase if the level of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (ICA) decreases.

Effective intercultural communication is unlikely to occur if we do not understand the barriers in cross-cultural interactions and do not know how to overcome them (Braslauskas, 2020). In cross-cultural communication, educating employees in multinational business organizations can indeed help provide a better understanding of cross-cultural differences, behaviors aligned with the organization, and conflict resolution. They acknowledge that the complexity of intercultural communication has become a necessity for most organizations to gain competitive advantage and shape a positive work environment (Shahid, 2022).

Employees of multinational business organizations are expected to have adequate cross-cultural communication competence. Cross-cultural communication competence is an individual's ability to interact effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The cross-cultural communication competence possessed by employees will impact team performance. (Balakrishnan et al, 2021).

The Benefits of Intercultural Communication in the Context of Multinational Business

Intercultural communication in the context of multinational business brings significant benefits such as expanding market reach, enhancing team performance, reducing conflicts, and increasing awareness of diverse customer needs and preferences. With a better understanding of cultural norms and different communication styles, companies can build stronger relationships with customers and business partners worldwide, enhance customer satisfaction, and expand international market share. Currently, the demand for individuals' intercultural communication competence (ICC) is increasing. An individual's intercultural communication competence contributes to tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity (Fantini, 2021).

According to Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005), interpersonal communication competence (ICC) includes listening skills, previous cross-cultural experiences, having a global perspective compared to an ethnocentric perspective, and a communication style that is centered on others. Meanwhile, ethnocentrism in the context of intercultural communication is an attitude or perspective that tends to prioritize or consider one's own culture as superior to others. Willingness to engage in intercultural communication can contribute to the success of intercultural communication (Nameni, 2020).

According to Nadeem et al (2022), it is stated that empathy, sensation seeking desire, and individual attitudes can enhance intercultural communication competence. In multinational-based companies, improving this competence will enhance interaction and collaboration among employees. Thus, cultural awareness training is one way to enhance intercultural communication competence.

Challenges and Barriers in Intercultural Communication

Challenges in intercultural communication include differences in language, physical distance, and contextual barriers (such as resistance to work systems) that can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Barriers such as stereotypes, differing perceptions, and a lack of understanding of other cultures also often hinder the process of effective communication. Cultural awareness, cultural intelligence, and sensitive communication skills are needed to overcome these challenges and build strong relationships among individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Susanto et al, 2020).

In the context of intercultural communication, there are still many negative stereotypes and prejudices ingrained in both ethnic groups, often leading to tension between them. Recently, violent conflicts involving diverse ethnic backgrounds have emerged (Lampe and Ariani, 2017).

Effective cross-cultural business communication heavily relies on the application of easily understood language. Cross-cultural communication means communicating among individuals from different cultures (Tuleja, 2022). Barriers can occur when communicating

with people from other cultures, such as stereotypes, perceptions, attitudes, physical aspects, motivation, language, non-verbal messages, and communication media (Braslauskas, 2020).

Stereotypes are judgments about someone. Communication barriers caused by language will impact cross-cultural business transactions. Therefore, overcoming language barriers can be achieved by recommending multilingual employees and language training (Adanlawo et al, 2021). Language is one of the means in cross-cultural business transactions; easily understood language will facilitate communication between business entities and their potential customers/clients (Bodomo and Che, 2020). Language barriers become crucial in intercultural communication. Language limitations will pose a serious threat to business activities among people with different languages (Ai et al, 2019).

In agreement with the findings of Susanto et al (2023), common barriers identified are semantic (in terms of language), physical barriers (in terms of physical distance), and contextual barriers (in terms of resistance to work systems). Contributing factors to these barriers are stereotypes, differing perceptions, and different educational backgrounds and experiences. Stereotypes are unavoidable and occur based on previous experiences or knowledge from a subordinate perspective. By eliminating communication barriers in multinational business organizations, optimal performance is expected.

Cultural Differences as the Main Challenge

Cultural differences are the main challenge in intercultural communication because each culture has different values, norms, and communication styles. This can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and difficulties in understanding messages between individuals or groups from different cultures. To overcome these challenges, a deep understanding of cultural differences is required, as well as the ability to accommodate and respect diversity in cross-cultural communication. According to Santos (2024), diverse cultural challenges include inequality and the preservation of cultural identity.

Cultural diversity can enrich customer experiences despite communication challenges. Effective strategies such as language training and cultural sensitivity programs can enhance service quality, create inclusive environments, and provide personalized services. Through cultural proficiency training, staff can gain a competitive advantage, attract diverse customers, and ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty (Miquel, 2024).

According to Pugu et al (2024), the challenges faced by multinational business organizations in addressing cultural differences require appropriate strategies to overcome them. Steps that can be taken include fostering respect and awareness of other cultures, providing effective translation to overcome language barriers, using appropriate communication technology, promoting inclusivity and participation of all team members, and conducting regular evaluation and feedback.

Consequences of Ineffective Intercultural Communication

Ineffective communication in the context of intercultural communication can lead to misinterpretation, conflict, and deep misunderstanding between individuals or groups from different cultures. This can hinder cooperation, worsen intercultural relations, and harm overall productivity and well-being. Inability to understand and respect cultural differences impedes the opportunity to build strong and sustainable relationships between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds.

According to Singh (2020), the consequences of ineffective intercultural communication and adaptation to new cultural environments in foreign countries result in underdeveloped cross-cultural relationships, leading to conflicts and disrupted adaptation. Most conflicts faced by individuals in foreign cultures stem from miscommunication.

Kalogiannidis (2020) states that ineffective communication in any business entity has a negative impact on employee performance. Businesses must maintain good information flow throughout the organization to improve employee performance and achieve business profitability. Meanwhile, Riyanto et al (2023) argue that ineffective intercultural communication is caused by language differences, which affects employees in communicating, socializing, and adapting to their work environment.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

To understand how to manage intercultural communication in multinational business organizations, research methods through literature reviews are used. The literature review method involves searching for credible sources from relevant journals on the research topic.

From the literature review, theories and concepts used to strengthen research arguments can be explained. Literature review is the initial step in developing a research plan (Nakano & Muniz, 2018).

In the research process, analysis and synthesis of previous journals are conducted, including summarizing and developing new ideas and theories (Xiao and Watson, 2019).

The literature review research method can help explain concepts in managing intercultural communication to optimize the performance of multinational business organizations based on published references. According to Marzali (2017), literature reviews can be conducted for research studies. In this study, literature review can enrich insights into the researched topic, including identifying factors influencing cross-cultural communication, its impact on company performance, and strategies that can be adopted to manage intercultural communication.

To obtain relevant research journals, Google Scholar is used by typing keywords such as cross-cultural communication or intercultural communication, multinational business organizations, and combining keywords. In addition to relevant journals, to align with recent developments, 80% of selected journals are published in the last 5 years (Putra & Irwansyah, 2020).

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach, which descriptively connects the subject and object of the study. Moleong (2017) explains that descriptive qualitative approaches aim to build, explain, and describe existing data categories. This step is taken to observe findings and manage intercultural communication as an effort to optimize the performance of multinational business organizations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Multinational business organizations are corporate entities that operate in more than one country with the aim of expanding their markets, resources, and profits globally. They integrate their operations across various countries and often have complex hierarchical structures and policies that must account for cultural, legal, and business policy differences in each country where they operate. In their efforts to achieve global success, multinational business organizations face challenges in managing cultural diversity, cross-border coordination, and adapting to dynamic external environmental changes.

The main challenge for multinational business organizations in understanding and managing cultural differences is navigating the complexity of interactions between cultures and business policies in the various countries where they operate. This involves a deep understanding of the different norms, values, and business practices in each culture, as well as the ability to integrate diverse perspectives to create an inclusive and productive work environment. Additionally, organizations must consider cultural alignment with their global business objectives while taking into account differences in language, beliefs, and work practices that may affect their overall performance and success.

Factors influencing cross-cultural communication in multinational business organizations include language and linguistic differences, cultural norms, values, beliefs, and different work practices in each country, as well as differences in communication styles and thought patterns. Additionally, factors such as time differences, geographical distance, technology, and infrastructure can also affect the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. Cultural adaptation, a deep understanding of local cultures, the use of appropriate communication technology, intercultural training, and awareness of stereotypes and prejudices can help overcome these barriers and facilitate effective communication in such multicultural environments.

The following are the results of identifying factors influencing cross-cultural communication based on a review of relevant journal literature in this study, which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Identifying Cross-Cultural Communication Barriers

Result of Identification	Impact	Recommendation
Language differences, Sources: (Adanlawo et al (2021), Luqman and Agathsya (2024), Khosh et al(2020), Ayuni et al (2022), Abugre & Debrah(2019), Tuleja (2022), Braslauskas, (2020), Bodomo and Che (2020), Ai et al (2019), Susanto et al (2023), Riyanto et al (2023).	Multinational business organizations will encounter communication barriers, misunderstandings, and decreased productivity. Additionally, it will affect team effectiveness, employee relationships, and the company's ability to operate efficiently in the global market	Multinational business organizations should consider providing language training for employees, utilizing automatic translation technology, facilitating meetings with interpreters, and encouraging the use of a universal language such as English in official communications.
Differences in social norms, values, and communication styles Sources: (Adanlawo et al (2021), Khosh et al (2020), Ayuni et al (2022), Luqman dan Agathsya (2024).	Triggering misunderstandings, cultural conflicts, and decreased productivity in multinational companies. Furthermore, it can hinder team collaboration, affect employee relationships, and disrupt operational efficiency and the company's success in the global market	Multinational business organizations can conduct cultural diversity training, promote understanding and respect for differences, facilitate open dialogue, and create inclusive and flexible communication policies.
Business Internationalization Source: Piekkari et al (2022),	Business internationalization affects cross-cultural communication in multinational organizations, such as increased complexity, the importance of understanding local cultures, expanding market reach, and increasing the need for multicultural skills.	Multinational organizations can implement regular intercultural training, adopt a flexible approach to communication, promote cross-cultural collaboration, and support teams with technological resources that facilitate effective global communication.
Effective communication Source: Adanlawo et al (2021), Susanto et al (2023), Sulaiman (2022), Shahid (2022), Kukko et al, (2020), Braslauskas, (2020), Tuleja, (2022), Singh (2020), Kalogiannidis (2020).	In international business organizations, ineffective communication can lead to misunderstandings, cultural conflicts, decreased productivity, and financial losses. It can also hinder team collaboration, damage relationships with customers or business partners, and impede the global growth of the company.	It is important to enhance cultural understanding, provide intercultural training, facilitate open dialogue, and utilize technology to improve cross-cultural communication.
Cross-cultural communication competence Source: Abugre (2018). Abugre & Debrah (2019), Balakrishnan	The positive impact of multinational organization employees possessing good cross-cultural communication	Multinational business organizations should provide regular cross-cultural communication training,

<p>et al (2021), Fantini, (2021), Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005). Susanto et al, (2020).</p>	<p>competencies includes enhanced effective cross-cultural collaboration, increased innovation through diverse perspectives, strengthened relationships with global customers, and improved company reputation in international markets.</p>	<p>encourage cross-cultural collaboration within teams, allocate resources to enhance cultural understanding, and recognize and reinforce diversity as a strategic asset of the company.</p>
<p>Employee Education Source: Shahid, (2022),</p>	<p>If the level of education of multinational business organization employees is insufficient, the negative impact includes decreased effectiveness of cross-cultural communication, difficulty in understanding and respecting cultural differences, the risk of errors in business negotiations, and decreased organizational performance in the global market.</p>	<p>International business organizations should adjust their approach to cross-cultural communication training according to the educational level of employees, provide easily understandable yet informative materials for all educational levels, encourage collaboration among employees with different educational backgrounds for mutual learning, and provide adequate support for the development of effective cross-cultural communication skills for all team members.</p>
<p>Etnosentris Source: Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005)</p>	<p>Ethnocentrism in cross-cultural communication within international business organizations can have detrimental effects. When individuals or groups view their culture as superior and disregard or negatively judge other cultures, it can hinder collaboration, reduce productivity, and even damage business relationships. Ethnocentrism can create tension among employees, inhibit innovation, and harm reputation.</p>	<p>Training or workshops on cultural awareness need to be conducted for all members of the organization to enhance understanding of cultural diversity and reduce prejudice. Additionally, it is important to promote inclusion and cross-cultural teamwork by creating an environment that supports the exchange of ideas and experiences across cultures. Management should also enforce policies that encourage appreciation of diversity and respond firmly to ethnocentric actions or comments.</p>
<p>Stereotipe Source: Susanto et al (2020), Braslauskas (2020).</p>	<p>Stereotypes can lead to prejudice and misunderstandings among team members from different cultural backgrounds. This can hinder collaboration, complicate decision-making processes, and damage team relationships. Additionally, stereotypes can reduce motivation and engagement among team members, as well as impede the creation of an inclusive work environment.</p>	<p>Organizations should enhance awareness of these stereotypes through training and education on cultural diversity. Furthermore, it is important to encourage team members to actively engage in the exchange of experiences and perspectives, thereby strengthening individual understanding of different cultures. Management also needs to promote inclusive policies that emphasize the importance of respecting differences and emphasize fair and open collaboration. Thus, organizations can reduce the impact of stereotypes and build</p>

Previous research findings indicate that language is often cited as a primary factor hindering cross-cultural communication within multinational business organizations. This may be attributed to language differences that impede understanding, inaccurate translations, and communication chaos that may arise due to linguistic misunderstandings. Therefore, it is important to develop communication strategies that take into account language differences and promote the use of clear and inclusive language to facilitate effective communication among team members from different cultural backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that: (1) Factors hindering cross-cultural communication in multinational business organizations include language differences, differences in social norms, values, communication styles, business internationalization, effective communication, intercultural communication competence, employee education, ethnocentrism, and stereotypes; (2) The impact of these factors includes communication barriers and misunderstandings among employees, ultimately leading to decreased productivity or company performance; (3) Strategies to address the barriers and impacts of cross-cultural communication include language training, cultural diversity training, promoting understanding and respect for differences, encouraging cross-cultural collaboration within teams, conducting cultural awareness workshops for all organization members to enhance understanding of cultural diversity and reduce prejudice, encouraging team members to actively engage in the exchange of experiences and perspectives, thus strengthening individual understanding of different cultures; (4) By managing cross-cultural communication, the performance of multinational business organizations can be optimized.

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