Cross-cultural Competence that Affected Job Stress of Airline Cabin Crews: The Moderating Role of Cultural Distance

ความสามารถทางวัฒนธรรมที่มีผลต่อความเครียดในการทำงานของลูกเรือสายการบิน : บทบาทตัวแปรกำกับของความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to study how cross-cultural competence affected job stress in Thai airline cabin crews. The cultural distance was purposed as a moderator of relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress of airline cabin crews. The data were obtained from 208 questionnaire surveys from leading international airline cabin crews in Thailand. The results from the partial least squares regression analysis indicated that high cross-cultural competence airline cabin crews perceived less job stress while they were serving foreign passengers. Moreover, the finding from moderating effect suggested that the stress tended to be lower when cabin crews who possessed higher cross-cultural competence interacted with foreign passengers whose culture are vastly different from their own.

Keywords: Cross-cultural Competence, Cultural Distance, Cabin Crew

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อศึกษาความสามารถทางวัฒนธรรมที่มีผลต่อความเครียดของลูกเรือชาวไทย โดยกำหนดให้ความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมเป็นตัวแปรกำกับของความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความสามารถทางวัฒนธรรมและความเครียดของลูกเรือ ข้อมูลถูกเก็บโดยใช้แบบสอบถามจากลูกเรือชาวไทยที่ทำงานในสายการบินระหว่างประเทศชั้นนำในประเทศไทยจำนวน 208 ฉบับ ผลจากการวิเคราะห์โดยใช้วิธีการถดถอยกำลังสองน้อยที่สุดบางส่วนพบว่า ลูกเรือที่มีความสามารถทางวัฒนธรรมสูงจะรับรู้ความเครียดได้น้อยกว่าในขณะที่ให้บริการผู้โดยสายชาวต่างชาติ และผลจากการวิเคราะห์ตัวแปรกำกับพบว่าความเครียดของลูกเรือ ที่มีความสามารถทางวัฒนธรรมสูงจะยิ่งลดลงเมื่อให้บริการผู้โดยสารต่างชาติที่มีวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกับตนมาก

คำสำคัญ : ความสามารถด้านวัฒนธรรม ความแตกต่างด้านวัฒนธรรม ลูกเรือ

Introduction

The airline cabin crews or flight attendants are one of the most important components of the airline business. C. Chen and Chen (2014) stated that airline cabin crews are crucial to the inflight service performance and air travel safety of the airline company. Generally, airline cabin crews have high workloads during their duties onboard including serving passengers and ensuring their safety on board (Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2014). According to their job characteristic, airline cabin crews have to encounter with passengers from both similar and different cultures. Their job stress tends to be more intense when they have to deal with foreign passengers from the different cultural background. According to, values, norms, expectations and other issues of passengers are varied by their culture (Lee, 2015), the previous study suggested that airline cabin crews were suggested to have a quality level of cultural knowledge in order to perform well in a cross-cultural context (Heracleous & Wirtz, 2010). This meant they have to possess a cross-cultural ability to deal with the diverse cultural situation. Thus, this research purposed cross-cultural competence (CC) of Johnson, Lenartowicz, and Apud (2006) to be a crucial skill for airline cabin crews to lessen their job stress. Due to cross-cultural competence (CC) is a cross-cultural skill which suitable for a career that emphasizes on “doing” than “knowing” (Johnson et al., 2006), this makes CC appropriate to airline cabin crews’ job characteristics which require them to provide both safety and service for passengers. With CC ability, cabin crews are able to serve accordingly to foreign passengers’ expectation. Therefore, they might alleviate themselves from job stress that may occur from foreign passengers’ dissatisfaction. Moreover, this study also investigated how the cultural distance between airline cabin crews and foreign passengers moderated the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress. The results from this study will provide empirical evidence, theoretical contribution, and implementation to airline companies because there is a lack of empirical evidence in airline cabin crews context. The details of the objectives will be discussed in the next section.

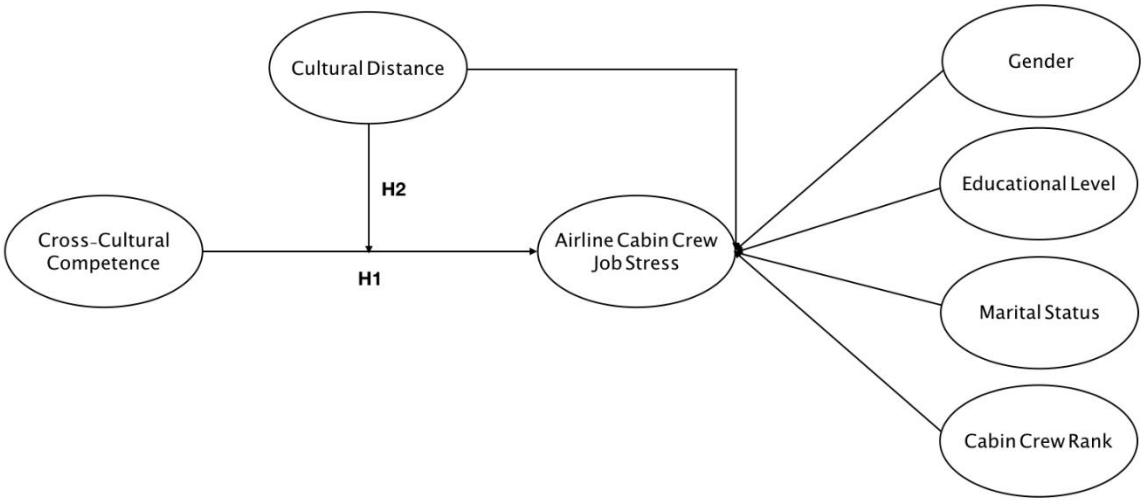
Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to investigate the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress when Thai airline cabin crews were serving foreign passengers. In addition to a direct relationship, this study also examined the moderating role of cultural

distance of the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress. The details of each relationship in the model were purposed as research objectives as follows:

1. To investigate the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress.
2. To investigate the moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress.
3. To provide empirical evidence, theoretical contribution, and implementation to airline companies

Conceptual framework



Literature Review

Cross-cultural Competence

Cross-cultural competence (CC) was introduced by Gertsen (1990). However, the definition remained unclear until Johnson et al. (2006) had successfully analyzed a concrete meaning of cross-cultural competence in international business context which referred to an effectiveness of individual to work with people from different national cultural background at home or abroad by utilizing a set of knowledge, skills and personal attributes (Johnson et al., 2006). According to its definition, CC consists of three facets which are knowledge, skills, and personal attributes dimension. First, the knowledge dimension includes culture-general knowledge such as what language does this country use, rules, and differences between cultures and culture-specific knowledge such as laws, politics, economics, and what to do and what not to do. Second, the skills dimension includes abilities and aptitudes. For abilities, these refer to the competence to speak a foreign language, adapting to other cultural norms and

values, and abilities to act like local. For aptitudes, these refer to a capability to obtain a new set of specific skills that are needed in that culture. Third, the person attributes dimension refers to preferable personality traits that facilitate persons to adapt themselves well from their local to the foreign culture.

Cross-cultural Competence and Airline Cabin Crews Job Stress

Generally, airline cabin crew career is perceived as a high-paid salary, beneficial in traveling aboard, and other attractive benefits (Kim & Park, 2014). However, in fact, airline cabin crews are such a stressful occupation due to their job characteristics which required them to work in an intense situation such as an irregular workhour, dealing with various type of passengers, limited time and resources on board (Suthatorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2018). Moreover, airline cabin crews tend to feel more intense when they have to interact with passengers from a different culture (Gudykunst, 2004). Due to expectations of foreign passengers about service and other aspects might differ from airline cabin crews' home culture (F. Chen & Chang, 2005), these might lead airline cabin crews to unintentionally express undesirable behaviors which create dissatisfaction to foreign passengers. Therefore, the complaints and other negative reactions from foreign passengers will cause airline cabin crews job stress. In this case, the specific cross-cultural skill is needed to alleviate the stress in diverse cultural situations. This study focused a cross-cultural competence (CC) as a cultural competency for airline cabin crew to lessen their stress in a cross-cultural context. Because this concept was reported as a situation skill rather than a knowledge skill (e.g. cultural intelligence) (Johnson et al., 2006), this makes CC appropriate for airline cabin crews whose job required them to directly engage with foreign passengers. Generally, airline cabin crews with high CC possess a quality knowledge both general and specific of other cultures which mean they entirely understand values, norms, and what is suitable action for each intercultural circumstance. Then, they are able to deliver precious actions to satisfy passengers from other cultures. Moreover, high CC airline cabin crews are able to present foreign passengers that they have desirable personality traits which made them enjoy to interact with. Therefore, this made cabin crews evade from conflict situations with foreign passengers which may cause them job stress. This assumption was supported by job demand-resource model (JD-R) (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). JD-R is a stress management theory which categorizes work conditions into two groups. First, job demands are work requirements which make persons

use their abilities to achieve. Second, job resources are work conditions or personal abilities which facilitate an individual to cope with job demands. The stress may arise when a person lack of job resources and have excessive job demands. On the other hand, if persons possess sufficient job resource to deal with those demands, stress will not occur (Demerouti et al., 2001). In this case, CC may play a significant role in lessening airline cabin crews' job stress. Because CC provides a useful resource for cabin crews to deal with diverse cultural situations. This will make them avoid job stress which may arise when dealing with foreign passengers. Thus, this hypothesis was presented:

Hypothesis 1: Cross-cultural competence will be negatively associated with job stress.

The Moderating Role of Cultural Distance

Kogut and Singh (1988) defined cultural distance as a difference between the national culture of home and interested country by using national culture indices of Hofstede (1980). The higher cultural distance means the more different in language, personality traits, perceptions, expectations, norms, values, institutions, and other aspects (Johnson et al., 2006). If these aspects are much different between two cultures, persons will face more difficult to achieve tasks in an intercultural environment.

Generally, the cultural distance was a major concerned in both inflight service (Sultan & Simpson Jr, 2000) and airline cabin safety (C. Chen & Chen, 2014; Hayward, 1990). The research illustrated that the cultural difference made airline cabin crews hard to achieve tasks in diverse cultural circumstances. This means cultural distance is an important issue that needs to be investigated in the airline cabin crew context. As mentioned earlier, this study proposed that CC will be negatively related to airline cabin crews' job stress. In addition, the authors also predicted that cultural distance may negatively moderate that relationship which meant airline cabin crews with high CC will experience less stress when dealing with passengers whose culture is vastly different from them rather than dealing with passengers whose culture is slightly different from them. In particular, high CC airline cabin crews will perform their best when they served high cultural distance foreign passengers because they are able to utilize their cross-cultural skill effectively than dealing with passengers whose culture are close to them. This assumption was supported by the study of Redmond (2000) who found that cultural distance negatively moderated the relationship between intercultural communication competence and stress in international students in the US. This meant that international

students whose culture were much different from the US perceived less stress when interacted with local students. From all of these evidences, this following hypothesis was presented:

Hypothesis 2: Cultural distance will negatively moderate the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The sample of this research was Thai airline cabin crews who worked in the leading international airline in Thailand. Every cabin crews in this airline company were assigned to fly in international flights every month which made this sample suit to our study. Due to this study investigate about the cultural distance between cultures, the authors needed to select a suitable culture to compare in this analysis which represented entire airline cabin crews in this company. According to the company website, airline cabin crews usually fly to 63 destinations worldwide. However, there were 2 countries which had 8 destinations – India and China mainland. Thus, these two countries were major routes which best represented a total population of airline cabin crews in this company.

Then, the authors compared national culture between Thai, Indian, and Chinese by using Hofstede's national culture indices (Hofstede, 1980). The results indicated that every cultural dimension of Indian was obviously different from Thai, and four of five cultural dimensions of Chinese were different from Thai. The details were reported in table 1 below:

Table 1: Hofstede's national culture indices: Thai, Indian, and Chinese

	PD	IN	MA	UN	LO
Thai	64	20	34	64	32
Indian	77	48	56	40	51
Chinese	80	20	66	30	87

Note: - PD = Power distance, IN = Individualism, MA = Masculinity, UN = Uncertainty avoidance, LO = Long term orientation.

- The value in the table is Hofstede index which has a value between 0-100.

According to Hofstede cultural dimensions, India was apparently different from Thai in every aspect. Similarly, Chinese was also different from Thai except Individualism is equal to Thai. This meant the degree of cultural distance between India and Thai was greater than Chinese and Thai. Thus, the author was able to use the cultural distance of these two cultures

to compare to Thai. Moreover, these selecting procedures were supported by the study of Pandey and Charoensukmongkol (2019). The researchers selected samples for analyzing cultural distance by chose two nationalities which have much and less different to Thai culture.

Even the different of Hofstede cultural dimension index was widely accepted in the literature, the author aimed to confirm the difference between these two cultures in the present context. The pilot questionnaire was distributed via an online channel to gain more support from the airline cabin crews. The respondents were asked only one question: “In your opinion, which nationality of passengers is the most stressful to deal with?”. The result from the pilot questionnaire will be reported in the result section.

During the time of the collection period, there were 5,900 cabin crew members in this company. Before collecting data, the director of cabin crew department was contacted for permission. Then, self-administrated questionnaire surveys were distributed in crew mailbox room within the company. The questionnaire surveys were separated into 2 sets, the first set measured Indian culture and the second set measured Chinese culture. Each set had 600 questionnaires. Therefore, there were 1,200 questionnaires which will be distributed. The respondents were asked to answer each question according to the designated culture (Indian or Chinese) which indicated at the top of every questionnaire. The 1,200 airline cabin crews were randomly selected by their personal ID number. At the first paragraph of every questionnaire indicated that data will be treated as high confidentiality, only the author can access the data. The respondents were able to fill questionnaires when they were convenient and were asked to drop a completed questionnaire at the box within the mailbox room.

Measure

Cross-cultural competence was measured by using a clinical cultural competency questionnaire (Rutgers, 2008) which used to measure healthcare service providers who usually contacted with foreign patients developed by the center of healthy families and cultural diversity at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson medical school. The authors abandoned questions that measured medical specialties and selected only items that measure cultural competency. Some questions had been modified from medical terms into airline service’s terms. For example, changing from “Greeting patients in a culturally sensitive manner” To “Greeting passengers in a culturally sensitive manner”. After adjusting questions, the scale consists of 33 items which divided into five aspects measuring knowledge (4 items), skills (9 items), situations (10 items),

attitudes (7 items), and education (3 items). These scales were measured by using a five-points Likert-Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Job stress was measured by using scales from Gudykunst and Nishida (2001). This scale was used in measuring job stress and anxiety in service providers. Some questions had been adjusted into airline service's terms such as "I felt frustrated during my interaction with the foreign passengers in this flight" and "I felt irritated during my interaction with the foreign passengers in this flight". The scale consists of 11 items which were measured by using a five-points Likert-Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Cultural distance was proposed as the moderating variable which coded by the dummy variable. Indian foreign passengers were coded as 1 and Chinese passengers were coded as 0. This method was used in measuring cultural distance between two culture in many research (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011; Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019).

Lastly, the control variables had been included in this research model to ensure the prediction of the independent variable and provide more understanding of how they affected the dependent variable. These control variables were age measured by number of respondent's age, gender measured by a dummy variable (male=1, female=0), educational level was measured by ordinal numbers (0=below bachelor degree, 1=bachelor degree, 2=master degree, 3=doctoral degree), marital status measured by a nominal number (1=single, 2=married, 3=divorced, 4=widowed) and job rank measured by ordinal numbers (1=economy class cabin crew, 2=business class cabin crew, 3=first class cabin crew, 4=air purser, 5=in-flight manager and above). However, age and job rank were highly correlated. In fact, the nature of the promotion in this airline company almost entirely rely on job tenure which mean the longer you have worked as an airline cabin crew, the high rank you will be promoted. Thus, the authors excluded age from the analysis because job rank not only represented the airline cabin crew's age but also refer to a higher quality of experience from quality training they had received.

To ensure the quality of data obtained from these scales, the author performed validity and reliability tests before analyzing data. For the validity test, the authors conducted both convergent validity and discriminant validity test. The convergent validity test was performed to ensure that all items were measured their construct. Using the factor loadings, all items need to have a value exceed 0.5 to meet the minimum threshold as recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2009). Next, discriminant validity test was performed by estimating

the value of the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) to ensure that all variables were discriminate from others. In case to confirm the validity of the data, the results of the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) have to be higher than the correlations between variables (Fornell & Larker, 1981). Then, the reliability test was performed by estimating a Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability. The results need to have a value above 0.8 to ensure that the constructs were reliable (Nunnally, 1978).

Data Analysis

The authors used partial least squares regression (PLS) to analyze the data. The PLS provide various statistical tools for researchers. For example, multiple regression analysis, structural equation modeling and path analysis. PLS are suitable for non-distributed data (Kline, 2005) and small sample size data (Chin, 1998). The results from the Jarque-Bera test of normality indicated that many variables did not normally distribute and the sample size of this research is also small (n=208). This made PLS suited to this study. The authors used WarpPLS version 6.0 for PLS estimation for this research.

Results

Before analyzing the data, the author investigated which nationality made airline cabin crews feel the most stress. The results from 156 pilot questionnaires showed in table 2 below:

Table 2: the most stress nationalities to airline cabin crews.

Nationalities	Number of airline cabin crews who feel stressed
1. Indian	67 (42.94 percent)
2. British	22 (14.10 percent)
3. Pakistanis	16 (10.56 percent)
4. Singaporean	13 (8.33 percent)
5. Hong Kong Chinese	11 (7.05 percent)
6. Arabs	9 (5.77 percent)
7. Mainland Chinese	8 (5.13 percent)
8. Other nationalities	10 (6.41 percent)

According to the results, Indian and Chinese were stressful nationalities ranked in number 1 and 7 respectively. This meant Indian passengers caused more stress to Thai airline cabin crews than Chinese passengers. Thus, these two cultures had confirmed the eligibility to use to compare the degree of cultural distance to Thai in the present context.

For the results of 1,200 questionnaires, the total of 208 questionnaires was returned which accounted for 17.33 percent response rate. When considering each set of the questionnaires, for Indian questionnaire, 117 questionnaires were returned which accounted for 19.50 percent response rate, and, for Chinese questionnaires, 91 questionnaires were returned which accounted for 15.17 percent response rate. The descriptive characteristics of the sample were reported in table 3.

Table 3: The descriptive characteristics of sample

Demographic	Descriptive statistics
Age (years)	Mean: 37.6539 Standard deviation: 8.9221
Gender	Male: 121 (58.17%) Female: 87 (41.82%)
Educational level	Below bachelor degree: 0 (0%) Bachelor degree: 148 (71.15%) Master degree: 56 (26.92%) Doctoral degree: 4 (1.92%)
Marital status	Single: 94 (45.19%) Married: 106 (50.96%) Divorced: 5 (2.40%) Widowed: 3 (1.44%)
Job rank	Economy class: 102 (49.04%) Business class: 42 (20.19%) First class: 40 (19.23%) Air purser: 19 (9.13%) In-flight manager and above: 5 (2.40%)

The results from the convergent validity test indicated that all items had a value over 0.5 which met the minimum threshold as recommended by Hair et al. (2009) except two questions from job stress (JS6) and cultural competence (CCK1). These two items were removed from the analysis. Next, the results from discriminant validity test showed that all variables had the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) higher than the correlations between variables.

This meant all constructs were discriminated from each other (Fornell & Larker, 1981). The details of the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) together with the correlations were reported in table 4.

Then, the reliability test was performed by estimating a Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability. The results indicated that all variables had a value above 0.8 (ranging from 0.846-0.942). This meant the constructs were reliable (Nunnally, 1978).

The multicollinearity had been investigated by full collinearity Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The benefits of full VIF were its capability to examine both lateral and vertical collinearity at the same time (Kock & Lynn, 2012). The results showed that all constructs have a value below 3.3 (ranging from 1.475 to 3.154) as recommended by Kock and Lynn (2012). Additionally, the value of full VIF test below 3.3 can indicate that common method bias (CMB) was not a serious issue in the model (Kock & Lynn, 2012).

Lastly, Model fit and quality indices were checked for the quality of the model (Kock & Lynn, 2012). The results illustrated that Simpson's paradox ratio (SPR) and R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR) were ideally acceptable (=1.000), Tenenhaus GoF (GoF index) indicated that the results had a large explanatory power to the model (>=0.36). and Average variance inflation factor (AVIF) (<=5), Average full variance inflation factor (AFVIF) (<=5), Statistical suppression ratio (SSR) (>=0.7), and Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR) (>=0.7) were acceptable. This meant this model had an acceptable quality.

Table 4: The correlations

	CC	JS	CD	GEN	EDU	MAR	RANK
CC	(0.646)						
JS	-0.441	(0.667)					
CD	0.207	-0.385	(1.000)				
GEN	-0.073	0.063	0.094	(1.000)			
EDU	0.157	-0.123	0.249	0.109	(1.000)		
MAR	-0.184	0.099	0.000	-0.047	-0.249	(1.000)	
RANK	0.602	-0.510	0.460	0.096	0.472	-0.252	(1.000)

Note: CC=Cultural competence, JS=Job stress, CD=Cultural distance, GEN=Gender, EDU=Educational level, MAR=Marital status, RANK=Job rank, the square root of (AVE) were displays in a parenthesis, ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05

After the data has been examined, hypothesis testing was conducted. Using a bootstrap resample technique with 100 subsamples as suggested by Efron, Rogosa, and Tibshirani (2004). The results of PLS analysis were shown in figure 1 and were discussed according to research objectives below.

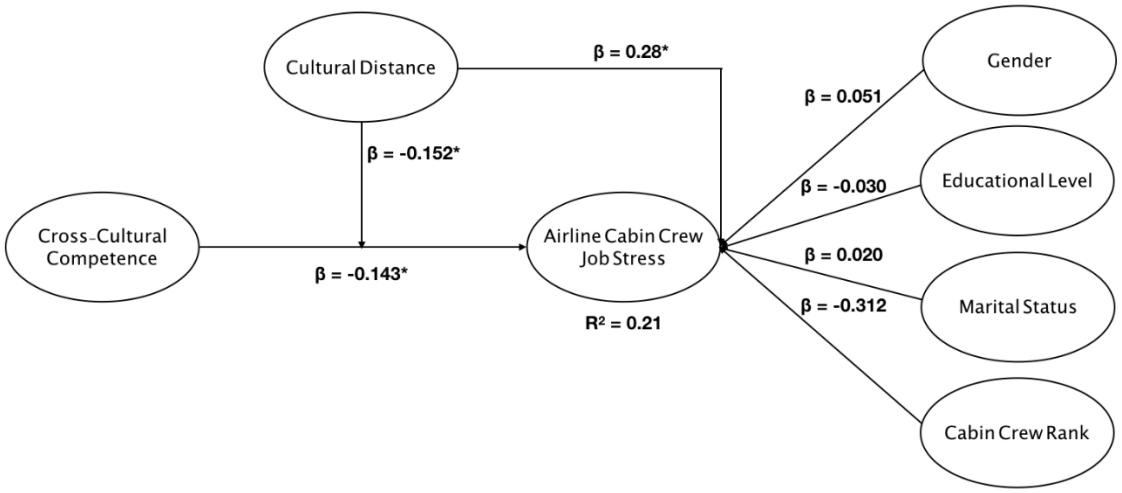


Figure 1: The results of PLS analysis

To investigate the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that cross-cultural competence will negatively associate with job stress. The result showed that there was a negative relationship and was statistically significant (β = -0.143, p < 0.032). Therefore, this hypothesis was supported. This relationship explained about 21% (Adjusted R^2 = 0.21) of the model.

To investigate the moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that cultural distance will negatively moderate the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress. The result showed that cultural distance negatively moderated the relationship and was statistically significant (β = -0.152, p < 0.024). Therefore, this hypothesis was supported. This revealed that the negative relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress tend to be weaker when cultural distance is high. The data plots of moderating effect were shown in figure 2. Figure 2 also indicated that when the cultural distance is low, airline cabin crews with high CC tend to experience higher stress compared to airline cabin crews who possess lower CC. Oppositely, when the cultural distance

is high airline cabin crews with a high level of CC would perceive much lower stress than their colleagues who have a low CC level.

For control variables, gender positively related to job stress (β = 0.051, p = 0.402). Educational level negatively related to job stress (β = -0.030, p = 0.347). Marital status positively related to job stress (β = 0.020, p = 0.339). Job rank negatively related to job stress (β = -0.312, p = 0.124). All control variable relationships were not statistically significant.

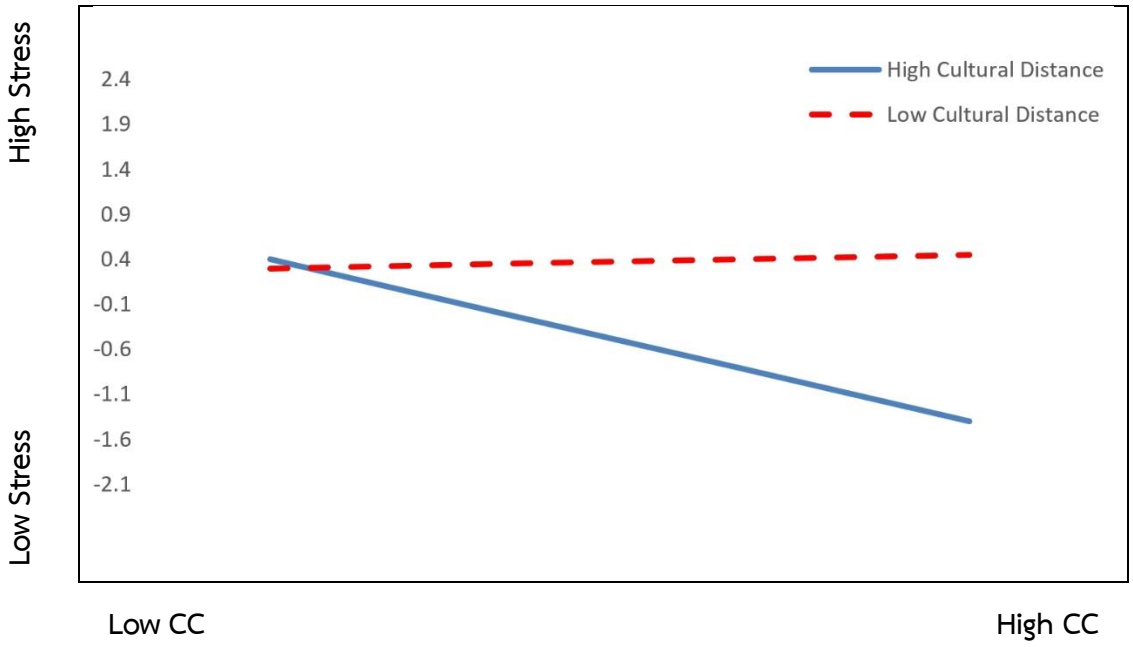


Figure 2: The data plot of the moderating effect of high cultural distance.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the objectives of this research, the authors aimed to examine how cross-cultural competence (CC) facilitates airline cabin crews to lower their job stress when dealing with passengers from other cultures and to consider the level of cultural distance between airline cabin crews and foreign passengers as a moderator of the relationship. For the first objective, the authors aimed to examine the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress. The result from PLS analysis indicated that there was a negative and significant relationship. This meant airline cabin crews who possess a higher level of cross-cultural competence were able to lessen their job stress when serving foreign passengers. This finding was congruent with previous research of Gudykunst (2004) who mentioned that individuals who have cultural knowledge, cultural awareness and cross-culturally behavioral skill were

able to lessen their stress when dealing with persons from another culture. Moreover, the result of this research also coincides with the study of Redmond and Bunyi (1993). The scholars found that international students who have a high level of intercultural communication competence can lower their stress while studying in US because they can communicate, adapt, and integrate themselves well with local students. Therefore, non-US students tend to experience a lower level of stress.

The second objective of this research was to examine the moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between cross-cultural competence and job stress. The result showed that there is a negative and significant moderating effect on the relationship. This meant the negative relationship between CC and job stress tended to be weaker when the cultural distance between airline cabin crews and foreign passengers is high. Thus, airline cabin crews with high CC would experience less stress when dealing with foreign passengers whose culture were vastly different from them. In contrast, airline cabin crews with a low level of CC would experience higher stress while they were serving foreign passengers whose culture were very different from their own. As mentioned earlier, CC is a practical skill rather than a knowledge skill. Airline cabin crews who possessed this ability were able to utilize CC to deal with complex tasks in intercultural situations. Without CC, airline cabin crews could not understand and delivered the right service to matched with foreign passengers' expectations. They might also unintentionally violate foreign culture's norms, values and other aspects due to lack of competency to exhibit proper actions to a particular culture. Therefore, they will suffer the stress from negative reactions and complaints from those unsatisfied passengers. On the other hand, airline cabin crews with CC will feel easy to deal with foreign passengers because CC provided significant skills to encounter unfamiliarly cultural situations effectively. Therefore, high CC airline cabin crews were able to serve foreign passengers according to their expectations. Thus, airline cabin crews could avoid possible conflicts that might happen. Finally, they were able to alleviate job stress.

These findings were congruent with previous research in service provider context. Hayne, Gerhardt, and Davis (2009) mentioned that the higher cultural diversity workplace made nurses who had a different cultural background feel more stress in their routine job. To lessen job stress, Hayne et al. (2009) also recommended that cultural competence was the key to lower nurses' stress when the cultural distance between them and others was high. More importantly,

the results from this study had a contribution to cross-cultural international human resource management literature and also provide empirical evidence for the airline industry due to there was a lack of empirical evidence how CC associated a lower level of job stress in airline cabin crews context specifically when considering a cultural distance between them and foreign passengers.

Moreover, these results also contributed to stress-related theory especially Job demand-resource model (JD-R) (Demerouti et al., 2001). Cross-cultural competence played a vital role in job resources to help airline cabin crews to deal with unfamiliarly intercultural situations. With a high level of CC, airline cabin crews can engage with any demands from foreign passengers due to their adequate knowledge of other cultures. Therefore, they can lessen their job stress while serving their foreign passengers.

There were some limitations to this research. First, using self-administered questionnaires, respondents could have a subjected bias when evaluating themselves. However, this was a common issue for evaluating cross-cultural skill due to there was no other practical method to examine cross-cultural skill effectively (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). Second, this study used cross-sectional data. The results could imply associations but could not interpret as causations. Third, the small size of the sample may have a bias in generalizing to other airline companies. The next study should expand the sample to other international airline company to validate the results.

Recommendation

Implementation

According to this study's objective, this research finding provided a practical implication to the airline industry. A developing of cross-cultural competence in airline cabin crews were needed to lessen their stress. Even airline cabin crews usually interact with foreign passengers, this did not mean that they already possess a quality level of cross-cultural competence to handle intercultural situations effectively. Since cultural skill could be obtained through the training (Black & Mendenhall, 1990), the cultural training was needed for developing CC in airline cabin crews. The company should hire the natives of interested culture who also understand Thai culture together with the cultural expert (e.g. university professor or skilled cultural advisor) to design a proper training for airline cabin crews. Then, the evaluation was needed both in-class and in-flight to ensure that airline cabin crews were able to use CC effectively in real

situations. Moreover, airline cabin crews with a quality level of CC should be assigned to fly in the flight which had foreign passengers whose culture were much different from them. According to this research results, airline cabin crews will suffer less stress due to a high level of CC facilitated them to evade from any conflicts with foreign passengers.

Future Research

There were some issues that need to be explored in future research. First, this model should be conducted in other international airline companies to confirm the concreteness of the results of this study. Second, other work-related outcome variables should be tested to provide additional evidence to airline company about how CC help their airline cabin crews to alleviate unwanted outcomes. Third, the other mechanisms how CC lower job stress is an interesting issue to be discussed. For example, further study may investigate that can CC develop other competencies for airline cabin crews to lower the stress.

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