

## Research Article

# Exploring the Differences in Innovative Work Behavior and Workforce Agility Between Korean and Indonesian Employees: A Cross-cultural Study in a South Korea FDI Company

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**Abstract.**

The expansion of South Korean foreign direct investment companies in Indonesia has led to the possibility of cultural challenges arising among workers in multinational corporations. Additionally, there are notable differences in the innovation and agility indexes of Indonesia and South Korea in 2022. These disparities in performance may perpetuate stereotypes that suggest that innovation and agility are unique qualities exhibited by employees from each respective country. The objective of this study is to investigate whether there exist variations in the innovative work behavior and workforce agility of Indonesian and South Korean employees who work in the same organization as part of cross-cultural research. The theoretical framework for this research is Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, specifically the dimensions of long-term orientation and Stereotype Threat Theory, which are used to explain the phenomenon. This study used a quantitative approach and had 30 participants who worked at a South Korean FDI company. The participants were chosen through convenience sampling. The research tools included the innovative work behavior scale and the workforce agility scale. Data were analyzed using the Mann–Whitney U-Test and descriptive analysis. Based on the research findings, it appears that employees from different cultural backgrounds working in the same organization do not exhibit significant differences in terms of their innovative work behavior and workforce agility. This was observed in a case study conducted at a South Korean FDI company located in East Java.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, innovative work behavior, South Korea, workforce agility

## 1. BACKGROUND

Indonesia is one of the attractive investment destinations for South Korea. This fact is evidenced by South Korea being the seventh-largest investor in Indonesia with a total investment realization of USD 2.29 billion in 2022 [1]. The proliferation of South Korean foreign investment companies in Indonesia opens up the possibility of developing multicultural issues in the workforce due to the convergence of employees from two different cultural backgrounds. In this context, it's important to understand

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the cultural differences that can influence employees' work behavior in Indonesia and South Korea. As stated by [2], diversity among employees can lead to innovative work behavior, as diversity can create flexibility, help identify problems, and stimulate creative solutions. Diversity reflects the differences among individuals within a group, encompassing various attributes such as age, gender, tenure, educational background, functional background, as well as cultural background, including race, ethnicity, and nationality. However, cultural diversity, while beneficial, can result in negative impacts if not managed properly. The potential for conflicts within an organization is inevitable, especially if there is no clear cultural vision, mission, and commitment among its members [3].

The latest data shows a significant difference in performance between Indonesia and South Korea in terms of innovation and agility. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) announced that in 2022, South Korea ranked the top six most innovative countries in the world. Meanwhile, Indonesia's Global Innovation Index ranking in 2022 was 75th out of 132 countries [4]. Additionally, in April 2023, the US News and World Report released rankings of global agility. South Korea ranked 13th out of 81 countries, while Indonesia was ranked 44th in terms of agility [5]. The global agility index assessed criteria such as adaptability, dynamism, modernity, progressiveness, and responsiveness [6]. This divergence in performance suggests potential differences in how innovative work behavior and workforce agility manifest within these two countries.

At the same time, this achievement also has the potential to trigger stereotypes or discriminatory views regarding behavioral differences between employees from the two countries. Possible negative perspectives could arise such as stereotyping performance. Data indicating Indonesia's lower ranking compared to South Korea in terms of innovation and agility could lead to stereotypes that Indonesian employees are inherently less innovative and less agile, without considering other factors that may affect performance. In organizational life, negative stereotypes about groups can have detrimental effects on group members, especially when they are engaged in tasks that associate certain abilities with negative judgments about their group [7].

In this context, Hofstede's cultural dimensions can shed light on the disparities observed. Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions has contributed significantly to cultural studies, providing a categorization system that is easy to understand and apply to business decisions, and useful for understanding the perspectives of people from various cultures [8]. Hofstede defined culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another [9]. According to Hofstede, culture can only be understood through its comparative use. The comparison

of the Hofstede cultural dimension indexes of South Korea and Indonesia is presented in the following Table 1.

TABLE 1: The Cultural Dimension Comparison Index of South Korea and Indonesia.

Hofstede Cultural Dimensions	Indonesia		South Korea	
	Indexes	Category	Indexes	Category
Power Distance	78	High Hierarchical	60	Hierarchical
Individualism/Collectivism	14	Collectivism society	18	Collectivism society
Masculinity/Femininity	46	Feminine society	39	Feminine society
Uncertainty Avoidance	48	Low preference for avoiding uncertainty	85	High Avoidant to uncertainty
Long Term Orientation	62	Long Term Orientation	100	The Most Long Term Orientation
Indulgence/Restraint	38	Restraint	29	Restraint

The long-term Orientation (LTO) dimension of the cultural framework has become one of the most widely cited criteria for assessing cultural differences [8]. Notably in the comparison between South Korea and Indonesia, the LTO dimension has very significant distinctions. South Korea achieved an index score of 100 for the long-term orientation dimension which means this country’s society takes the most pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts as a way to prepare for the future. Meanwhile, Indonesia’s index is 62 which means fairly pragmatic where people believe that truth depends on the situation, context, and time. They can adapt traditions to changing situations, have a strong tendency to save and invest, make savings, and persevere in achieving results. The LTO dimension reflects the extent to which a society values future-oriented behaviors such as persistence, perseverance, and planning for the long term, as opposed to valuing tradition and fulfilling immediate needs [8]. According to [10], cultural values can predict certain organizational and employee outcomes similar to, or even stronger than, other individual differences such as personality traits. As such, this cultural variance could potentially influence the extent to which innovative work behavior and workforce agility are cultivated and valued in the respective work environments.

### 1.1. Innovative Work Behavior

Innovative work behavior is the intentional introduction or proposal of new ideas regarding one’s work to improve performance [11]. According to [12], there are four dimensions of innovative work behavior: idea exploration, idea creation, idea promotion, and idea

implementation. The following is a comprehensive explanation of the four dimensions of innovative work behavior:

a. Idea Exploration is searching for methods to enhance existing products, services, or processes or attempting to conceive alternative approaches.

b. Idea Generation entails reorganizing existing concepts to address problems and enhance performance in various ways.

c. Idea Championing entails pursuing support and forming coalitions with individuals who play significant roles in the organization to implement innovative ideas with persistence and zeal.

d. Idea implementation is a focused endeavour on how the concept is realized, focusing on outcomes. The form is creating, testing, and modifying innovations in work processes or new products.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of innovative work behavior in the workplace [13]. Innovative work behavior is a social and independent mechanism that can enhance workplace performance [14]; frequently necessitates out-of-the-box and novel thinking, which can increase work autonomy and individual perspective [15]; enhancing the positive correlation of organizational climate innovation and organizational performance [16]; and as a key pillar that supports business organizations in maintaining their competitiveness [17].

The antecedent factors influencing innovative behavior considered Individual and organizational perspectives [18]. Individual perspective factors include personality [19] and learning agility [20]. The organizational perspective factors involving organizational culture and climate that can stimulate the enhancement or reduction of innovative behavior in the workplace. The perceived supportive environment by employees influences the level of employee commitment to the organization and can determine whether they engage in innovative activities [9].

## 1.2. Workforce agility

Workforce agility defined as the ability of employees to manage and respond to change by quickly adapting to the new conditions generated by these changes [21]. The dimension of workforce agility outlined by [22] namely the behavior of employees who demonstrate the capacity to behave proactively, adaptability, and resilience. In a dynamic business environment, agility is one of the most essential traits and skills employees must possess. Workforce agility ultimately correlates positively with organizational

development agility [23] and correlates positively with task performance and innovative performance, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and well-being [24].

### 1.3. Innovative Work Behavior, Workforce Agility, and Hofstede's LTO Dimension

Typically, a company's emphasis on a long-term perspective is correlated with a favorable impact on innovation. This correlation is based on the underlying idea that managers with a greater focus on the long term are more inclined to take risks, subsequently fostering increased innovation [25]. Error risk-taking mediates the positive link between perceived psychological safety and innovative work behavior [8]. Additionally, adopting a long-term orientation also has a positive influence on the thoroughness, speed, and inventive nature of strategic decision-making procedures [26]. Speed and thoroughness are parts of the adaptive dimension that characterizes workforce agility as the ability to quickly and efficiently adjust to both internal and external environments while feeling comfortable with change [27].

As a study case, this research is conducted at PT.XYZ is one of the South Korean foreign direct investment (FDI) companies in East Java Indonesia. PT.XYZ is a subsidiary of one of the top-tier business corporations in South Korea. PT.XYZ has been operating for more than 30 years. As a South Korean FDI company, PT.XYZ has top management controlled partially by South Korean expatriates and partially by local Indonesian employees. Up to this day, PT.XYZ has exhibited a well-regarded performance by its Head Quarter Corporation and received awards from government as the best exporter performance. The success is certainly attributed to the collaborative efforts between South Korean expatriates and local Indonesian employees.

Based on the aforementioned context, built upon the observed discrepancies in the Global Innovation Index, the global agility rankings, and the underlying cultural dimensions. These disparities prompt an exploration into how cultural country contexts, as reflected in long-term orientation, might contribute to distinct approaches to innovative work behavior and workforce agility among South Korean and Indonesian employees. This study aims to explore the differences in innovative work behavior and workforce agility between Indonesian and South Korean employees: a cross-cultural case study in a South Korean FDI company.

## 1.4. Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference in innovative work behavior between South Korean Employees and Indonesian Employees

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference in workforce agility between South Korean Employees and Indonesian Employees

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1. Sampling Method

The sampling method used is non-probability sampling through the convenience sampling technique. Non-probability sampling does not offer an equal chance for every element in the population to be selected as a sample. The convenience sampling technique involves choosing elements that are readily available and easy to obtain for sampling [28].

### 2.2. Research Subjects

Using the convenience sampling technique, 15 South Korean expatriate and 15 Indonesian employees participated. Detailed descriptions are presented in the following Table 2.

### 2.3. Research Instruments

Innovative work behavior, measured by a scale devised and validated by [12]. The scale consists of ten statement items that measure four dimensions of innovative work behavior: idea generation, idea promotion, idea implementation, and idea exploration. On a 4-point Likert scale, responses ranged from category 4 for very often to category 1 for very rarely. Cronbach's reliability coefficient = 0.877 for the statement, "I systematically introduce innovative ideas into my work practices."

The workforce agility instrument is a measuring device created by [29]. The scale consists of seven items that assess respondents' talents, attributes, attitudes, and behavior. The dimensions measured consist of adaptability, flexibility, collaborative development, speed, and informational content. On a 3-point scale, each item is rated as follows: (1 = low, 2 = moderate, and 3 = high). The following is an example of a bullet

TABLE 2: Description of Subject (N = 30).

Characteristic	N	(%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	29	97%
Female	1	3%
<b>Age</b>		
31 – 40 years old	4	13%
41 – 50 years old	14	47%
51 – 55 years old	12	40%
<b>Education</b>		
Associate Degree (D1)	2	7%
Undergraduate (S1)	20	67%
Postgraduate (S2)	6	20%
Doctoral (S3)	2	7%
<b>Working Years</b>		
< 10 years	15	50%
11 - 20 years	5	17%
> 20 years	10	33%

point describing an employee’s adaptability: “ I am flexible to quickly change from task to task, job to job, and place to place.” Cronbach’s reliability coefficient = 0.823%.

## 2.4. Research Design

This study engages quantitative methodology, specifically an objective theory testing methodology, by investigating the relationship between variables measured with specific instruments and data that can be analyzed using statistical methods [30]. This study employs quantitative methodology to assess the difference in innovative work behavior and agility employee between South Korean employees and Indonesian employees as a cross-cultural study case in FDI South Korea Company.

## 2.5. Data Collection Procedures

Primary data collection techniques were carried out using online questionnaires in English language for Korean and Indonesian participants. Questionnaires collect data by presenting respondents with written statements or queries to answer [28]. The Google form was used to send online questionnaires to respondents selected by proportional stratified random sampling. Respondents filled out the Google form with their responses and returned the questionnaire using the same platform.

## 2.6. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis techniques used descriptive methods and the Mann-Whitney U-Test with IBM SPSS (Statistical Product & Service Solutions) 26 software. The Mann-Whitney U-Test is used to test the significance of comparative hypotheses between two independent samples when the data is in ordinal form and not normally distributed. distributions [28].

## 3. RESULTS

Based on research conducted on 30 employees, the average value (mean) and standard deviation (SD) of the research variables have been determined. The data description is available in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Description of Research Variable.

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Indonesian Innovative Work Behavior	3.380	0.305	15
Korean Innovative Work Behavior	3.320	0.260	15
Indonesian Workforce Agility	2.610	0.331	15
Korean Workforce Agility	2.600	0.230	15

The data in Table 3 indicates that the innovative work behavior of Indonesian employees is slightly higher (3.380) compared to the Korean average (3.320), which means no substantial difference. However the standard deviation for the Indonesian employee (0.305) is higher than the Korean employee (0.260), this could indicate greater variability within the Indonesian group's responses. The workforce agility average among Indonesian employees and Koreans is almost the same. However the standard deviation for the Indonesian employee (0.331) is higher than the Korean employee (0.230), this could indicate greater variability within the Indonesian group's responses.

Then, for a more detailed description of the differences in innovative work behavior and workforce agility based on the cultural country we classify high, moderate, and low categories in each behavior based on the mean of total scores Indonesian and Korean, and consider the range between mean and maximum value as the basis for determining the range of each category. The outcomes are presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

From Table 4, based on the cultural country background of the participants, Indonesian employees show a slightly higher percentage of highly innovative work behavior (47%) compared to Korean employees (27%). Moderate innovative work behavior is more prominent among Korean employees (67%) compared to Indonesian employees (53%).



TABLE 4: Classification Innovative Work Behavior.

Innovative Work Behavior	f	%
<b>Korean Employee</b>		
High	4	27%
Moderate	10	67%
Low	1	7%
<b>Indonesian Employee</b>		
High	7	47%
Moderate	8	53%
Low	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		
High	11	37%
Moderate	18	60%
Low	1	3%

TABLE 5: Classification Workforce Agility.

Workforce Agility	f	%
<b>Korean Employee</b>		
High	8	53%
Moderate	5	33%
Low	2	13%
<b>Indonesian Employee</b>		
High	9	60%
Moderate	3	20%
Low	3	20%
<b>Total</b>		
High	17	57%
Moderate	8	27%
Low	5	17%

From Table 5, Indonesian employees have a slightly higher percentage of respondents with high workforce agility (60% vs. 53% for Korean employees).

The analysis results of the Mann-Whitney U-Test to observe the variations in innovative work behavior and workforce agility are presented in the following Table 6 and Table 7.

TABLE 6: Result of Mann-Whitney U-Test of Innovative Work Behavior Based on Cultural County.

Indicator	U	W	Z	p
Culture	94,000	214,000	-0,775	0.438

Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney U-Test for innovative work behavior (Table 6), it was found that the difference in innovative work behavior between Korean

TABLE 7: Result of Mann-Whitney U-Test of Workforce Agility Based on Cultural County.

Indicator	U	W	Z	p
Culture	104,500	224,500	-0,340	0.734

employees and Indonesian employees is not significant ( $p$  0.438 > 0.05). Similarly, the results of the Mann-Whitney U-Test for workforce agility (Table 7) also indicate that there is not enough evidence to suggest a difference between Korean employees and Indonesian employees ( $p$  0.734 > 0.05).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the differences in innovative work behavior and employee agility between Korean and Indonesian employees within the context of a South Korean FDI company. The analysis is approached through the lenses of both Hofstede’s Culture Dimensions Theory, specifically focusing on Long-Term Orientation, and the Stereotype Threat Theory. First, the research found that there is no significant difference between Korean and Indonesian employees regarding innovative work behavior. This finding indicates that the assumed differences in innovative work behavior due to cultural country factors are not supported.

Even though the Korean culture dimension has been categorized as having a relatively high long-term orientation, while the Indonesian culture dimension is more balanced between short-term and long-term orientations, this could indicate that the long-term orientation value is not a major differentiating factor in this case study. Particularly it might conclude in the context of employees within the same organization, the cultural country backgrounds do not influence the difference in innovative work behavior between the Top Management employees. This result is aligned with the previous research statement that ethnic backgrounds do not significantly affect innovative work behavior [31]. Based on this finding, hypothesis one in this study is rejected.

The lack of variation in innovative work behavior between Indonesian and South Korean employees can be attributed to other factors such as organizational culture and climate when individuals from different cultural backgrounds work in the same company. As stated by [32], organizational culture acts as a binding agent that facilitating a connection between employees and the organization is key in promoting innovative work behavior, as confirmed by [33]. This underscores the importance of organizational culture, climate, professional norms, and other aspects in shaping cultural values within a specific context, which can have a greater influence on employees’ innovative work

behavior. As stated by [34] organization differences are larger than country differences in cultural values.

Second, the research findings indicate that there is insufficient evidence to support the notion that Indonesian and South Korean workers differ in terms of workforce agility. Despite having diverse cultural backgrounds, employees within the same organizational context appear to have similar levels of workforce agility. As a result, the second hypothesis in the study has been rejected. The reason why there are no differences in workforce agility between Indonesian and South Korean employees is because both groups have grown within the same organizational climate and culture.

Even though Indonesia and South Korea have significant differences in terms of long-term orientation, employees from both countries have acquired the same management approach. They are required to adopt modern management practices and technology, as well as receiving similar training to enhance their abilities in facing changes. Factors such as the demands of tasks and responsibilities, the characteristics of environmental challenges faced, and mutual adaptation of work culture have a greater influence on the respondents in applying behaviors or performance in their day-to-day work life. To be adaptable, flexible, collaborative, and speedy as dimensions of workforce agility are basic competencies demanded to be possessed by all of employees in this company. According to [35], organizational culture, collaboration, information systems, and competencies are the major factors promoting agility in an organization.

According to Stereotype Threat Theory, people from diverse cultural backgrounds may perform differently because they worry about confirming negative stereotypes associated with their group [36]. This theory shows how societal prejudices and preconceptions can impact individual performance. If people feel that their efforts will be judged based on negative stereotypes, they might not perform well. Furthermore, if someone's performance validates a stereotype, it can reinforce biases and discrimination. Due to Indonesia having a lower index encompassing the Global Innovation Index and agility rankings compared with South Korea, this psychological pressure did not influence the behavior and performance of Indonesian employees.

In the context of this study, Indonesian employees might be not influenced by stereotype threat. However, susceptibility to the influence of stereotype threat could be influenced by how much individuals embrace stereotypes or show support for them. Even though the belief is that someone is unfavorably impacted by stereotype threat, they don't necessarily have to question their capability or their group's competence in the stereotyped field to experience negative effects from stereotype threat [7]. The other factors that may be attributed are organizational culture and leadership practices in

the workplaces of Indonesian employees might emphasize a positive, growth-oriented environment that leads to resilience and determination to overcome these challenges.

#### 4.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

We offer two theoretical implications of this research. First, we found no significant difference in workforce agility and innovative work behavior between Indonesian and South Korean employees, expanding the theoretical discussion that organization differences contribute more than country differences to employee innovative work behavior and workforce agility, as attempted by a few recent studies [31,34,35]. Second, Indonesian employees might be not influenced by stereotype threats even though the difference between Indonesia and Korea in terms of innovation and agility is a significant gap. This finding supports what [36] stated that experiences of stereotype threat may differ between stigmatized groups and that no one mediator may provide generalized empirical support across diverse populations.

Our research has implications for company management. Firstly, it's important to prioritize diversity initiatives and emphasize that collaboration and performance go beyond cultural differences. This can foster a more inclusive work environment and promote harmony among multicultural employees. Secondly, management should focus on breaking down stereotypes and promoting collaboration, mutual respect, and equal opportunities for all employees. This can create a more supportive work environment. Thirdly, the absence of the stereotype threat theory effect can reduce performance anxiety among Indonesian employees. Despite Indonesia having a lower index of innovative work behavior and agility, the absence of significant differences suggests that Indonesian employees may feel less pressure from cultural bias, be more confident in their abilities, and be encouraged to take ownership of their professional development and growth.

#### 4.2. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

It should be noted that there are limitations to this research that affect the significance of any cultural differences between Korea and Indonesia in terms of innovative work behavior and workforce agility. Specifically, this study was limited to a single private company and therefore had limited resources. As a result, the number of Korean expatriates and local Indonesian employees working in the same organization was

not substantial. Additionally, the fact that there were only 30 participants may have resulted in weak statistical power and is a major limitation of this research.

To enhance the scope of studying the effects of cultural differences on innovative work behavior and workforce agility, it is recommended to include participants from multiple Korean FDI companies in Indonesia. This approach will yield more generalized conclusions due to a larger population coverage, which would be beneficial for future research in this area.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on our research into cultural factors, specifically the Hofstede culture long-term orientation dimension, and taking into account the impact of stereotype threat theory on the global innovation and agility index, we have found that there is no significant difference between the innovative work behavior and workforce agility of Korean and Indonesian employees in a South Korean FDI company located in East Java.

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## Ethics Policy

Informed consent procedures are carried out simultaneously with the distribution of research instruments, through a statement of willingness.

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