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The Influence of Power Distance on the Communication Effectiveness of Indonesian Workers

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of power distance on the communication effectiveness of Indonesian migrant workers in international multicultural workplaces. The study employed a quantitative approach using a survey design. Data were collected through online questionnaires distributed to Indonesian workers who had experience working abroad. A total of 107 responses were obtained, and after outlier screening using the Z-score method, 101 valid responses were analyzed. The research instruments were tested using validity and reliability tests, showing that all items were valid and reliable with Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70. Because the data did not fully meet the normality assumption, hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrap method with 1000 resampling iterations. The results showed that power distance had a negative but statistically insignificant effect on communication effectiveness, with a regression coefficient value of -0.047 and a significance value of 0.211 (>0.05). The coefficient of determination (R^2) value was 0.011, indicating that power distance explained only 1.1% of communication effectiveness, while the remaining 98.9% was influenced by other factors outside the study. Therefore, it can be concluded that power distance is not a major factor affecting the communication effectiveness of Indonesian workers abroad.

Keywords: Power Distance; Communication Effectiveness; Indonesian Migrant Workers; Intercultural Communication; Multicultural Workplace.

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Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh power distance terhadap efektivitas komunikasi pekerja Indonesia dalam lingkungan kerja internasional yang multikultural. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring yang disebarkan kepada pekerja Indonesia yang memiliki pengalaman bekerja di luar negeri. Sebanyak 107 data responden diperoleh dan setelah dilakukan penyaringan outlier menggunakan metode Z-score, sebanyak 101 data digunakan dalam analisis akhir. Instrumen penelitian diuji melalui uji validitas dan reliabilitas, dengan hasil seluruh item dinyatakan valid dan reliabel dengan nilai Cronbach's Alpha di atas 0,70. Karena data tidak memenuhi asumsi normalitas, pengujian hipotesis dilakukan menggunakan metode bootstrap dengan 1000 kali resampling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa power distance memiliki pengaruh negatif namun tidak signifikan terhadap efektivitas komunikasi dengan nilai koefisien regresi sebesar -0,047 dan nilai signifikansi sebesar 0,211 (>0,05). Nilai koefisien determinasi (R^2) sebesar 0,011 menunjukkan bahwa power distance hanya mampu menjelaskan efektivitas komunikasi sebesar 1,1%, sedangkan sisanya dipengaruhi oleh faktor lain di luar penelitian. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa power distance bukan merupakan faktor utama yang memengaruhi efektivitas komunikasi pekerja Indonesia di luar negeri.
***Kata kunci**: Power Distance; Efektivitas Komunikasi; Pekerja Migran Indonesia; Komunikasi Antarbudaya; Tempat Kerja Multikultural.*

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, labor mobility between countries is increasing annually. Indonesia is one of the 10 countries with the highest number of immigrants in the world (IOM, 2024). Indonesia is also one of the largest contributors of labor, with more than 9 million people working abroad in 2016, increasing the value of the country's remittances and contributing at least 1% of Indonesia's total GDP (World Bank, 2017).

However, working in an international environment requires not only technical skills but also intercultural communication skills. Cultural differences significantly influence how relationships within a workplace are formed, with the culture of an organization or workplace influencing how its members interact with each other, express opinions, enforce rules, and relationships between employees and superiors (Tina Urbach et al., 2020).

One crucial cultural dimension of workplace communication is power distance. According to Hofstede (2001), power distance is a fundamental issue handled differently in societies where inequality exists in certain areas such as prestige, wealth, and power. Different societies place varying proportions on status consistency in these areas. Power distance also weakens the influence of leadership on employee behavior (Subiyanto & Susanto, 2021).

Previous research has focused on the relationship between power distance and communication within the context of national organizations, rather than multinational organizations in general. Furthermore, discussions of communication effectiveness as influenced by power distance are still relatively limited. Furthermore, this aspect has not been extensively researched using quantitative research methods. Therefore, further research is needed to fill this gap in research on the influence of power distance on communication effectiveness.

This study examines the relationship between power distance and the communication effectiveness of Indonesian employees working abroad. Specifically, this study aims to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the level of power distance and the communication effectiveness experienced by employees working in an international work environment. Furthermore, this study also examines the extent to which power distance influences communication effectiveness, thereby providing a better understanding of the role of cultural hierarchical differences in communication interactions.

This study aims to examine the relationship between power distance and the communication effectiveness of Indonesian migrant workers in international work environments. Specifically, the study investigates whether power distance has a significant relationship with communication effectiveness and measures the extent to which power distance influences the communication effectiveness of Indonesian employees working abroad. Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the role of cultural hierarchy in shaping communication processes within multicultural workplaces. Accordingly, this research addresses the following questions: (1) Is there a significant relationship between power distance and the communication effectiveness of Indonesian migrant workers abroad? and (2) To what extent does power distance influence the communication effectiveness of Indonesian migrant

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workers abroad? To answer these questions, the study tests the significance of the relationship between power distance and communication effectiveness and evaluates the magnitude of the influence of power distance on communication effectiveness among Indonesian employees working in international settings.

Literature Review

2.1 Power Distance

This study uses Geert Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions, specifically the concept of power distance. According to Hofstede (2001), power distance is the degree to which an individual accepts the unequal distribution of power within an organization or society. In cultures with high power distance, relationships between superiors and subordinates tend to be formal and hierarchical. Subordinates are more obedient to superiors' orders and rarely express direct criticism. Conversely, cultures with low power distance encourage more open and equal communication.

2.2 Communication Effectiveness

Communication is a crucial aspect aimed at achieving organizational goals, where information is exchanged between two or more people. Good communication is effective and two-way, requiring organizational members to possess strong communication skills to achieve goals (Robbin, 2017).

Robbin (2017) also stated that communication also has several obstacles, namely, circumstances when the sender manipulates information, the existence of capacity limitations in individuals, differences in oral communication between different genders, the recipient's feelings during communication, and misinterpretation of information.

2.3 The Influence of Power Distance on Communication Effectiveness

Based on the concept of power distance proposed by Geert Hofstede, interaction patterns between individuals can be influenced by differences in power levels within an organization. Organizational conditions can influence the communication process, especially between superiors and subordinates. Furthermore, Stephen P. Robbins emphasizes the importance of openness, message understanding, and feedback in organizational communication, according to the definition of

communication effectiveness. A high power distance can hinder open communication, which can lead to less effective communication within the organization. This is consistent with previous research focusing on Norwegian workers with Asian business partners that found that power distance influences challenges and can become a barrier to communication, where high power distance can trigger communication imbalances (Skevik, 2020).

METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey design. The quantitative approach was chosen because this study aims to examine the relationship and influence between power distance variables and communication effectiveness in a measurable and objective manner. Data were collected in numerical form through a questionnaire and analyzed using statistical techniques to determine the influence between variables. This approach was chosen so that the phenomenon under study could be analyzed based on numerical data obtained directly from respondents. The focus of this study is on Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) abroad who interact in a cross-cultural work environment, particularly in communicating with superiors from different cultural backgrounds.

3.2 Population and Sample

The sample used in this study was Indonesian immigrant workers with experience working abroad. We chose this target sample because it was relevant to the research objective, which focuses on communication experiences within the context of cross-border work hierarchies. The research sample is a subset of the population that meets the criteria of having worked or having experience working in a multicultural, cross-border hierarchical environment.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, where respondents were selected based on specific criteria that met the research objectives. This technique was used due to limitations in accessing the entire population and the need to obtain truly relevant respondents. The target number of respondents/samples in this study was a minimum of 100 respondents, adjusting to the data and statistical analysis needs.

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The total number of respondents obtained was 107. However, after data screening, six outliers were identified, affecting the distribution and normality of the research data. Therefore, outlier detection was performed using the Z-score method. These data were removed from the analysis to ensure more accurate research results and meet the required statistical assumptions. Therefore, the final sample size used in this study was 101 respondents.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire system compiled using a Likert scale (1-4), namely:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = agree
4 = strongly agree

The questionnaire consists of two main variables:

1. Variable X: Power distance
   Measuring how respondents perceive hierarchy and power in the workplace.
2. Variable Y: Communication effectiveness
   Measuring respondents' ability to communicate effectively in the work environment, including comfort, clarity of communication, and respondents' ability to express opinions.

Data collection was carried out online using Google Forms, thus facilitating distribution to respondents who met the desired criteria.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed quantitatively to identify the relationships and influences between the variables studied. Prior to further analysis, the research instrument will be tested for validity and reliability to ensure that each question item accurately and consistently measures the variable. Next, the data will be processed using statistical software, SPSS, to produce findings that can objectively and systematically answer the research questions.

3.5 Data Testing Instruments

To ensure the strength of the instrument used, the following tests were carried out:

1. Validity Test
   Validity testing is conducted to determine whether the questionnaire is capable of measuring the intended variables. This test is conducted by examining the correlation between item scores and the total score. Validity is determined if the correlation value is greater than the r-table value.
2. Reliability Test
   Reliability testing was also conducted to determine the consistency of the research instrument. The testing was conducted by observing the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. An instrument is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is > 0.7.
3. Normality Test
   This test is carried out to determine whether the distribution of research data is normal or not, the test results can be seen based on the output of several tests, namely:
   1) Kolmogorov-Smirnov test
   2) Histogram graph
   3) Normal p-plot regression residual chart

   It is said to be normally distributed if the significance value is > 0.05.
   The test results showed that the research data did not meet the assumption of normality. To address this issue, outliers were identified using the Z-Score method by examining the Z-residual value. Data with a value above +2.5 or below -2.5 were categorized as extreme data (outliers). Based on the test results, using the original data, the total number of data used in the study was 107 respondents.
4. Hypothesis Testing
   a. t-test
      The t-test is a method used to determine the influence of the independent variable (power distance) on the dependent variable (communication effectiveness) partially.
      testing criteria:
      1) If the significance value is < 0.05, then the hypothesis is accepted.
      2) If the significance value > 0.05, then the hypothesis is rejected.

   b. r^2 test
      The r^2 test or coefficient of determination (r^2) is a method used to determine how much the power distance variable is able to explain the communication effectiveness variable.

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The r^2 value is in the range 0-1:

1) The closer to 1 → the stronger the model's explanatory power
2) The closer to 0, the weaker the model's ability to explain.

5. Bootstrap method

   The bootstrap method is a resampling-based statistical technique that is carried out by resampling the original data in a certain amount. This technique is used to improve the accuracy of parameter estimation, overcome the limitations of non-normal data and obtain more stable standard values and significance.

   The bootstrapping method uses 1,000 resamplings to produce more stable parameter estimates. This is because it is more suitable for non-normally distributed data and can increase the validity of statistical test results. The B coefficient value is used to determine the direction and magnitude of the influence between variables, while the confidence interval value is used to ensure the stability of the research parameter estimates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine how power distance can influence the communication styles of Indonesian migrant workers while working abroad. The data used in this study were obtained by distributing questionnaires to 107 respondents who were Indonesian migrant workers or had worked abroad and had superiors from different cultural backgrounds. The information obtained from the questionnaires was then processed using SPSS to evaluate the quality of the research instruments and to examine the relationships and influences between variables.

4.1 Validity Test Results

Validity testing was conducted to determine whether each question in the questionnaire accurately measured the research variables. The testing process used Pearson correlation between each item and the total score of the variable. An item was considered valid if it had a correlation value greater than 0.30 and a significance value less than 0.05.

Based on testing, all items in the Power Distance variable showed correlation values above 0.30. The highest validity value was found in item PD1

with a value of 0.799, while the lowest value was found in item PD5 with a value of 0.525. Therefore, all items in the Power Distance variable are considered valid and can be used in research.

Table 1. Validity Test of Power Distance Variable

Item	Pearson Correlation	Information
PD1	0.799	Valid
PD2	0.701	Valid
PD3	0.738	Valid
PD4	0.554	Valid
PD5	0.525	Valid
PD6	0.746	Valid
PD7	0.670	Valid
PD8	0.682	Valid
PD9	0.690	Valid
PD10	0.720	Valid
PD11	0.724	Valid

Source: SPSS 23

Meanwhile, for the Communication Effectiveness variable, all items also showed correlation values above 0.30. The highest validity value was found in item EK3 with a value of 0.787, while the lowest value was found in item EK7 with a value of 0.668. These results indicate that all questions in the Communication Effectiveness variable are valid.

Table 2. Validity Test of Communication Effectiveness Variables

Item	Pearson Correlation	Information
EK1	0.680	Valid
EK2	0.689	Valid
EK3	0.787	Valid
EK4	0.728	Valid
EK5	0.773	Valid
EK6	0.777	Valid
EK7	0.668	Valid
EK8	0.686	Valid

Source: SPSS 23

Based on these results, all statement items in both variables meet the validity criteria and can be used in the next research analysis stage.

4.2 Reliability Test Results

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Reliability testing was conducted to determine the consistency of the research instrument. The testing was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha method, with a reliability criterion of greater than 0.70.

Based on the test results, the Power Distance variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.887, while the Communication Effectiveness variable obtained a value of 0.871. Both values are above the minimum reliability limit, thus the research instrument is declared reliable.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Information
Power Distance	0.887	11	Reliable
Communication Effectiveness	0.871	8	Reliable

Source: SPSS 23

These results indicate that the research instrument has a good level of consistency and can be used in the research data collection process.

4.3 Results of the Classical Assumption Test (Normality)

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the residual data in the study was normally distributed before hypothesis testing was conducted. Initially, this study used data from 107 respondents, previously declared valid and reliable through research instrument testing. Normality testing was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method on the residual data.

Based on the initial test results, the significance value was below 0.05, indicating that the data were not normally distributed. The researchers then attempted to transform the data using the natural logarithm (LN) method to improve the distribution. However, the transformation results indicated that the residual data still did not meet the assumption of normality.

In addition to examining the significance value, researchers also examined the Normal P–P Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals in the regression output. Based on the graph, the residual points appear to be spread around the diagonal line, although they do not yet fully follow a normal distribution pattern.

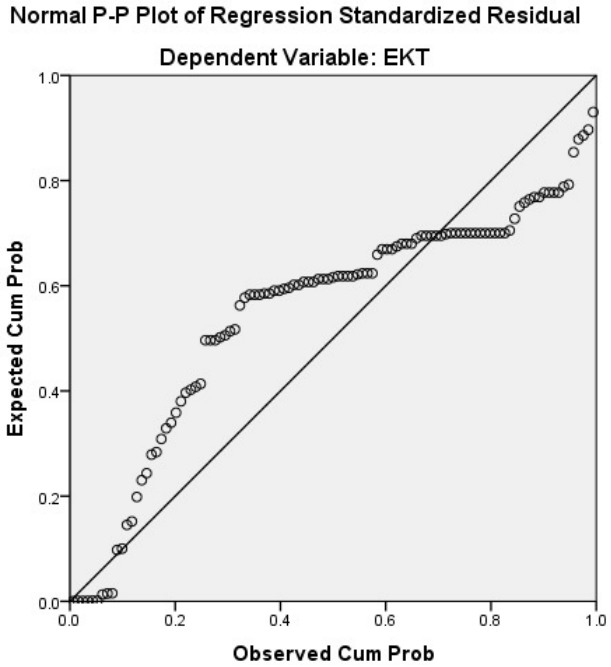

Figure 1. Normal P–P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual Graph

Because the data was still not normal, the researchers then conducted a data screening process using the Z-Score method on the residual values (ZRESID) to detect extreme data (outliers). Based on the screening results, 6 respondents' data were found to have Z-Score values outside the ±2.5 range, thus categorizing them as extreme data and eliminating them from the analysis process. After elimination, the total number of data used in the study was 101 respondents.

Although the residual data did not meet the assumption of normality, the study continued because the sample size was relatively large, namely 101 respondents. Based on the concept of the Central Limit Theorem (CLT), data with a sufficiently large sample size tends to produce a sampling distribution close to normal, so parametric statistical analysis can still be used. Therefore, hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using the bootstrap method with 1000 resampling times to produce statistical estimates that are more stable and robust against violations of the normality assumption.

4.4 Results of Hypothesis Testing with the Bootstrap Method

After data screening and outlier elimination, the data used in further analysis was 101 respondents. Hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using the bootstrap method with 1,000 resamplings because

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the previous research data did not meet the assumption of normality. The bootstrap method was used to produce statistical estimates that are more stable and robust against violations of the normality assumption. According to Ghozali (2021), the bootstrap method can be used to increase the stability of parameter estimates, especially when the research data does not meet the assumption of a normal distribution.

Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine whether the power distance variable influences the communication effectiveness of Indonesian migrant workers abroad. Based on the bootstrap test results, the regression coefficient (B) was -0.047 with a significance value of 0.211 (>0.05). These results indicate that the power distance variable does not significantly influence communication effectiveness.

In addition, the Bias Corrected and Accelerated Confidence Interval (BCa 95%) value shows a lower limit of -0.121 and an upper limit of 0.032. Because the interval range exceeds zero, the influence of the power distance variable on communication effectiveness is declared statistically insignificant.

Bootstrap for Coefficients

Model		B	Bootstrap[a]				
			Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	BCa 95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
1	(Constant)	28.420	-.035	1.226	.001	25.752	30.706
	PD	-.047	.001	.038	.211	-.121	.032

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Figure 2. Bootstrap Test

These results show that increasing power distance tends to be followed by a decrease in communication effectiveness, but this effect is not statistically significant.

4.5 Results of the Determination Coefficient Test ()R^2

The coefficient of determination test was conducted to determine the extent to which the power distance variable explains the communication effectiveness variable. The test was conducted using final data from 101 respondents after eliminating outliers.

Based on the analysis results, an R Square value of 0.011 was obtained. These results indicate that the power distance variable is only able to explain the influence on communication effectiveness by 1.1%, while the remaining 98.9% is influenced by other factors outside the study.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.104[a]	.011	.001	2.946

a. Predictors: (Constant), PD

b. Dependent Variable: EK

Figure 3. R Square Test

These results show that the low coefficient of determination value indicates that power distance has a very small contribution in explaining the effectiveness of communication of Indonesian migrant workers abroad.

The findings of this study indicate that power distance has a negative but statistically insignificant effect on the communication effectiveness of Indonesian migrant workers in multicultural international workplaces. Although the regression coefficient shows a negative direction (B = -0.047), the significance value (p = 0.211) demonstrates that the relationship is not statistically meaningful. These findings suggest that hierarchical cultural orientation alone does not determine whether Indonesian workers communicate effectively when interacting with supervisors and colleagues from different cultural backgrounds.

The negative direction of the relationship is theoretically consistent with Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimension theory, which argues that high power distance cultures tend to accept unequal power distribution and encourage more formal and hierarchical communication. In such environments, subordinates may hesitate to express opinions, ask questions, or provide feedback, potentially reducing communication openness. Likewise, Robbins and Judge (2017) emphasize that effective organizational communication depends on openness, mutual understanding, and continuous feedback. Excessive hierarchical barriers may therefore reduce opportunities for two-way communication. However, the present study demonstrates that these theoretical expectations are not sufficiently strong

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to produce a statistically significant influence among Indonesian migrant workers.

One possible explanation is that Indonesian workers adapt their communication behavior according to the cultural norms of their host countries and organizations. Working in multinational environments exposes employees to diverse communication styles, organizational cultures, and intercultural interactions that encourage greater flexibility than would be expected from their original cultural background alone. Through repeated interaction with colleagues from different countries, workers may gradually develop intercultural communication competence, enabling them to communicate effectively despite differences in perceived hierarchy. Consequently, the influence of power distance becomes less dominant as individuals adjust their communication strategies to the expectations of multicultural workplaces.

The findings are also consistent with previous research conducted by Skevik (2020), who reported that power distance can create communication challenges in intercultural business relationships but is not necessarily the sole determinant of communication success. Instead, communication effectiveness depends on multiple contextual factors, including interpersonal trust, language proficiency, cultural awareness, organizational support, and previous international experience. This perspective helps explain why the coefficient of determination in the present study is very low (R^2 = 0.011), indicating that power distance explains only 1.1% of the variance in communication effectiveness, while the remaining 98.9% is influenced by other variables that were not included in the research model.

The low explanatory power of the model suggests that communication effectiveness in international workplaces is a multidimensional phenomenon. Factors such as foreign language proficiency, intercultural communication competence, emotional intelligence, organizational communication climate, leadership style, psychological safety, and cultural intelligence may play considerably greater roles than hierarchical orientation alone. Employees who possess strong intercultural competencies may remain effective communicators even when working

within organizations characterized by relatively high power distance because they are able to adapt their communication behavior to different cultural expectations.

From a practical perspective, these findings imply that organizations employing Indonesian migrant workers should not focus exclusively on reducing hierarchical barriers to improve communication. Instead, companies should provide intercultural communication training, language development programs, cross-cultural orientation, and leadership practices that encourage open dialogue and constructive feedback. Such initiatives are likely to have a greater impact on communication effectiveness than attempting to modify employees' perceptions of organizational hierarchy alone.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature on intercultural communication by demonstrating that, within the context of Indonesian migrant workers, power distance is not a primary predictor of communication effectiveness. Although hierarchical cultural values remain relevant in explaining communication behavior, their influence appears limited when employees operate in multicultural international environments that require continuous adaptation. Future research should therefore incorporate additional cultural dimensions, such as uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, and cultural intelligence, together with organizational and individual factors, to develop a more comprehensive model of communication

CONCLUSION

This study aims to determine whether there is a significant relationship between power distance and communication effectiveness among Indonesian migrant workers (TKI), as well as to measure the extent of power distance's influence in a multicultural international work environment. Based on the results of the study, conducted through a questionnaire with 107 respondents, it was found that there were six outliers; therefore, these six data were eliminated using the Z-score method. Thus, the total number of data used in the final analysis was 101 respondents.

The instrument testing results showed that all statement items in the Power Distance (PD) and Communication Effectiveness (EK) variables were

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proven valid with correlation values above 0.3. Meanwhile, the reliability test results showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.887 for the Power Distance (PD) variable and 0.871 for the Communication Effectiveness (EK) variable. Both variables were above the Cronbach's alpha criterion of 0.70. Therefore, both variables were declared reliable and suitable for use in research.

The study then continued using the bootstrapping method with a 1,000-fold resampling process to obtain more stable test results and a higher level of validity. This method is used to assist hypothesis testing on data that does not meet the normality test. Through the bootstrapping method, this study still obtained a more accurate T-test, coefficient of determination (R^2), coefficient of influence (B), and confidence interval limits (upper and lower bound). The test results showed that PD had a regression coefficient (B) value of -0.047 with a significance value of 0.0211 (>0.05). In addition, the confidence interval showed a value that exceeded 0, thus concluding that power distance does not significantly affect the communication effectiveness of Indonesian workers.

The results of the coefficient of determination test show an R square value of 0.011, which proves that Power Distance is only able to influence Communication Effectiveness by 1.1%, while the rest is influenced by other factors outside the research.

Based on the research results above, it can be concluded that power distance is not the primary factor influencing the communication effectiveness of Indonesian migrant workers. Therefore, further research is recommended to add other variables, such as language skills or other cultural dimensions, to obtain more comprehensive results and strengthen the hypothesis.

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