

# National Cultural Dimension Challenges from Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos in Developing Hotel's Organizational Performance

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## Abstract

Measures needed to improve organizational performance may run counter to cultural dimensions as identified by Hofstede (2001). This mixed methodology study looks at the cultural dimensions of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar and at how they can stand in the way of reaching organizational goals. The quantitative approach consists of a survey of hotel managers from those three countries. In addition, in-depth structured interviews were conducted with twelve managers from the selected hotels to determine the impact of cultural dimensions on hotels' performance in terms of working relationship, changing and adapting to circumstances, coordinating and collaborating, and holding employees accountable. Hypothesis testing and data analysis were done by reference statistics and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results indicate that the natural cultural dimensions are heavily linked to the business operations and may put high performance in a quandary. Time orientation has the highest direct effect on hotels performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, followed by power distance and collectivism.

**Keywords:** Change, Collaboration, Cultural dimensions, High performance, Management, Organization

## 1. Introduction

One of the main factors for business organizations to perform at their highest level is the focus on daily operations. Keeping customers and clients satisfied with the products or services requires top management to keep front-line staff empowered to make the right decisions. Moreover, people with diverse skills and talents should be aligned in order to utilize their knowledge and wisdom toward attaining the organization's goals and objectives and making its operations sustainable (Claus, 2019). This requires employees to take initiatives towards innovation and creativity, which in turn necessitates an open channel for communication among colleagues for new ideas and for mutual respect from those making informal contributions. Initiatives and innovative ideas are especially critical when a company need to navigate through an instable economic environment and uncertain times. Often time, these are situations where an organization needs to re-examine the organizational framework and the way its conducts business (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Much of its success depends on the working relationship within the organization and on the level of trust, confidence, and commitment among employees.

How working relations operate within an organization and contribute to maintaining a high performance depends in part on the culture of the country where the organization is based (Carey et al., 2019). Obviously, it also depends on the culture of the organization and its main orientations. While both cultures play a critical role in the performance of a firm, this study focuses on national cultural dimensions as defined by Hofstede (2001). More specifically, it seeks to examine the challenges the cultural traits of three countries geographically and culturally connected, Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, pose to hotels in developing their organizational performance. Ideally an organization wants to continuously perform at a high standard and expects all its members to be dedicated to contributing to its success (Jyoti & Rani, 2017). In practice, however, challenges of all sorts make this goal difficult to attain, in particular, challenges arising from national cultural orientations. For instance, as Panphae and Ploysri's (2018) research on the national cultural factors that may affect hotel's performance in Thailand reveals, in terms of working relationship, management in the Thai hotels included in the study is more authoritative with subordinates than would be the case in most Western cultures. As their study shows, employees must, among other obligations, show extreme respect to their superiors, accept that there is inequality in the workplace as well as injustice in the performance appraisal, and come to grasp with the fact that any privileges must first come from those in higher positions.

As can be easily gathered from the above, in this kind of working environment, management is unlikely to be keen on letting individuals have much freedom in terms of taking personal initiatives and even less in terms of making decisions no matter how skilled or talented individuals may be. Needless to say, under such circumstances, there is also little room for employee empowerment. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, another important cultural dimension is the degree of uncertainty tolerated by individuals, which in the case at hand means that any form of uncertainty is considered a threat to be dealt with immediately by management due to the fear that it might disturb the status and privileges of one's position. Clearly, there needs to be a proper understanding of the culturally-induced mindset behind the working attitude and behavior of hotel employees in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos. In examining the challenges hotel's organizational performance is confronted with in terms of the national cultural dimensions of these three countries, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Which national cultural dimensions of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand have a direct effect on hotels' performance?
2. What are the challenges hotels in their efforts to improve their organizational performance face with regard to working relationship, changing and adapting to circumstances, coordinating and collaborating, and holding people accountable?

## 2. Literature Review

### - *Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions*

Geert Hofstede (2001) pioneered the way research is conducted with regard to cross-cultural issues in the workplace by examining how an individual or a group of individuals' cultural beliefs and values have an impact on their working behavior and thought patterns (Farrell & Hutasingh, 2018). Hofstede's vast amount of data collection and analysis of 100,000 individuals representing 40 different countries gave rise to a cultural dimension theory model for analyzing culture in the workplace that has been widely used since by many research scholars (Towers & Pepler, 2017; Carolina, 2019). Hofstede's cultural dimensions are discussed next. They include power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long- versus short-term orientation.

**- Power Distance**

This dimension was introduced by Hofstede in 2001 to describe the extent to which members of institutions and organizations within a given culture expect and accept power to be unevenly distributed. In hierarchical organizations, individuals who do not possess any power of influence willingly obey orders by those who possess more power than others (Fang, 2012). Those who come from a lower stratum in society accept the degree of power to be unfairly distributed (Merkin, 2006). A strong hierarchical structure emits a sense of awareness for employees to limit their communication disagreeing with the manager's decision, curb their level of influence in the organization's decision-making process, and do their best to avoid taking part in activities related to making decisions (Kumar Moona Haji Mohamed et al., 2013). If a team is formed, members rely on top management as the ultimate authority for determining what ought to be correct (Chieochan, Thanasankit, & Corbitt, 2005). When it is a family-owned business, the affairs are conducted less formally with a slower decision-making process, and management is centralized on the basis of seniority and personal relationships (Adams & Vernon, 2004). However, in organizations that have a lesser chain of command, power is distributed equally amongst individuals and no one has strict authority over each other (Hofstede, 2013). With more power in hand, managers can be more effective in terms of responding swiftly to poor performance while simultaneously modeling appropriate behaviors for their employees (De Waal & Akaraborworn (2013).

**- Individualism/Collectivism and Organizational Working Performance**

Individuals in society where individualism is highly valued tend to focus more on their own interests such as, for example, taking care of their own family, and expect others to respect their privacy and rights. For them, being able to speak one's mind takes priority over minding the working relations (Koch & Koch, 2007). In contrast, collectivism, where the extended family predominates, encourages people to have sense of belonging together. Maintaining harmony is key and working relations should be the focus rather than completion of the task assignments (Reeve et al., 2014). In exchange, loyalty is granted. Individualism and collectivism influence the way people communicate and interact with each other in social gatherings and in functional situations (Hofstede, 2011). Nations that value individualism promote a working culture in which employees have more freedom in engaging in development or experimentation with products, services, and ideas. Their views and opinions may have a significant impact and influence on shaping the organizational outcome (Jirachiefpattana, 1997). A collectivist culture, on the other hand, expects people to conform and strictly comply (Hofstede, 2001). In a working culture where collectivism is highly valued, studies show that employees feel more at ease when tasks are procured as a group, knowing that there is a sense of security and loyalty with each other when the same language is being spoken and they are doing work in an easy and relaxing manner (Petison & Johri, 2008).

There is no feeling of individual pressure as everyone shares in the responsibilities and expectations to perform efficiently and effectively. There is also no need to feel overburdened or disheartened when the desired results have not been met (Amster & Böhm, 2015). The golden rule for working in a collective cultural system is to ensure that the people around you, especially top executives, do not 'lose face' or respect from your actions and behaviors. No matter how doomed to failure the idea and resources given to execute from the top committee, one has to refrain from stating reasons that point to the illogical thinking and constraints that lead to attaining the aims. In short, the importance of not dragging down the name and reputation of others prevails over reaching the organizational goal (Thanasankit & Corbitt, 2002). The organization can utilize its collective strength to help to cope with volatile disruptions in the economy (Grant, 2016). According to Karlgaard and Malone (2015), in

order for the collective group to deal with changes, high performing organizations rely on cohesive teams that act as the driving force in executing the decisions across the entire organization.

**- *Masculinity/Feminism and Organizational Working Performance***

Whereas in a masculine society, people are more focused on being successful and achievers, in a feminine society, they put a lot of efforts in caring about the wellbeing and health of others, as well as promoting a quality of life' (Hsu, Woodside, & Marshall, 2013). While individuals in a masculine society tend to be assertive, ambitious, and admiring of those who are strong, a feminine society is more about being modest, caring for others, and displaying sympathy for individuals experiencing an unfortunate situation (Armstrong, Francis, & Grow, 2017). Femininity seeks balance between one's family and duties and, unlike masculinity which seems to be oblivious to feelings, take emotions into account (Hofstede, 2006). In a society where masculinity dominates, people tend to be less in favor of cooperation among each other. According to Promsri (2013), there is a heavy leaning on the side of femininity within an organization when workers hope to see managers express their good faith in being concerned for the well being and welfare of others and promote strong bonds in the work environment. In other words, management style is expected to assume the role of a paternalistic figure by putting an effort in dealing with the emotions and feelings of employees coping with their task assignments (Promsri, 2013).

As a result, discussions on work performance will first revolve around the state of mind of workers and then around configuring a way for them to do their job more effectively (Saratun & Rungruang, 2013). In a working culture that embraces feminine values, it is therefore comprehensible for staff members to bring their family life and issues into the organization since the workplace is considered an extension of a social living space for individuals to meet and greet new people (Sunny, Patrick, & Rob, 2019). This sets the platform for co-workers to open up more about themselves and reciprocate their sentiments with one another. The friendlier the workplace, the stronger the chances of retaining workers (Kantabutra & Saratun, 2011). Whenever problems arise within the organization management provide immediate attention to the situation, such as for example, easing the conditions, which have been making groups compete against each other for resources or are making other workers feel uncomfortable at their job (Anurit, Selvarajah, & Meyer, 2011).

**- *Uncertainty Avoidance and Organizational Working Performance***

Uncertainty avoidance may be defined as the level of tolerance of key decision-making unit in dealing with unstructured situations that make the behavior feeling comfortable or uncomfortable (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). In cultures with a low degree of tolerance in experiencing uncertain situations, people will take an immediate, but often irrational, action to prevent any conditions that will be tightening behavior codes and enforcing laws and rules sporadically. They will monitor any suspected behaviors deemed to be deviant and are unwilling to accept any situation that challenges their status quo (Matusitz & Musambira, 2013). According to Hofstede (2006), high uncertainty avoidance often causes people in organizations to see threats everywhere and get too emotional. They may not be able to function when there is no clarity and a structure is lacking. An organizational work culture with a high level of uncertainty avoidance has the tendency to put up mental default practices that are resistant towards adapting to the changes. Higher management's immediate response towards dealing with changes is to set the system in risk avoidance mode by carrying out policies and guidance procedures for employees to adhere and comply without much questioning (Swierczek & Ha, 2003).

The rationale for adopting a high uncertainty avoidance stance is the belief that people will perform much better in a safe and conforming environment as opposed to one that is constantly shifting, which would make workers feel inconvenient in managing things (Pinkse & Kolk, 2012). Organizations become trapped in their own stubborn ways by believing that they perform much better when the operation of things are more stable; these organizations hide in their shells like a turtle and wait for the external environment to be fully stabilized for the next course of action (Kaplan, 2008). The stronger resistance to the changes, the weaker the organizational performance (Hallikainen and Laukkanen, 2015). Unknown and unfamiliar ties stemming from uncertainties make managers seek for immediate security without entertaining the thoughts of challenging or experimenting with some innovative/creative ideas. The tendency is for them to look for outside advice as a quick solution to remedy the state of affairs, which they strongly view as a problem (Foucreault & Ollier-Malaterre, 2017). Low-uncertainty avoidance organizations on the other hand take all challenges on a daily basis, are in self-control regardless of what the situation is, analyze differences as an opportunity to learn, and work through the chaos and ambiguous surrounding (Nakata, 2009). Individuals or organizations that have a strong habit of avoiding any issues deemed uncertain will tend to feel more apprehensive and, therefore, take quick procedures to stamp out the level of ambiguity (Hofstede, 2001d). In this study, uncertainty avoidance therefore means taking actions immediately to reduce ambiguity in the workplace over performance.

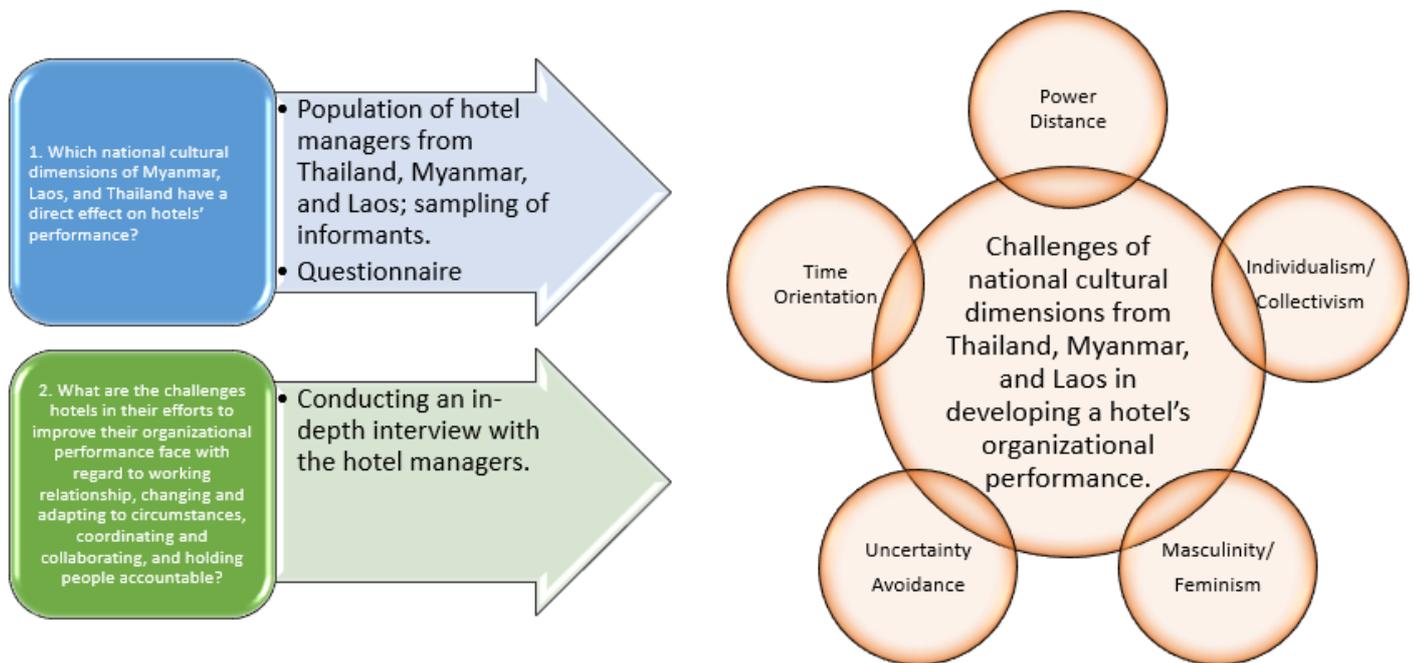
#### **- Long-Term Orientation and Organizational Working Performance**

When social psychologist Michael Harris Bond, who was doing work on time orientation in Asia, met Hofstede in the early eighties, they put up a study that uncovered a new, fifth dimension of culture (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Initially called Confucian dynamism, it was later renamed long-term orientation and then defined as long-term versus short-term orientation. It relates to the extent of holding a perspective that is focused on the future with minimal thoughts on being conservative with time (Durach & Weingarten, 2017). It is about investing in the future. In contrast, short-term orientation focuses on personal steadiness and stability, respecting the values of tradition, and pursuing happiness over peace of mind (Fang, 2003). Long-term-oriented organizations have parameters to indicate the extent of employees' loyalty, partaking in reciprocal duties, and meeting obligations with superiors. It is not unusual for workers to feel that that conformity, respect, and personal loyalty to supervisors are important and should be rewarded (Khan & Panarina, 2017).

Partners may invest heavily over time in forming relationships, which, once formed, are viewed as long-term partnerships and long-term contracts (Sarason, Yuthas, & Nguyen 2018). Such partnerships are characterized by a great deal of reciprocity and information exchange that results from the deep, almost family-like ties formed between business partners. According to Kuo et al. (2017), organizations following a long-term orientation tend to abstain from seeking immediate gratification, which they delay, strongly advocating instead for the staff to make all necessary sacrifices for the future (Lawler & Siengthai, 1997). In a society that values time in the long term there is a belief that truth will prevail as the situation runs its course, thus making the context more ascertain for better decision making, and stronger minded to save and invest, while the demonstration of guile and perseverance become more imminent (Hofstede, 2001). This research thus defines long-term orientation as looking into the future within the workplace for performance.

### **3. Conceptual Framework and Methodology**

In order to examine the challenges some of national cultural dimensions of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos pose to a hotel's performance, the following conceptual framework was developed:



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework for National Cultural Dimensions Analysis

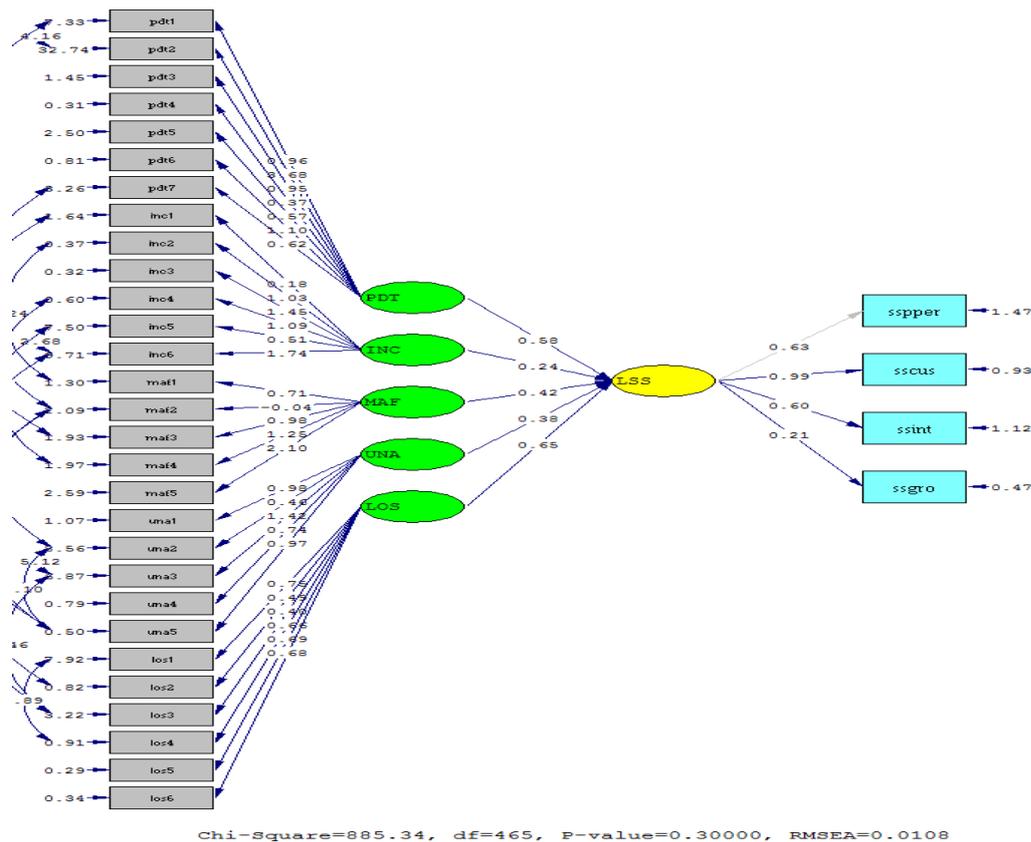
This study was inspired by Panphae and Ploysri's (2018) research that sought to provide an understanding of the national and business cultures of hotel entrepreneurs and offer guidelines for remedial action. It used a mixed methodology. The quantitative approach consisted of a survey of hotel managers from Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos. As to the qualitative approach, it involved conducting in-depth interviews with 12 hotel managers and collecting secondary data such as academic papers, books, journal articles, and related research. The data collected were then compared and confirmed. The population in this study comprised hotel managers or owners based in Chiang Mai (Thailand), Yangon (Myanmar), and Vientiane (Laos). This amounted to 206, 187, and 194 managers respectively from the three countries for a total of 587. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), the proper sample size should be 45% of the population. Using purposive sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016), 400 hotels were selected in these three cities: 140 in Chiang Mai, 127 in Rangoon, and 133 in Vientiane.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts: (1) Demographic data of hotel managers and background of the hotels; (2). Opinions of hotel managers on Hofstede's national cultures; (3) Organizational performance; and (4) Suggestions and business etiquette when running business in those countries. The reliability test of the instrument was analyzed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient with 0.73 - 0.88 and the whole questionnaire was 0.84. After selecting informants for in-depth interviews, the researcher sent consent letters to all of them and made appointments. Each interview lasted for 1-1.30 hours. The interviewers took notes and also recorded the interviews. The data was then thoroughly analyzed. Triangulation was used for checking the data liability first. The analytical process was implemented by ordering and decoding the data and interpreting the results. The descriptive statistics included frequency, means, and standard deviations. Hypothesis testing and data analysis were done by reference statistics and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). In evaluating the consistency of the model with data and hypothesis testing, the Linear Structural Relationship (LISREL) model was employed.

The LISREL model is a linear program showing which independent factors will have a direct or indirect effect on the dependent factors. The results were analyzed by a statistic program in order to identify the frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and the descriptive statistics (Causal structural models with latent variable) for testing the relationship between Hofstede’s Cultural Dimension and the hotels’ performance.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Figure 1 below shows the results of the causal model of national culture analysis with regard to hotel business’ performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.



**Figure 2:** Casual Model of National Culture Analysis in Hotel Business Performance

Figure 2 indicates a relationship between types of relationship congruence to evidently with a qui-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of 858.34 at a degree of freedom (df) of 465 and a probability (p) of 0.30. In addition, as shown in Table 1, the GFI equals 0.94, the AGFI, 0.95, the RMSEA 0.01, and the SRMR 0.03.

**Table 1:** Congruence of Model Fitting

Index	level of Acceptance	result	conclusion
Qui-square	Non-significant Qui-square or P-value $\geq 0.05$	0.30	accept
GFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.94	accept
AGFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.95	accept
RMSEA	$\leq 0.05$	0.01	accept
SRMR	$\leq 0.05$	0.03	accept
CN	$\geq 200$	360	accept

With a score of 0.65, time orientation, either long or short term (LOS), has the highest direct effect on hotels performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos. With a score of 0.58, power distance (PDT) is the second national cultural dimension to have an effect on hotel performance in these three countries. Masculinity and femininity (MAF) rank third with score of 0.42, uncertainty avoidance fourth with a score of 0.38, and individualism and collectivism fifth with a score of 0.24. The three countries score high on time orientation with a mean of 4.57, 4.16, and 4.09 respectively. The scores are consistent with research conducted by Fisher et al. (2006), who argued that time orientation was very little different, especially within the same region. In this study, the three countries had long, medium, and short-term plan to cope with a rapidly changing business environment. However, Thailand and Myanmar are more long-term oriented when doing business than Laos where the tendency is to take action sooner.

### - *Hypothesis Testing*

- *Hypothesis 1* (Power distance has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – the results show that power distance had a direct impact on hotel performance in those three countries ( $b = 0.58$ ,  $(p) > 0.05$ ). People accept inequality in power distribution and inequality in human's physical strength and wisdom. The in-depth interviews indicated that respondents in those countries accepted power distance and found inequality in the workplace and have leaders who were more authoritative to be normal. All subordinates must pay respect to their leaders, accept injustice in performance appraisal, and privileges must be enjoyed by those in higher positions.

- *Hypothesis 2* (Individualism and collectivism have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – It was found that individualism and collectivism have a direct effect on hotels' performance in the three countries ( $b = 0.24$ ,  $(p) > 0.05$ ). The results are in keeping with Wiengarten et al.'s (2011) study which focused on how national cultures may affect business investment and organizational performance and found that individualism has an effect on organization's performance. They are also consistent with that of Hammou et al. (2014) who determined that national cultures had a direct effect on the strategic and financial planning of cement companies in Morocco and the USA. They found that individualistic persons were more innovative than those in collectivist societies as they had more freedom thinking, making decision, and choosing their style of work.

- *Hypothesis 3* (Masculinity and femininity have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – Testing demonstrated that masculinity and femininity had a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos: ( $b = 0.42$ ,  $(p) > 0.05$ ). The results of the study indicate that Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar are male dominated societies with a high score masculinity of 3.96, 3.83, and 3.43 respectively. Male-dominated societies emphasize power and work accomplishment and place much importance on material belongings or money. This is in keeping with Wiengarten et al. (2011) who found that masculinity was more conducive to personal motivation and higher work determination than femininity, which puts more emphasis on spiritual aspects (Deresky, 2014).

- *Hypothesis 4* (Uncertainty avoidance has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – Uncertainty avoidance has a direct effect on hotel performance in the three countries: ( $b = 0.38$ ,  $(p) > 0.05$ ). This finding is in keeping with Wiengarten et al.'s (2011) study that showed that employees in the organization were risk takers and were very enthusiastic about their work. Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos scores were 3.28, 3.76, and 4.01 respectively, which were high and indicate that the respondents in these three countries did not embrace a high-risk-orientated working culture. This is corroborated by the in-depth interviews. People in these three countries tend to rely on occupations that are very stable

such as civil servants and can fulfill one’s social status. The perception, however, is that civil officers have very low efficiency compared to people employed in the private sectors. This is also consistent with Hammou et al. (2014) discussed earlier.

- *Hypothesis 5* (Time orientation has a direct effect on hotel’ performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – this cultural dimension has a direct effect on hotels’ performance in the three countries ( $b = 0.65$ ,  $(p) > 0.05$ ). Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos have scores of 4.57, 4.16, and 4.09, respectively. These scores, which are high, show that the respondents in all three countries are long-term oriented. In-depth interviews indicate that interviewees have short, medium, and long-term plans to cope with the changing business environment.

**Table 2:** Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Accept	Reject
Power distance has a direct effect on hotel’ performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Individualism and collectivism have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Masculinity and femininity have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Uncertainty avoidance has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Time orientation has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	

**- Challenges Changing National Cultural Dimensions**

The following is a summary of the replies from the twelve hotel managers interviewed on the challenges posed by the national cultural dimensions discussed above.

**- Power Distance Challenges**

One the challenges posed by power distance, as explained by some interviewees, is that although there is a promotion of equality in the workplace, there is a sense of obligation among the staff to accept inequality and submit to authority from top management, especially if the business has a sole owner. It was also mentioned that people in societies not equal, the prevailing attitude in organizations is to be highly obedient to superiors. There is a grip on the conservative way of managing the business. Strong hierarchical traditions and beliefs within the organization clearly mean that the working relationship revolves mostly around those who have a strong influence in the chain of command (Beugelsdijk, Maseland, & van Hoorn, 2015). Workers adhere to those in power and will make some changes to the way they function in the workplace only if they have been given direct orders from the seniority level. While the staff and employees carry about their roles and duties, the initiative for working in unison will never be consistent until the authorized person with power demand that people do so (Brouthers, Marshall, & Keig, 2016). The idea of holding people accountable is not an ideal practice for this type of working climate. No matter how many mistakes and errors may pile up, the most important thing is to protect the reputation of those who are associated with managerial or supervisory positions (Drogendijk & Slangen, 2006).

**- Individualism/Collectivism Challenges**

The interviewees’ comments reveal that people tend to work mainly as a group, regardless of whether the working procedures rely on a particular individual to make corrections or adjustments to the process. No matter what, individual feels that it is best to get others involved. Individuals are expected to treat other employees like family members and heed the importance of their relatives by participating in special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, and funerals. Given the very high collective working culture of Thailand, Laos and

Myanmar, relationships are highly nurtured. Anything that might be deemed to be a threat to or undermine the camaraderie between workers will be immediately be dealt with as poisonous. As pointed out by a number of interviewees, strong working relationships, however, can be the demise of standard performance as group-thinking creeps in and puts pressure on peers to move along with others, even if the rationale is weak. The importance of maintaining ways of working collectively is given much consideration over other matters that have given rise to new ways of responding to competition or adjusting to new business environments (Foss & Lindenberg, 2013). Still, any changes in the workplace will always maintain the ceremonial rituals and traditions that keep people working together and respecting each other as family members. Everyone is expected to take part in scheduled events and the sense of being part of the family encourages workers perform to coordinate their efforts and collaborate with fellow co-workers. People encourage one another to do their best and are often willing to assist if they can. Sometimes extra favors are done out of goodwill with no expectation that the recipients reciprocate. They are expected, nonetheless, to show gratitude by for instance offering a snack and/or gracious words (Kim & Aguilera, 2016).

*- Masculinity/Feminism Challenges:*

Several managers emphasized that everyone felt they were treated fairly regardless of the character or personality of the individual considered. According to management, everyone is given the opportunity to perform at his/her best in the job position. Employees can demonstrate their skills and abilities as long as this does not make other employees, especially those in higher positions, feel uncomfortable or uneasy about not being able to perform well in front of others. In preserving working relations employees need to be aware of functioning with other group members and balance changes in the working system while upholding the cultural values and traditions that top management would like to see being carried out (Phillips, Pullen, & Rhodes, 2014). In a spirit of collaboration, workers are sometimes asked to coordinate with other people who have different skills. To keep a smooth working relationship the thought of preventing colleagues from feeling the pressure to perform is always kept in mind so that others may get the chance to do their best, regardless of whether time and resources are being heavily over consumed. When the expected results are not coming on time, a meeting will be held to discuss the situation at hand and allow employees involved in the process to explain what they plan to do to remedy the situation. As part of the process, top management strive to show much empathy and make sure to encourage employees to complete the tasks and not hold anyone accountable (Klier et al., 2017).

*- Uncertainty Avoidance Challenges*

Management makes adjustments every so often for the sake of organizational development. However, plans for adapting to the changes do not really involve employee who are simply shifted around and monitored to see how their work progresses. Typically, the staff will leave risk issues and other relevant concerns to management to deal with and will just go about carrying their duties. The working relationship between employees and those in higher positions revolves around the expectations from executives in charge. Employees are simply required to respond to requests, including those coming abruptly with scant details if any. Management decides what is the best course of action and workers oblige, instantaneously adjusting to the changes in the belief that it will lead to good results although the rationale is hardly justified as emotions often swayed in (Maidland & Sammartino, 2015).

Coping with uncertainties is a reactive form of management as executives let issues that constrain organizational performance to accumulate until they are overloaded with problems. Ad hoc committees are then typically set up to identify the problems. Once they have been identified, rearrangements are made for the staff to work together in getting the method corrected under the watchful eye of supervisors (Marano et al., 2016). Only management can determine what is considered acceptable and normal and what the threats may be toward the organization. Meetings will be held to discuss obstacles to raising the level of organizational performance but one concern is that nobody gets into a spat with those colleagues who may be part of the problem (Seo, Kim, & Jang, 2018). It is best for everyone to preserve the reputation of others rather than openly blaming them and holding them accountable. Moreover, getting into an argument on what is best for the organization would make others feel uncomfortable.

#### *- Time Orientation Challenges*

Hotels have plans in place for medium- to long-term responses to competition. Management, however, feels that they should be set forth only if competition level becomes highly aggressive. As some managers interviewed lamented, when expectations are raised, the tendency is for workers to stick to their job routines, as there is little interest, if any, in future-oriented self-development. Some people admit that they do not like to get involved with competition as it brings a lot of pressure and disruption to their normal flow of daily activities. When competition becomes too high, it makes working relationship a bit edgy, especially if employees fail to get the outcome sought (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). It is unbearable for managers and employees to be perceived as incompetent adapting to changes as it makes them think that others see them as unqualified for the position. Regardless of whether the plan set forth for engaging in competition produces the right results or not, employees are still expected to demonstrate their loyalty by coordinating and collaborating with others and not questioning authority to gather additional information to make things clear on what is needed to be done. Even if the people in charge of planning are unaware of what the competition actually is, they will be given a briefing on the situation and come up with an approach (Tippmann, Scott, & Mangematin, 2014). How much time the person responsible for making the plans will have depends on the patience of the executive. Failure of the organization to adequately deal with competition is likely to bring shame on executives for being ineffective.

#### *- Challenges Developing Hotels' Organizational Performance*

The second question seeks to understand the challenges hotels in their efforts to improve organizational performance face with regard to working relationships, changing and adapting to circumstances, coordinating and collaborating, and holding people accountable. National cultural dimensions are heavily intertwined with one another and set the feelings and mood of employees as well as their working behavior. They can act as a single catalyst that directs the flow of operation. Whatever working philosophy the organization espouses, national cultural dimensions play an intricate role in maintaining the order of things while simultaneously being a total impediment to learning to adjust to changes (Huang & Crofts, 2019; Metiu & Rothbard, 2013). Principles and values are upheld to the point of not questioning authorities even if evidence shows that are not producing effective results. Management should not rely on the old Taylor style of approach whereby people are just cogs of the big machine and can be replaced anytime and anywhere as workers' skills, abilities, talent, and knowledge are not fully utilized to set up a high-performance organization (Gao et al., 2018; Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2008). The challenge for setting up a high-performance organization is therefore to maneuver around natural cultural dimensions planted in the minds of employees and find the leverages that will cause them to adopt the best practices for high performance.

When working with a hierarchical structure, managerial staff alignment is vital to continuously find the best ways of getting the organization to perform at its best (Soldatenko & Backer, 2019; Huang, 2016). The values in comradery and loyalty can quickly erode if the organization is failing to reach its targeted aims. But failures can serve as lessons to be learned or relearned about the working culture. The managerial level of influence should be assessed regarding how well they promote a culture of performance aiming to make the organizational vision and mission become close to reality (Matilla, 2019; Stahl et al., 2010). The continuous search for better methods and applications requires that changes and ideas be accepted, which in turn means that resorting to cultural traditions and customs may not be the proper path. While management assumes the role of guardian of culture as well as that of promoter of high performance, they need to be sensitive to employees' experience in order to determine how improvements can be made and how they can be effective. To do so, they strive to make task procedures clear and encourage them to provide feedback, especially positive feedback that can enhance the outcome (Crotts, 2016; Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011).

Coordination and collaboration are essential ingredients for continuous success. For challenges that might be too much to handle, management can hold a meeting with the teams and groups to review the organizational framework and allow members to share insights on what can be changed to improve performance. This should be part of the organizational culture for high performance. Management needs to be patient and be sure to understand the extent of their workers' capabilities and capacity to execute applying higher standards. Moreover, getting people to buy into the idea of high performance is a journey that requires both sides to be tolerant, empathetic, and to make some sacrifices for the greater good (Stamolampros et al., 2020; Cronin et al., 2011). New resources can be added but they will not add real value unless they contribute to achieving the organizations' aims and objectives. While rearrangements can be made, they cannot be an antidote for quick changes and learning. Realignments can be implemented to get people working as one force if the task assignments involve the skills and abilities of all of them and make them feel important in valued in the process.

That said, national cultural dimensions will still stand in the way of shaping mindsets conducive to performance enhancement. It is a matter of time, space, and momentum. Individuals need to be focused on priorities. Providing time is also about letting the workers convert the data into information and then sorting that information for decisive action. Questions also need to be asked and answers compared to find the best solutions to act upon. Moreover, management has to allow the system to run its course for people to discover and explore hidden methods that can help make improvements and develop others' competencies. Resources should be properly allocated for workers or teams to get edge. Most critical is a sense of trust and confidence with fellow colleagues regarding their good intentions for supporting each other (Kitirattarkarn, Araujo, & Neijens, 2019; Gibbs, Grushina, & Gibson, 2013). Any uncertainties, unknowns, or unforeseen events should be anticipated and dealt with instantaneously by managers in order to prevent performance from being forestalled in carrying out the mission objectives. At times, people can become mentally fatigue or get caught up with some troubling personal emotions which can hinder performance. To enlarge the space for performance management should identify people who can be lifelong learning partners that offer mentoring and coaching to restore the spirit of others so that they have a positive outlook and determination for reaching their aims and goals (Francesco & Roberta, 2019; Hinds, Liu, & Lyon, 2011).

Furthermore, conditions allowing people to make efficient and effective progress should be reinforced as a sign of having faith in workers. Management should promote informal conditions for members to provide feedbacks and setting channels for a healthy dialogue that seeks for ways to make the most of the situation (Afsar et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2011). Experienced people can assist one another in asking the right questions for acquiring a much better solution or getting the right corrections for implementation.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings from this study go beyond the statistical facts and figures of Panphae and Ploysri's (2018) previous study to provide a clear understanding of what hotels operating in countries like Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos need to do to achieve higher performance. This paper clearly shows that the main challenges working with the cultural dimensions identified in this study stand from deeply-entrenched routine behaviors. If an organization wants to promote a culture of high performance, it is up to the management team to provide incentives in order for things to gradually morph into the model that is desired. Culture matters, power distance in particular, as it takes those with power to influence others to learn to become a high performing organization without intimidating them. The results highlight what the management side struggle with to get employees working at a high level. The fact of the matter for hotel managers is that getting people to perform at their best demands the very best from people and requires attitudes and beliefs that may go against working values (Chon, Park, & Zoltan, 2020; Acquaaah, 2007). Performance is constrained by the need to maintain traditions and values. Employees tend to be more concerned making their fellow workers happy rather than holding them responsible for finding ways for example to cut down on wastes, maximize resources and search for solutions instead of being paralyzed. It becomes a folly when there are two different cultures within the organization that compete with each other instead of complementing each other for helping the organization reach the next level (Koukpaki et al., 2020; Cantwell, Dunning, & Lundan, 2009). Using national cultural dimensions as an excuse for not taking any initiatives to change or adapt working behaviors is common practice (Ullah, 2020; Brouthers & Hennart, 2007). This makes restructuring the organization for high performance challenging.

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