Article

Mediator Acceptability for Sustainable Trading Management: Scale Development and Validation

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Abstract: This study develops and empirically validates a multidimensional scale for measuring mediator acceptability (MEDACCEPT) from a sustainable trading perspective. Moreover, it examines the developed scales' ability to evaluate the impact of mediator selection. Data are collected from a professional research firm using 265 respondents who have mediation experience in export or import industrial areas. Although we initially identify seven dimensions, the research findings empirically identify the following five primary dimensions that drive mediator acceptability: status, legal expertise, procedural justice, restorative justice, and perceived confidentiality. Interestingly, while traditional mediation literature highlights the importance of a mediator's skill and cultural expertise, our scales exclude these two constructs. The MEDACCEPT scales are salient only to firms that trade physical products, suggesting further research directions.

Keywords: mediator acceptability; scale development; physical trading product context; restorative justice

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1. Introduction

Mediation is becoming a popular global tool to facilitate industrial or trade dispute resolutions in the USA, Japan, China, and other Western countries, but it is not yet widely implemented in Korea [1]. In the latter case, some trading firms are devoting more resources to resolving disputes as part of a strategic shift toward effective dispute resolution. Moreover, researchers are greatly interested in the importance of mediation effects, and recent studies indicate that mediation can drive an effective and speedy resolution between two parties, resulting in economic advantage and mutual confidentiality [2,3]. Although mediation may be sufficient to ensure dispute resolution in the sustainable global trading context, how mediators are accepted in their role appears to be a critical methodological condition. Thus, the following research question arises: Has the literature developed a measure to accept competent mediators when firms face disputes?

In this regard, mediator acceptance has received relatively little attention in international trading literature, and approaches to developing a valid and reliable measure for acceptance have been limited. For example, previous studies have investigated the role of culture [4] and the comparison of mediation systems between the Korean Commercial Arbitration Board (KCAB) in Korea and the American Arbitration Association (AAA) in the USA to enhance a mediator's acceptability [1], but they did not conceptualize a mediator acceptability construct, and none of these previous studies has attempted to validate a reliable mediator acceptability construct; thus, empirical tests for mediator acceptability effects lack precision, at least in the Korean sustainable trading context. A recent study also announced a call for papers that emphasize the systematic measurement of mediator acceptability [5]. This suggests that the development of measures for the acceptability of dispute mediators is essential for a sustainable trading environment. In addition, the new scale development approach should be directly or indirectly related to the protection of firms or consumers in the context of concluded contracts [6,7].

Solid measurement is especially relevant in international trading contexts, in which mediator acceptability is difficult to standardize and apply. As mediators can create value by controlling the flow of information between two parties [8], mediator acceptability is germane to firm value, based on the acceptance of targeted mediators. Acceptability seems to be a multidimensional construct in management and psychological literature, but no empirical effort has been exerted to validate this construct. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to develop and validate multidimensional scales of distinct mediator acceptability dimensions, to offer a mediator acceptability (MEDACCEPT) scale that can provide reliable measures of perceived mediator acceptability.

Theoretically or methodologically, the findings of this study advance our knowledge of what determines a firm's evaluations of mediators' competencies in the mediator selection process. Reflecting on the nature of the trade dispute environment, our scale development clarifies the role of new dimensions in facilitating the process of MEDACCEPT. In addition, the implications of this study aid firms in their strategic decision about what to focus on in their selection processes and how to develop and enhance dimensions for mediators, to resolve their disputes.

The subsequent section outlines the potential constructs explored in this study. Prior research on scale development is addressed, and two-phase approaches are discussed. This is followed by an overview of validity evaluation. Finally, the results are summarized, and research implications are discussed.

2. Conceptualizing Mediator Acceptability

This study proposes that five primary facets—mediator's skill, status, expertise, procedural justice, restorative justice, and confidentiality—underlie the various mediator acceptability conceptualizations explicitly and implicitly proposed by previous studies. For example, frameworks of mediator acceptability (or adoption) incorporate procedural and restorative justice and fairness [9]. We also propose the conceptualization of mediator acceptability in terms of a firm's confidence in its mediator selection regarding the specific mediator activities required to reconcile the problem faced, as mediator evaluations become salient during key stages of the mediation process [10]. In addition, competent mediator acceptability is directly or indirectly related to the likelihood of reaching an agreement on resolving disputes [11].

Specifically, we propose that firms perceive these primary facets as associated with mediator acceptability or the selection decision through initiating mediator search, reviewing the core performance of the mediator, finalizing the mediator selection, and reestablishing the subsequent contract with the mediator. This conceptualization reflects a multistage, experience-based process in which evaluations of mediation vary at each stage [12]. Our approach, in whole or in part, may be useful to further systematic analyses of mediator acceptability.

The skills and status of mediators are salient in international business disputes. Regarding these issues, the performance of the mediator and other alternatives determine the skills required for mediator acceptability; firms normally have a higher mediation threshold when mediator skills involve mediation performance that is difficult to resolve [13]. Status is determined by the field reputation associated with connections of resolving elements and social esteem [14].

Legal and cultural expertise become notable once the mediation process has been initiated. Legal expertise, which encompasses the acquisition of a large repertoire of knowledge [15], varies in importance across mediation categories and may be more relevant in the very specific field wherein a mediator practices. Cultural expertise reflects "the ability to distinguish and valorize different cultural forms in a way that resonates with others possessing the same expertise" ([16], p. 747).

Procedural and restorative justice are salient prior to the final judgment of the mediation. The type of justice is determined by the stage in the mediation process. Procedural justice becomes notable after initiating the interaction between a mediator and stakeholders.

Generally, procedural justice has an important impact on stakeholders whose faith in the underlying legal code is shaky [17]. Meanwhile, restorative justice deals with international business disputes that bring together an offender and his or her victim to repair the harm an offender has inflicted [18]. Factors that determine restorative justice often are related to responses to relational restoration through meetings, social control practices, and mutual communications [19].

Mediation theory often considers confidentiality as a critical legitimizing element of the mediation process [20]. From a mediator acceptability perspective, perceived confidentiality may be an important value resulting in a relationship of trust between a party and a mediator. Such confidentiality is critical in terms of party perceptions when mediation involves the maintenance of secrets or confidentiality of information disclosures. This is because confidentiality can be in dispute in cases involving sensitive commercial information. In line with these observations, we model a mediator acceptability framework as a hierarchical model structure insofar as the dimensions in our model drove mediator selection requirements.

3. Overview of Scale Development

This study overviews the concrete research process of scale development. As shown in Figure 1, there are five steps in developing MEDACCEPT, which are the thematic analysis of literature, development of a conceptual definition, qualitative research, quantitative testing, and finalization of the scale. The literature recommends a procedure that identifies how researchers should address the validity of concepts regarding methodological applications and statistical analyses by creating definitions and generating and refining items for the scale [21]. Finally, these refined items should be tested by nomological validity. To this end, we also present a specific methodology in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Overview of the scale development procedure.

Figure 2. Conceptual model and study layouts.

We conducted two studies over two phases (Figure 2). In Phase 1, we developed and validated the determinants of the mediator acceptability scale through two prestudies that capture a mediation user perspective. Scale development, which is the first step, focuses on key determinants of mediation from the literature, whereas scale validation focuses on mediation user-side reports concerning the possibility of mediator acceptability. In Phase 2, we tested the nomological validation of scale development using structural equation modeling (SEM).

4. Phase 1: Scale Development and Validation

4.1. Prestudy of Scale Development

Based on Churchill's [22] research, we used established procedures for scale development. Then, we developed the definition for mediator acceptability and its six underlying dimensions based on the relevant literature. The proposed definition highlights that mediator acceptability can be considered to be a second-order construct reflected in the six first-order dimensions, each of which is then reflected in a set of possibilities for mediator acceptability. In line with the definition as well as the existing literature, we generated an initial pool of 30 items.

Second, we conducted in-depth interviews with 18 industrial managers who have experience with mediation and who were working on international business disputes for export/import firms in Korea. Industry participants represented in the sample covered a broad range of industries including electronics ($n = 5$), information technology ($n = 4$), textiles ($n = 4$), chemicals ($n = 3$), and materials ($n = 2$). They had an average of 5.2 years of mediation experience and 17.4 years of work experience. Considering their workload, we conducted the interviews for a duration of 30–45 min. They fully reviewed the list of 30 items with relevant definitions and 7 dimensions. Then, using a three-point scale

(1 = “not representative”, and 3 = “clearly representative”), they rated each item on how well it reflected its determinants. Finally, we retained 24 items based on the preceding item analysis.

We further tested these items with exploratory factor analysis (EFA). In this way, we conducted a pretest study with 42 participants (with an average age of 36.2) who were familiar with the mediating processes in the Korean trade dispute context. These dimensions accounted for more than 73% of the total variance. The factor loading of the 24 items ranged from 0.718 to 0.945. The commonalities for each of the retained items ranged from 0.682 to 0.915, which indicated that the retained items were highly correlated [23]. In addition, the Cronbach’s alpha for all seven dimensions was higher than the minimum acceptable level of 0.7.

4.2. Quantitative Prestudy

In July 2019, we obtained data from a professional research firm that has rich industrial panel profiles. The research firm provides suitable respondents whose profile meets the purpose of this study. These respondents were identified by the firm as experienced salespeople or managers who are the most knowledgeable about the mediating processes and outcomes. The firm sent an online survey to a well-matched sample of 180 respondents. After two reminders, we received 156 usable responses (86.66%).

We subjected the mediator acceptability scale to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Based on modification indices, factor loadings, and model fit statistics ($\chi^2(df = 00) = 278.137$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.943; IFI = 0.944; RMSEA = 0.069), we deleted 3 items, thereby reducing the scale to 21 items (Table 1). Factor loadings were significant, except for two items (0.672 and 0.662), which were nonsignificant cutoff values [24]. Composite reliability (CR) for the second-order construct and first-order dimensions exceeded the cutoff value of 0.70. All convergent validity also exceeded 0.50. In line with these observations, these results indicate the attribution of each item’s systematic variance to the underlying latent construct, thereby providing significant empirical support for the second-order structure of the current scale.

Table 1. Key measures.

Items	Standardized Loadings
<i>Skill</i>	(CR = 0.968; AVE = 0.811)
Mediator should be trained on mediation (X1).	0.890
Mediator should be trained in mediation skills (X2).	0.985
Mediator needs special education and training (X3).	0.819
<i>Status</i>	(CR = 0.776; AVE = 0.618)
Mediator should be held in good reputation (X4).	0.672
Mediator should earn the esteem of his/her relevant colleagues (X5).	0.886
Mediator should have a high social status.	deleted
<i>Legal expertise</i>	(CR = 0.908; AVE = 0.754)
Mediator should be well versed in the law enacted by the nation (X6).	0.893
Mediator should obtain a law degree or legal license.	deleted
Mediator should be well versed in the national laws regarding dispute cases (X7).	0.844
<i>Cultural expertise</i>	(CR = 0.952; AVE = 0.781)
Mediator should be well versed in the different cultural morals (X8).	0.816

Table 1. Cont.

Items	Standardized Loadings
Mediator should be able to use culture for achieving noncultural outcomes (X9).	0.969
Mediator has the power to maintain control in a fraught and difficult cultural process (X10).	0.859
<i>Procedural justice</i>	(CR = 0.947; AVE = 0.691)
The mediating procedure generally progresses without causing negative emotions between the two parties (X11).	0.823
It is unlikely to generate an opposing relationship between the two parties due to the mediating procedure (X12).	0.923
Mediation is fulfilled through mutual harmony (X13).	0.738
<i>Restorative justice</i>	(CR = 0.745; AVE = 0.521)
Dispute resolution should focus on the relational restoration between the two parties (X14).	0.667
It is necessary to rejoin society with a resolution to the dispute rather than penalties given (X15).	0.773
Mediator should create an atmosphere of communication between the two disputing parties.	deleted
<i>Perceived confidentiality</i>	(CR = 0.876; AVE = 0.711)
Details of a dispute are confidential (X16).	0.825
Apart from the disputing party and the mediator, details of a dispute are undisclosed (X17).	0.911
Mediator should maintain secrecy regarding firm information (X18).	0.789
<i>Mediator acceptability</i>	(CR = 0.891; AVE = 0.704)
If a dispute arises, we would like to employ a particular mediator (Y1).	0.862
If possible, we would like to constantly use the same mediator (Y2).	0.861
We will make the best use of a mediator to resolve our dispute (Y3).	0.793

Note: CR, composite reliability.

5. Phase 2: Nomological Validity of Scale Development

The importance of obtaining nomological validity has been well established in the literature [25,26]. Scholars have emphasized the need for an acceptable level of nomological validity or a broader research focus, establishing more general theories that directly or indirectly link multiple constructs. A nomological approach is, therefore, based on a synthesis of a commercial mediation system [27], a combination of mediation and arbitration [28], and trade disputes by mediation [4].

5.1. Testing Nomological Validity

Studies in the literature suggest that trading firms that perceive more advanced knowledge from a mediator are more likely to accept the mediator and are more likely to expect dispute resolution than those that perceive lesser knowledge [5,29]. The main domain (mediator acceptability) within the nomological network of rationally related constructs investigated the following seven determinants: skill, status, legal expertise, cultural expertise, procedural justice, restorative justice, and perceived confidentiality. As

mentioned, these factors are important in the mediating process from a practical perspective. Subsequently, hypotheses were developed, and correlations between each of the seven dimensions and mediator acceptability were assessed to test the hypotheses, indicating the formation of nomological validity of the developed scales. Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *The seven factors (i.e., (a) skill, (b) status, (c) legal expertise, (d) cultural expertise, (e) procedural justice, (f) restorative justice, and (g) perceived confidentiality) of mediating knowledge that results in dispute resolution have significantly positive correlations with mediator acceptability.*

5.2. Data Collection

An online survey facilitated by a professional research firm was conducted in South Korea. The total sample comprised 265 respondents with mediation experience in the export or import industrial areas. These respondents were representative of the main export and import industries in Korea: electronics (24%), information technology (16%), textiles (14%), chemicals (11%), etc. In particular, we directed the survey (online or offline) to respondents who were primarily responsible for international business disputes. Although the job titles of the respondents ranged from assistant manager to general, purchasing, financial, and administrative managers, all of them were the key people responsible for their mediating operations. In terms of profile, they had an average of 4.7 years of mediation experience and 13.6 years of work experience, indicating a high degree of confidence for the sample.

5.3. Measures

Given that workers experienced in mediating were the respondents in this study, we had already developed items for Phase 1. The final questionnaire consisted of three sets of measures: (1) seven determinants of mediator acceptability, (2) mediator acceptability as the main research subject, and (3) dispute resolution intention as an expected consequence of mediator acceptability. As shown in Table 1, all items were measured using a 7-point scale (ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7)).

5.4. Measure Assessment

To maintain a healthy ratio of the sample size to the number of estimated parameters, this study tested CFA models. Table 2 depicts the overall fit statistics for each of the measurement models. CFI was 0.964, and TLI was 0.951, indicating that the model provides a good fit to the sample covariance matrix. The chi-squared test with degrees of freedom was also statistically significant.

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Measurement Model χ^2 (df, p-Value)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
220.578 (114, $p < 0.01$)	0.964	0.951	0.060

Note: df, degree of freedom.

For the multiple-item measures, only 3 out of 18 for both samples had loadings from 0.675 to 0.698 with statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3). All composite reliability coefficients (CR) exceeded 0.70. Furthermore, all AVE values exceeded 0.50. These results provide evidence of the constructs' convergent validity. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha was acceptable for the minimum criteria of reliability (0.709 to 0.927). Finally, as Fornell and Larcker [30] recommended, we checked discriminant validity. As shown in Table 4, acceptable levels of discriminant validity were established based on our measurement model because the AVE of each construct exceeded the average variance shared with any other construct.

Table 3. Measurement scales: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.

Construct	Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Skill		0.813	0.944	0.927
X1	0.904			
X2	0.952			
X3	0.846			
Status		0.581	0.825	0.752
X4	0.675			
X5	0.840			
Legal expertise		0.749	0.915	0.854
X6	0.863			
X7	0.869			
Cultural experience		0.766	0.927	0.900
X8	0.840			
X9	0.961			
X10	0.820			
Procedural justice		0.679	0.933	0.856
X11	0.844			
X12	0.926			
X13	0.685			
Restorative justice		0.521	0.847	0.709
X14	0.745			
X15	0.698			
Perceived confidentiality		0.706	0.905	0.841
X16	0.832			
X17	0.886			
X18	0.807			
Mediator acceptability		0.743	0.934	0.897
Y1	0.880			
Y2	0.862			
Y3	0.844			

Table 4. Construct correlations.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Skill	5.09	1.17	0.81							
Status	4.57	1.17	0.51	0.58						
Legal experience	5.11	1.07	0.60	0.50	0.75					
Cultural experience	3.55	1.34	−0.06	0.19	−0.50	0.77				
Procedural justice	4.21	1.16	0.13	0.53	0.12	0.43	0.67			
Restorative justice	4.80	1.16	0.36	0.54	0.52	0.26	0.52	0.52		
Perceived confidentiality	4.73	0.92	0.15	0.30	0.21	0.18	0.48	0.12	0.70	
Mediator acceptability	4.92	1.00	0.26	0.42	0.37	0.09	0.31	0.47	0.22	0.74

Note: Boldface indicates AVE values.

5.5. Path Model Estimation

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the direct effects of the seven constructs on mediator acceptability. As shown in Table 5, the model fit statistics were acceptable ($\chi^2(129) = 288.460$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.943; TLI = 0.914; RMSEA = 0.067).

Table 5. Model estimations and fit indices.

Path	Standardized Coefficients	t-Value
H1-1. Skill → Mediator acceptability	0.028 (ns)	0.442
H1-2. Status → Mediator acceptability	0.195 *	2.335
H1-3. Legal expertise → Mediator acceptability	0.216 **	2.820
H1-4: Cultural expertise → Mediator acceptability	−0.046 (ns)	−0.733
H1-5: Procedural justice → Mediator acceptability	0.154 *	2.382
H1-6: Restorative justice → Mediator acceptability	0.269 **	3.488
H1-7: Perceived confidentiality → Mediator acceptability	0.238 **	2.602
$\chi^2(129) = 288.460$, $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.236$		CFI = 0.943; TLI = 0.914; RMSEA = 0.067

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Our results were quite interesting in addressing the seven determinants and their outcomes. Two hypotheses—the relationship between skill and mediator acceptability (H1-1) and the relationship between cultural expertise and mediator acceptability (H1-4)—were insignificant ($\beta = 0.028$, $p > 0.05$ and $\beta = -0.046$, $p > 0.05$, respectively). However, the rest of the hypotheses (H1-2, H1-3, H1-5, H1-6, and H1-7) were significantly supported. These different results suggest that mediator acceptability varies, as both skill and cultural expertise are less importantly considered in the Korean mediating context.

5.6. Additional Test of Moderating Effects

Although our findings indicate that both skill and cultural expertise are not directly related to mediator acceptability, they are still useful for a better understanding of mediator quality evaluation [13,31]. The effects of the six factors on mediator acceptability can be different from the moderating level of perceived confidentiality. This is because, from a practical perspective, the conventional wisdom that confidentiality is strictly observed by the parties has been questioned [32]. This suggests that other roles of confidentiality may be critical for a complete understanding of mediator acceptability. Thus, we additionally tested the moderating effect of perceived confidentiality between each of the six factors and mediator acceptability.

The moderating effect using SEM is commonly tested by dividing the dataset into two groups (i.e., high and low perceived confidentiality) and comparing the model fitting across groups [33]. If two groups are successfully identified without any constraints, the SEM results should check whether the change of χ^2 is statistically significant given the change in the degree of freedom ($\Delta\chi^2/\Delta d.f.$). If the change of χ^2 is significant, a moderating effect exists.

To test the moderating effects of perceived confidentiality, M1-1 to M1-6, we conducted moderating analyses to determine whether significant moderating effects existed between the six factors and the key moderator (perceived confidentiality), with mediator acceptability as the dependent variable. Meanwhile, as perceived confidentiality was a multiple-item measure, we computed the construct as the average of three items ($M = 4.43$; low ($n = 138$) vs. high ($n = 127$)) and then identified two groups (low vs. high) of perceived confidentiality.

Moreover, following the procedures suggested by Hair et al. [34], we tested the invariance between the two groups. As noted, for the moderating role of perceived confidentiality, a model that imposes structural weights on one path was compared with the unconstrained model using the chi-square difference tests (Table 6). With 17 more degrees of freedom, the analyses found a significant chi-square difference between the two models.

Table 6. Results of moderating effects: perceived confidentiality.

	Original	Low	High	$\chi^2(df)$	$\Delta\chi^2(17)$
Unconstrained model				617.90(258)	27.63 *
Structural weights				645.53(275)	
Skill → Mediator acceptability	0.028	−0.021	0.070		
Status → Mediator acceptability	0.195	0.007	0.511 *		
Legal expertise → Mediator acceptability	0.216	0.167	0.156		
Cultural expertise → Mediator acceptability	−0.048	−0.116	0.018		
Procedural justice → Mediator acceptability	0.154	0.103	0.093		
Procedural justice → Mediator acceptability	0.268	0.240 *	0.413 **		

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Our findings were quite interesting. We found that a high level of perceived confidentiality (M1-2: $\beta = 0.511$, $p < 0.05$) only moderated the relationship between status and mediator acceptability. Meanwhile, the relationship between restorative justice and mediator acceptability (M1-6) was fully supported for both groups (Low: $\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.05$; High: $\beta = 0.413$, $p < 0.01$), regardless of the level of perceived confidentiality. However, when perceived confidentiality was low (or high), the relationship between restorative justice and mediator acceptability decreased (or increased). Unfortunately, other relationships (i.e., skill, legal expertise, cultural expertise, and procedural justice) with perceived confidentiality were not significant. In line with these observations, we discuss more details in the next section.

6. Discussion

We began this study with a fundamental objective—namely, to develop and validate multidimensional scales for the seven distinct mediator acceptability dimensions to offer the MEDACCEPT scale that can provide reliable measures of perceived mediator acceptability. Our tests of nomological validity show different determinants and consequential effects

for the seven mediator acceptability dimensions. Moreover, additional verification of our scale development prediction is offered by Korean trading firms perceiving each dimension when they select a particular mediator.

Especially, we found overall support for the hypothesized relationships between each of the seven dimensions and its outcome. More specifically, of the hypothesized effects, our findings supported five of the seven hypotheses. However, the effects of both skill and cultural expertise on mediator acceptability were insignificant even though these two dimensions are often used to select mediators from a practical perspective. However, these findings are not surprising because prior empirical studies on actual mediator selections that can be used as reference points for scale development predictions are lacking. Meanwhile, a practical assessment of the current scales shows that Korean trading firms considering mediators perceive significant advantages in terms of mediator acceptability and selection. Overall, we conclude that this robust support validates our multidimensional, formative conceptualization of mediator acceptability.

6.1. Research Implications

This study offered important implications for researchers and trading practitioners. Five dimensions—namely, status, expertise, restorative justice, procedural justice, and perceived confidentiality, were identified as important determinants of mediator acceptability. Although numerous theoretical and practical approaches have been used to examine the selecting determinants of mediators [28,35], these approaches have not been systematically adopted at least in the Korean mediation context. This study integrated dimensions from traditional mediation frameworks to examine the nomological validity of the scale development, contributing to both Korean trading firms' decision-making processes and mediator selection literature.

Our developed scales capture several logical reasons why Korean trading firms need mediators who have a specific criterion. First, our findings add to previous efforts at measuring restorative justice, particularly by enhancing the cooperative component as an essential part of international mediation. These findings suggest that firms evaluate mediators at an overall justice level and that they have perceptions of the key level of mediator acceptability. It improves our understanding of how firms evaluate international trading mediators. Second, firms are often concerned with selecting a suitable mediator when facing a critical trade dispute. This can be resolved via the identified dimensions in this study. Third, our findings indicate that restorative justice is an important determinant of mediator acceptability, thus underscoring the importance of mediating justice as a decision-making variable.

The findings of this study suggest that international trading firms should consider these five dimensions (e.g., status, legal expertise, procedural justice, restorative justice, and perceived confidentiality) of mediator acceptability as important dispute resolution objectives, because these constructs provide ways for firms to ensure adequate international mediators in their dispute. Our findings are especially relevant to the SME environment, where it is difficult to select a mediator who will have a significant impact on dispute resolution.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study also has several limitations. The currently identified constructs were tested with quantitative studies; however, further research should include qualitative studies to better identify each of the dimensions captured in the MEDACEPT framework. This is an important approach to offer both researchers and managers a complete understanding of mediator selection and clues on how to effectively identify adequate mediators of international trading disputes.

To capture the full range of mediator selection issues, this study focused on international disputes on trading physical products (in contrast to service products such as information, patents, and copyright services). As such, an alternative research priority is to

examine the scales in the context of service sectors, make any necessary modifications, and assess the full-scale development procedure of the modified scales.

7. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to provide researchers and practitioners with a guideline for how to measure competent mediators when considering the use of MEDAC-CEPT. By achieving this goal, this study developed and validated multidimensional scales for seven distinct mediator acceptability dimensions, to offer a MEDACCEPT scale that can provide reliable measures of perceived mediator acceptability. We showed that the five dimensions of status, expertise, restorative justice, procedural justice, and perceived confidentiality are important determinants of mediator acceptability. Our findings suggest that international trading firms should consider these five dimensions of mediator acceptability as important dispute resolution objectives because these constructs provide ways for firms to ensure adequate international mediators in their disputes. Finally, this study presented insights for practical dispute management through mediator selection, to achieve a sustainable trading advantage. In particular, we expect that studies reflecting the actual evaluation of how firms use the dimensions developed in this study can provide significant insights.

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