



The Role of Motivational Cultural Intelligence in Enhancing Work Adjustment: A Study of Indian Expatriates

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of motivational cultural intelligence (MCI) on the work adjustment (WA) of Indian expatriates to their new workplace in different countries. This study used survey data from 151 respondents from 35 countries. The idea that MCI is linked to WA was tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings showed a significant and positive effect of MCI on expatriates' WA, which demonstrates that MCI is a key determinant of expatriates' successful WA. MCI evaluation should be incorporated into hiring and selection procedures for overseas assignments to enhance the effectiveness of these processes. Enhancing self-efficacy, perseverance, and cultural curiosity through targeted training, coaching, and mentorship programs can improve expatriates' MCI and promote a more seamless transition to the workplace. The role of MCI in WA is empirically validated in this study, adding to the body of literature. In addition to providing useful insights for enhancing expatriate management and foreign assignment results, it broadens our theoretical grasp of cultural intelligence.

Keywords: Motivational Cultural Intelligence (MCI), Work Adjustment (WA), Expatriates (or Indian Expatriates), Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Cross-Cultural Adjustment (CCA).

1. Introduction

Modern human resource management techniques have evolved as a result of globalization. Organizations place a high priority on employee training and development, particularly multinational firms that provide their staff with overseas assignments (Pernkopf *et al.*, 2011) [34]. The most common strategy used by multinational firms to expand and maintain their corporate culture, open new worldwide markets, and preserve central organizational coordination and control is the deployment of expatriates to other countries (Zhang and Dodgson, 2007) [49]. However, businesses and employees incur large direct and indirect expenses as a result of expatriate failures (Puck *et al.*, 2008) [36].

Expatriate failures can take many different forms, such as poor performance, transition issues, and early returns (Harzing and Christensen, 2004) [21]. Choosing, training, and placing expatriates are crucial to the operations of a multinational corporation since each person's performance and adaptability certainly affect the organization's ability to develop foreign business. When expatriates perform poorly on an international project, they incur significant costs to both their employer and themselves (Black *et al.*, 1992; Copeland and Griggs, 1985; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1986) [10, 16, 30]. In

order to inform practitioners in evaluating and managing the performance of overseas work assignments, sojourner and expatriation research looked into factors that influence cross-cultural adjustment (Kundu *et al.*, 2025) [28]. In this paper, we examine the use of motivational cultural intelligence (MCI) as a predictor of work adjustment (WA), which has received little attention in the studies on cross-cultural adjustment (Setti *et al.*, 2022; Konanahalli *et al.*, 2014) [42, 26]. Earley and Ang (2003) [17] claimed that MCI, a promising multidimensional trait that helps an individual cope with culturally diverse situations. Among the four dimensions, MCI is one of the factors of cultural intelligence. MCI significantly contributes to overall cultural intelligence, facilitating expatriates to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts. Motivation as a factor of cultural intelligence is seen to be an essential element to successfully adjust in a host country's cultural environment (Earley and Ang, 2003; Haines *et al.*, 2008) [17, 18].

In particular, cultural effectiveness is linked with MCI, which enables an individual to concentrate attention and energy on understanding and negotiating culturally diverse situations (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008) [1], and holds particular importance for cultural competence (Chen *et al.*, 2010;

Templer *et al.*, 2006) [13, 47]. Among other dimensions of cultural intelligence, MCI is the most effective predictor across different cultures and tasks (Chen *et al.*, 2012) [14]. MCI encourages the person to gain different cross-cultural experiences that lead to increases in cultural effectiveness (Kolb, 1984). Previous studies found that the CCA is the main reason for not completing a foreign assignment successfully. Researchers assume that failure in WA is the main aspect of not performing tasks effectively. So, this research specifically gives attention to the WA aspect of CCA, since it is more important than the other dimensions of CCA, and also it is closely related to the work itself (Chew *et al.*, 2021) [15]. WA defines the degree by which expatriates develop a sense of ease while managing assignment responsibilities and achieving performance standards (Chen *et al.*, 2010) [13]; Shaffer *et al.*, 2006) [44]. Along with general and interaction components, WA is one of the three dimensions of CCA (Black *et al.*, 1991) [9]. Ang *et al.* (2004) [2] discovered that MCI is more closely associated with WA than gender, age, and citizenship. According to Chen *et al.* (2010) [13], a high level of MCI fosters receptivity to different viewpoints, facilitating easier WA. Since WA is more indicative of job performance than the other CCA characteristics, there are very few studies that focus on WA individually (Chew *et al.*, 2021; Ott and Michailova, 2018) [15, 32]. So, the predictive efficacy of MCI on the WA of expatriates working in other cultures, however, requires more research.

Therefore, by investigating the influence of MCI on WA on a sample of expatriates, the current study's main goal is to advance the theory of cultural intelligence and expand research on international assignment success and CCA. Since cultural intelligence is a relatively new concept, a thorough analysis of MCI as one of its subcategories has the potential to improve our knowledge of cultural intelligence and serve as a template for further cultural intelligence studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Motivational Cultural Intelligence

According to Ang *et al.* (2004) [2], MCI is the capacity to comprehend, control, and guide one's own motivation as well as to identify and affect the motivation of others in order to accomplish objectives. It is characterized as a person's inherent drive and particular sense of self-efficacy to communicate effectively with people from different cultures and become proficient in their subtleties. People who possess a high motivational cultural intelligence are naturally enthusiastic to participate in new and varied cross-cultural interactions (Earley and Ang, 2003) [17]. They like engaging with others from many ethnic backgrounds and cherish new cultural encounters.

Culturally intelligent people are also self-efficacious in their capacity for adaptation. "A personal sense of efficacy and desire for enactive mastery, as well as a positive evaluation of such situations, are necessary for the motivational aspect of cultural intelligence" (Song *et al.*, 2023) [45]. In support of this idea, Templer *et al.* (2006) [47] discovered a favorable correlation between psychological adjustment in cross-cultural settings and MCI. According to Bandura (1986) [4], MCI encourages and guides a person's cultural knowledge and practices into focused action in new cultural encounters, as well as igniting attention and effort. The three components of MCI, enhancement, efficacy, and consistency, can guide and impact a person's adjustment to new cultural contexts (Ng and Earley, 2006) [31]. Therefore, the degree to which people

acclimate to other cultures may be influenced by their motivating cultural intelligence.

2.2. Work Adjustment

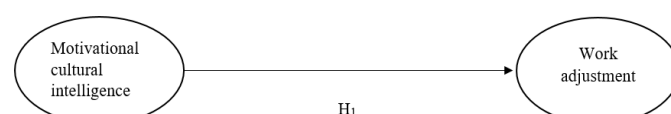
The level of psychological comfort and familiarity with many aspects of a foreign culture is referred to as cross-cultural adjustment (Black, 1988; Black *et al.*, 1991) [7, 9]. As a procedure, it entails lowering uncertainty and bringing about change, which helps expatriates become more at ease and integrate into the new culture (Black, 1988) [7]. Acculturation literature has recognized the aspects of psychological, socio-cultural, and WA as three interconnected aspects of living abroad (Searle and Ward, 1990) [40]. However, because WA is closely related to job performance, productivity, and assignment success, we primarily focused on this aspect of cross-cultural adjustment in our study (Kraimer *et al.*, 2001) [27]. According to research, work adaptability is the primary factor influencing long-term job performance and the primary forerunner of cooperation (Braman *et al.*, 2010; Selmer and Luring, 2013) [11, 41]. An expatriate may succeed in his/her assignment despite having a good social or general adjustment. Thus, a high degree of WA results in less role ambiguity and increased confidence when carrying out tasks connected to the job (Shaffer *et al.*, 1999) [43].

2.3. Motivational Cultural Intelligence and Work Adjustment

According to Black (1988) [7], WA is the process of adjusting to new duties, responsibilities, positions, and work environments in a different cultural context. People with high MCI ought to adjust to their jobs more easily. They are intrinsically motivated to acquire the norms of other cultures. They are more flexible and have a propensity to adjust to changing circumstances, especially those at work (Ang *et al.*, 2004; Earley and Ang, 2003) [2, 17]. Their psychological readiness to adapt to the changing demands of the workplace in the new cultural context is more important. Organizations require employees who are naturally driven and culturally nimble to succeed in an international assignment (Spreitzer *et al.*, 1997) [46]. According to Chen *et al.* (2010) [13], expatriates with high MCI are better mentally equipped to handle the challenges of the workplace in culturally different environments. They are, therefore, self-assured and intrinsically motivated to adapt to new work environments (Palthe, 2004; Kanfer and Heggstad, 1997) [33, 24] and exhibit behaviors that they have learned (Black *et al.*, 1991) [9]. This could encourage them to participate in culturally diverse work practices and achieve the goals of their assignments (Lin *et al.*, 2012) [29]. As a result, research has shown that MCI and expatriates' WA are positively correlated (Jyoti and Kour, 2015) [23]. Consequently, we anticipated the following:

H₁: Motivational cultural intelligence is positively related to work adjustment.

Considering the literature review, the conceptual model for the study is proposed in Figure 1.



Source: Authors' own work

Fig 1: Conceptual model

Note(s): Here, H refers to the hypothesis

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Participants and Procedure

The study sample comprised 151 Indian expatriates working in foreign countries. In total, 225 expatriates were approached, out of which 151 expatriates gave responses, yielding a 67.1% response rate. To reach the required number of respondents for this study, we took a membership in the Inter-Nation group. Inter Nation Group is the largest community to link with expatriates all over the world, with 5.3 million members across 420 cities worldwide. A maximum of the data (N=77) was collected with the use of this group. Because of its targeted nature, convenience sampling was employed in this study. The remaining data was collected via Facebook and LinkedIn (25 from Facebook, 49 from LinkedIn). The demographic profile of the respondents (N = 151) reveals a fairly balanced gender distribution, with 58% male and 42% female participants. The majority of

expatriates have experience of more than six months. Furthermore, the maximum respondents were from South America (10 countries), followed by Asia and followed by Asia and Africa (7 countries each). After that, Europe and North America followed with 5 and 4 countries. Finally, Oceania came up with 2 countries. Table I represents the demographic profile of the respondents.

3.2. Measures

MCI - Ang *et al.* (2007) [3] define MCI as how an individual is self-motivated to learn and accept the norms, values, and culture of another country. From the four-item scale, the sample item is "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures".

WA- Black and Porter (1991) [9] provided three items to measure WA. The sample item is "I am adjusted to the specific responsibilities of my job, etc.".

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	88	58
Female	63	42
Total	151	100
Education		
Graduate or above	78	52
PhD	30	20
others	43	28
Total	151	100
Designation		
Managerial position	81	54
Non-managerial position	70	46
Total	151	100
Experience		
Less than 6 months	47	31
More than 6 months	104	69
Total	151	100
Language of other country		
Yes	83	55
No	68	45
Total	151	100
Age		
18-25 years	31	21
26 to 30 years	67	44
31 to 40 years	27	18
41 to 50 years	26	17
Total	151	100

Continents	Countries
South America (10)	Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Guyana, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay
Asia (7)	Israel, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Thailand
Africa (7)	Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Angola, Libya, Algeria
Europe (5)	Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Ukraine
North America (4)	United States, Canada, Mexico, Jamaica
Oceania (2)	Australia, New Zealand

Source: Authors' own work

Note(s): Parentheses represent the number of countries covered in respective continents

4. Results

4.1. Measurement Model

The constructs were first tested for convergent reliability and validity using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Each factor loading was greater than 0.50, as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2019) [19] (See Table II). In particular, factor loadings for MCI fluctuate between 0.880 and 0.936, and 0.817 and 0.894 for WA items. Additionally, composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach alpha were computed to check the internal consistency. Table II represents the CR values of 0.836 and 0.951 and the Cronbach alphas of 0.831 and 0.932 for both constructs, which are over the 0.70 threshold (Hair *et al.*, 2018) [20].

Furthermore, the convergent validity was calculated by average variance extracted (AVE). The value of AVE is 0.747 and 0.830 for each construct (see Table II), justifying the necessary threshold value of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2018) [20]. Furthermore, the modern technique (Heterotrait-Monotrait/HTMT) was used to evaluate the discriminant validity. According to Heseler *et al.* (2015) [22], an HTMT value higher than 0.85 may lead to issues with discriminant validity. HTMT value between the two constructs was within the suggested range of 0.85 (Table III). To evaluate the multicollinearity, Variance inflation factor (VIF) values were calculated, and since all values were found to be below 5, it indicates that the data does not suffer from multicollinearity issues (Becker *et al.*, 2015) [6]. Additionally, to check for common method bias, Harman's single-factor method was employed. The first factor had a variance of 29.69%, which was below the threshold outlined by Podsakoff *et al.* (2012) [35].

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table III represents the descriptive statistics, with the help of correlations, means, and standard deviations. The positive and significant correlation found between the independent and dependent variable provided support to proceed toward the hypothesis of the study.

Table 2: Outer loadings, reliability and validity

Variables	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE	VIF
<i>Motivational Cultural Intelligence (MCI)</i>		0.932	0.951	0.830	
I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	0.936				4.083
I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me".	0.915				3.642
I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	0.913				3.515
I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.	0.880				3.230
<i>Work adjustment (WA)</i>		0.831	0.836	0.747	
I am adjusted with the specific job responsibilities.	0.817				1.498
I am adjusted with the performance standards and expectations".	0.894				3.002
I am adjusted with the supervisory responsibilities.	0.881				2.701

Source: Authors' own work

Note(s): CA refers to Cronbach alpha; CR refers to composite reliability; AVE refers to average variance extracted; VIF refers to

variance inflation factor

4.3. Structural Model Assessment

To investigate the proposed direct association between MCI and WA, the structural model was evaluated using PLS-SEM (refer to Table IV). MCI had a positive and substantial effect on WA ($\beta = 0.266$, $t = 3.560$, $p \leq 0.001$), and the results showed non-zero values in both the top and lower limit (0.141-0.423), supporting the hypothesis that was put forth. This indicates that individuals with higher MCI are more likely to thrive in multicultural workplaces. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for WA was 0.194, indicating that WA accounts for 19% of the variance in MCI. (refer to Table IV). Table IV presents the predictive relevance (Q^2) value as 0.301, which is greater than zero, indicating that the model has adequate predictive capability (Rigdon, 2014; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2014) [37, 39]. These results identified that MCI is an important component for improving workers' capacity to adapt, integrate, and function well in a variety of cultural contexts. Since the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value was less than the 0.08 threshold (Henseler *et al.*, 2015), it was 0.068, suggesting an acceptable fit. To verify the model's fitness, the normed fit index (NFI) was also examined. The results indicated a value of 0.881, meeting the minimum requirements for model fitness (Hair *et al.*, 2018) [20] (see Table IV)

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and Discriminant validity (HTMT)

Variables	Mean	SD	Correlations		HTMT criterion	
			MCI	WA	MCI	WA
MCI	3.110	0.51				
WA	3.158	0.69	0.255**		0.291	

Source: Authors' own work

Note(s): N-151; HTMT-Heterotrait - Monotrait ratio; ** $p \leq 0.01$; MCI refers to motivational cultural intelligence; WA refers to work adjustment

Table 4: Results of Direct and Indirect effects

Effects		Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	CI (LLCI-ULCI)	P values
Direct effects						
H ₁	MCI → WA	0.266***	0.075	3.560	(0.141-0.423)	0.000
	WA					
R ²	0.194					
Q ²	0.301					
SRMR	0.068					
NFI	0.881					

Source: Authors' own work

Note(s): N-151; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$; CI- Confidence interval at 95% significance level (LLCI-Lower level confidence interval, ULCI-Upper level confidence interval); MCI refers to motivational cultural intelligence; WA refers to work adjustment

5. Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore more about MCI as a crucial element of cultural intelligence and to measure the expatriate adjustment at work. This study, utilizing a sample of expatriates from different cultural backgrounds, confirms that cultural intelligence is a valid, generalizable, and

applicable factor. In foreign assignments, employees who are keen to learn about and experience different cultures and who are confident in their skills to adjust to new cultural contexts do better at balancing their social, professional, and personal commitments (Rockstuhl and Dyne, 2018) [38]. According to the study, employees who possess MCI are better able to adapt to a variety of settings without experiencing any problems. This result supports the claim given by previous researcher(s) who suggested that a person having high MCI has stronger internal curiosity, self-belief, and readiness to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds (Ang *et al.*, 2007) [3]. When it comes to adjustment at the global level, MCI helps in reducing tension and simplifying the process of dealing with uncertainty. This makes it easier to adjust to work. Our findings are in line with earlier research that underscores the significance of motivation in effective cross-cultural adaptation (Ward *et al.*, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2011) [48, 12]. Because of their positive outlook, they can view cultural differences as chances for growth rather than barriers, which eventually fosters greater role clarity, psychological comfort, and professional inclusion.

Overall, this study adds to the literature on cultural intelligence by offering empirical proof that MCI is a strong predictor of WA. The result encourages the researchers and professionals to see the motivational component of cultural intelligence as a critical factor in assessing successful cross-cultural work adaptation by validating the positive link.

i). Practical Implications: The study provides a number of useful ramifications for managers and organizations. First, businesses should assess the level of MCI in the recruitment and selection process of expatriates before assigning foreign assignments, since MCI has a beneficial impact on WA. Second, companies can give attention to a training program that improves employees' self-motivation, self-assurance, and ability to endure in cross-cultural situations. And also organize workshops and seminars that promote goal-setting, self-efficacy development, and cultural curiosity, for instance, may develop employees' MCI and, thus, their ability to change. Third, providing coaching and mentoring opportunities that increase motivational resources, expatriate management programs can help expatriates maintain engagement and resilience in unfamiliar settings. Finally, executives and professionals should nurture an organizational climate that encourages diversity and inclusion. This will ensure a smoother transition to work and better performance overall.

ii). Limitations and Future Research Directions: This work has some limitations despite its significant contributions. First, the result might have been inflated due to common method variance because of the use of self-reported measures. Future research should include feedback from supervisors and peers along with expatriates to obtain a more accurate assessment of their performance. Second, focusing only on the MCI aspect ignores the potential relevance of other aspects of cultural intelligence (cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral cultural intelligence), which may interact or work together to influence WA. And also, future studies can do a comparison to find which aspect of cultural intelligence makes a stronger work adjustment. The current study only considered one aspect of the WA process, ignoring its longitudinal side. Future studies can address these limitations by utilizing experimental or longitudinal methodologies so that they can properly identify causal

connections between MCI and WA. Lastly, future studies may add potential mediators and moderators (such as organizational support, cultural distance, or personality qualities) between the studied variables that contribute more to the expatriate management literature.

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