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# UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCING CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

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### Abstract:

Culture is a global phenomenon that is derived from social, economic, legal, political, and religious norms, values, and traditions of the society. Culture shapes the behavior of individuals to act accordingly in different situations faced by individuals in all spheres of life. Thus, from the last few decades of the 20th century until now, organizational culture has been researched extensively. Culture exerts influence over every facet of individuals' conduct within a particular society. Consequently, individuals raised in disparate countries with varying cultural norms cultivate distinct patterns of behavior and cognition. Organizational culture is an important determinant of organizational success. The workplace environment is crafted through the interactions of employees, forming organizational culture. In the new Malaysia, the focus has shifted towards embracing the diversity of cultures and interests, necessitating attention. In an era marked by polarization and limited social mobility, cultural intelligence emerges as a crucial asset across all socioeconomic and ethnic groups. In a heterogeneous society like Malaysia, the capacity to collaborate with diverse cultures will provide disadvantaged individuals with a competitive advantage and enhance social mobility. This conceptual paper aims to investigate the Model of Cultural Intelligence, examining how employees in Malaysia embrace a diverse range of cultures in their daily activities.

### Keywords:

Cultural Intelligence, Metacognitive, Cognitive, Behavioural, Motivation

## Introduction

The ability to successfully navigate multiple cultural surroundings is more important than ever in today's globalised society, which is marked by a rise in cross-cultural encounters. Cultural intelligence (CQ), the capability to relate and work adeptly in culturally disparate situations, has emerged as a critical skill for success in a global market. While cultural sensitivity and awareness form the foundation, CQ goes beyond mere knowledge. It equips individuals with the agility to understand, adapt to, and leverage cultural differences to achieve their goals. According to Van Dyne and Ang (2008), cultural intelligence is the capacity of an individual to work well in cross-cultural settings and, as a result, to make informed decisions when adjusting to a new cultural setting. This paper delves into the concept of CQ, explicitly focusing on the adaptability of cultural intelligence in Malaysia.

Because of rising globalization, having a robust CQ knowledge set is becoming more and more valuable for leaders, especially in a digital setting (Rüth and Netzer, 2020). Organizations are increasingly dealing with a diverse workforce and customer base with varying cultural backgrounds, preferences, and expectations. Understanding and effectively engaging with this diversity is crucial for organizational success, innovation, and competitiveness in the global marketplace. Furthermore, technology challenges is one of the issues that organizations should face. Rapid technological advancements are reshaping industries and business practices, requiring organizations to stay agile, innovative, and adaptable to leverage emerging technologies and digital trends effectively (Livermore et al., 2022).

Besides, conflicts and knowledge concealing may arise from a lack of cultural intelligence (Bogilovic et al., 2017). Employees must, therefore, possess cultural intelligence to deal with the diversity of organizational cultures and communicate effectively with other members of the organization. To understand more on this area, topology on cultural intelligence by Early and Ang (2003) has been used. Cultural intelligence was proposed by Earley and Ang (2003) as a four-dimensional construct that includes metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects.

## The Objective of the Paper

The paper's objective is to explore the literature on cultural intelligence and analyze the dimensions of cultural intelligence.

## Literature Review

### *Definition of Cultural Intelligence*

The ability of a company to operate successfully in a complicated and uncertain multicultural environment is known as organizational cultural intelligence. Agile tactics that promote evolutionary fitness, organizational resilience, and the capacity to overcome adversity are all part of it (Livermore et al., 2022). With the rise of frequent foreign travel, business travel, and communication, the world is getting more and more interconnected. However, cultural differences can hinder these relationships, resulting in miscommunications, breakdowns in communication, and even confrontations. In this situation, cultural intelligence (CQ) becomes evident as a crucial ability. CQ is the capacity to comprehend, adjust to, and engage with others from a variety of cultural backgrounds. This literature review aims to explore how researchers have defined and measured CQ, identify its core dimensions, and examine the benefits and applications of CQ in the organization. While cultural intelligence differs throughout the world, its effects remain the same inside a nation.

**Table 1: Historical Literature on Cultural Intelligence**

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Construct Concept</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Binsaeed et al., (2023)</b>	Cultural Intelligence and Performance	Quantitative Research	Cultural intelligence (CI) refers to an individual's ability to effectively function in different cultural settings. This includes understanding and navigating diverse cultural norms, values, beliefs, and behaviours. Cultural intelligence goes beyond simple awareness and also involves the necessary skills to adapt and succeed in multicultural environments.
<b>K Babu (2021)</b>	Cultural Intelligence	Systematic Review	Cultural intelligence is essentially the ability of a person or an organization to adjust to all kinds and levels of culture and culturally heterogeneous environments through appropriate behavior for that culture.
<b>Aldhaheri (2017)</b>	Cultural Intelligence and Leadership Style	Qualitative study of 14 school leaders.	The capacity of an individual to perform well in cross-cultural settings
<b>Cox (2019)</b>	Organizational Culture and Culture Intelligence	Qualitative Research.	The capacity to comprehend and adjust to various cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours in order to perform well in environments with a diversity of cultural backgrounds.
<b>Afsar et al., (2020)</b>	Organizational Culture	Quantitative research, collected data from employees working in multicultural environment	The ability of an individual to adapt to and understand various cultural norms, values, beliefs, and behaviours in order to function well in culturally diverse environments. It entails having the capacity to communicate and collaborate with individuals from various cultural origins while exhibiting cultural sensitivity, awareness, and respect.
<b>Fakhreldin (2011)</b>	Culture Intelligence	Mixed Method	The ability of a person to perform well in a variety of cultural situations, such as national, ethnic, organisational, and others.

***Dimensions of Cultural Intelligence***

Cultural intelligence goes beyond just awareness of cultural differences; it includes the skills to navigate and thrive in diverse environments. Individuals with high cultural intelligence can effectively manage cross-cultural interactions, communicate with high cultural intelligence are able to communicate across cultural divides, handle cross-cultural relationships, and modify their behaviour in response to various cultural circumstances.

CQ comprises four dimensions or components (Early & Ang, 2003, Ang & Van Dyne, 2008) which are metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral and motivation.

**Table 2: Discussion on the Dimension of Cultural Intelligence**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
Metacognitive	<p>The term "metacognitive CQ" describes the regulation and observation of cognition, or the process of gaining and understanding knowledge (Ang et al., 2007).</p> <p>Metacognitive also describes a person's capacity to use their knowledge and create suitable plans of action in order to handle cultural differences (Early &amp; Ang, 2003).</p> <p>The ability to plan and strategize for intercultural interactions (Cox, 2019).</p> <p>Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence pertains to an individual's ability to consciously monitor and regulate their cognitive processes and coping mechanisms during cross-cultural communication (Azevedo &amp; Shane, 2019).</p>
Cognitive	<p>The cognitive component is an individual's general knowledge and the organization of their cultural knowledge concerning the customs, beliefs, and norms of various cultures (Ang et al., 2007)</p> <p>People who possess high levels of cognitive cultural intelligence demonstrate a thorough understanding of various cultural norms, customs, and practices, which they have acquired via both formal schooling and life experiences (Jain, 2022).</p> <p>Cognitive aspects involve an individual's cultural knowledge, awareness, and understanding of different cultural norms, practices, and values (Aldhaferi, 2017).</p>
Behavioral	<p>The ability of individuals or organizations to adapt their behavior effectively when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds (Livermore et al., 2022).</p> <p>The ability of a person to communicate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds in a suitable manner using both words and body language (Babu, 2021)</p> <p>Developing collaborative efforts, mutual respect, understanding, and effective cross-cultural relationships in a variety of contexts all depend heavily on behavioural cultural intelligence (Fakhreldin, 2011).</p> <p>Behavioral in cultural intelligence is being able to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds effectively requires the ability to adjust both verbal and nonverbal behaviours (Jain, 2022).</p>

Dimension	Discussion
Motivational	<p>Motivational Cultural Intelligence is the combination of internal and external motivation in cross-cultural contacts, such as enjoying the interactions, identifying concrete benefits in cross-cultural situations, and feeling comfortable in a variety of settings (Azevedo &amp; Shane, 2019).</p> <p>The inherent desire of individuals to engage with diverse cultures, driven by their intrinsic motivation, enthusiasm, and eagerness, plays a crucial role in their pursuit of cross-cultural experiences and their ability to adapt successfully in multicultural environments. This desire stems from their genuine interest in learning about and interacting with different cultural groups and the pleasure they derive from such encounters (Afsar et al., 2020).</p> <p>Frías-Jamilena et al. (2018) claim that the motivational component of CQ acts as a catalyst, creating the drive and effort needed to perform well in situations that meet specific requirements. People are naturally motivated to learn about and engage with different cultural groups, and they find enjoyment in doing so.</p>

### *Argument Of Previous Study*

Hartini et al., (2019) in their study highlighted that due to cultural challenges and complexities, employees need to possess the right capabilities to deal with global customers effectively. Cultural intelligence is a key managerial competency required for interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds when conducting business globally. In the organization, employees often encounter cultural challenges and complexities when interacting with global customers or stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds. These challenges can arise due to differences in communication styles, values, norms, and expectations among individuals from various cultures. Employees must be able to navigate these cultural differences effectively to engage with global customers meaningfully and productively.

Cultural Intelligence empowers individuals and organisations with the capacity to comprehensively comprehend, effectively communicate, and successfully cooperate across diverse cultures, resulting in enhanced relationships and outcomes (Livermore et al., 2021). By improving their cultural intelligence, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of how culture impacts behaviour, communication styles, decision-making processes, and social interactions. This comprehension enables individuals to interpret behaviours and intentions in a culturally suitable manner, promoting mutual respect and empathy across cultural barriers.

Having a strong cultural intelligence is crucial in culturally diverse settings as it enables individuals to establish positive connections, promote mutual comprehension, and prevent any misunderstandings or conflicts stemming from cultural disparities (Babu, 2021). Individuals possessing a high level of cultural intelligence are more proficient in efficient communication, displaying respect for various viewpoints, and adjusting their behaviour in culturally suitable manners.

By acknowledging the significance of cultural intelligence in effectively navigating various situations, individuals can improve their ability to interact with people from different cultures, expand their understanding of different cultures, and acquire the necessary skills to thrive in



multicultural settings. The focus on cultural intelligence highlights its significance as a crucial skill for persons aiming to succeed in the contemporary globalised society, where encounters with individuals from many cultural origins are progressively prevalent and indispensable for personal and professional development. Butt et al., (2023) said that individuals who have a high level of cultural intelligence possess a specific set of abilities that allow them to successfully navigate and excel in surroundings that are diverse and multicultural. They possess a greater degree of open-mindedness, empathy, and curiosity towards various cultures, enabling them to establish favourable connections with individuals from diverse origins.

## Conclusion

To summarise, cultural intelligence (CQ) is an essential skill that empowers individuals to navigate and operate in varied and multicultural environments successfully. Studies have demonstrated that cultural intelligence can be enhanced by training programmes that focus on important factors such as cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions (Azevedo & Shane, 2019). These dimensions play a crucial role in enhancing cross-cultural competence, improving intercultural interactions, and driving individual and organizational outcomes such as cultural adjustment, leadership effectiveness, and job performance.

Cultural intelligence is an invaluable aptitude that enables individuals to effectively negotiate the intricacies of multicultural settings, foster better intercultural connections, and achieve success in the increasingly interconnected global society of today. Investing in the cultivation of cultural intelligence through training and education enables individuals and organisations to bolster their capacity to succeed in varied and linked environments. It is necessary to prioritise the development of cultural intelligence among personnel in order to improve their capacity to successfully engage with international consumers and negotiate relationships across different cultures (Hartini et al., 2019).

Cultural intelligence is a highly useful skill that empowers individuals with the capacity to traverse the intricacies of intercultural contexts with great effectiveness. In the contemporary era of globalisation, where encounters with individuals from various cultural origins are becoming more prevalent, possessing a profound level of cultural intelligence is vital for establishing prosperous partnerships and collaborations amidst multiple cultures. Individuals who possess a high level of cultural intelligence have the ability to adjust their behaviour, communication style, and decision-making methods to align with the cultural norms and expectations of various groups. This results in more successful interactions and a greater level of mutual understanding.

Investing in the cultivation of cultural intelligence through training and education enables individuals and organisations to bolster their ability to succeed in varied and linked environments. People with a strong CQ components know cultural parallels and differences (Brislín et al., 2006). Cultural intelligence training programmes, which target the enhancement of cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions of cultural intelligence, can assist individuals in cultivating the necessary abilities and mindset to engage with persons from diverse cultural backgrounds in a respectful and productive manner. This investment not only enhances the personal and professional development of individuals but also enhances the overall success of organisations functioning in multicultural situations.

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