

Training of Political Skills as Moderator between Cultural Intelligence and Expatriate Adjustment: A Social Learning Theory Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Background - Applying social learning theory, we propose a relationship of cultural intelligence with the moderation effect of political skills to predict expatriate adjustment.

Design/methodology/approach - Three ninety-one participants voluntarily participated in the survey for the data collection from four sectors (banking, telecom, software, and public).

Findings - The findings reveal that a direct positive influence of cultural intelligence on expatriate adjustment and political skills positively moderates this relationship.

Practical Implications - This study provides guidance to policymakers and practitioners that by using the tools of cultural intelligence and political skills, they can overcome the hurdles faced by the expatriates for adjustment in multi-national firms and culture.

Originality/value - This study emphasized the primary domain of political skills, which enables the expatriates to adjust themselves with higher cultural intelligence in the environment of multinational firms.

Keywords: Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Political Skills, Expatriate Adjustment (EA), Social Learning Theory (SLT).

JEL Classification: D23, M10, M14

1 | INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the global economy and multiculturalism have emerged as pervasive characteristics of the contemporaneous professional environment (Roehl, 2021), and the process of globalization has also caused an increase in expatriates around the world (Morence et al., 2021). Companies compete in the international market partly by eliminating expatriates to develop and manage overseas activities (Morin & Talbot, 2023). More and more individuals are taking overseas assignments as businesses become more interconnected, and by contributing their skills and experience, expatriates help companies to gain or keep their competitive edge abroad (Anggraini & Sholihin, 2023; Farooq, Hao, & Liu, 2019). There are several benefits for companies when they send employees on overseas assignments, such as developing into new markets, promoting and preserving business culture, strengthening internal communication and management, and sharing and enhancing expertise (Tsai-Jung Huang, Shu-Cheng Chi, & John J. Lawler, 2005; Panda, Pradhan, & Singh, 2022; Yusuf et al., 2022). Generally, the post-pandemic circumstances put pressure on multinational corporations to cut costs and severe budget restrictions (Daab, 2022),

but still, worldwide assignments persist as an essential aspect of international corporations' policy ([Mello, Suutari, & Dickmann, 2023](#)). Multinational corporations might consider local employees more advantageous to be hired, but there will still be a need for expatriate employees ([Fang et al., 2010](#); [Peltokorpi, 2023](#); [Wyant & Kramer, 2022](#)). The high failure rate of expatriates has been highlighted in the previous literature ([Chan et al., 2022](#); [Engle, Dowling, & Festing, 2008](#); [Harzing, 2002](#); [Tocaven Gonzalez & Kasteren, 2021](#)), which continues to reduce multinational corporations' profits. As global assignments are of greater importance for both an individual's career expansion and multinational corporations' international success ([Alshahrani, 2022](#); [Wang et al., 2022](#)), much effort has been made to ensure the success of an expatriate on foreign assignments.

Sternberg and Detterman ([1986](#)) established that there are numerous methods to measure intelligence outside of the classroom. In the last 20 years, researchers have looked into a number of these types of intelligence, including cultural, emotional, social, and practical ([Goswami, 2022](#); [Lam, Cheung, & Lugosi, 2022](#); [Racicot & Ferry, 2016](#); [Zhu et al., 2022](#)). The notion of cultural intelligence (CQ) was established by Earley and Ang ([2003](#)) and originated from both Sternberg and Detterman's ([1986](#)) theory of multiple intelligences and Gardener's ([1993](#)) research on numerous facets of intelligence. For individuals to adjust to the host country and to adopt its cultural values and norms, past research has provided the use of soft skills such as CQ ([Ang et al., 2007](#); [Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005](#); [Kour & Jyoti, 2022](#); [Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2006](#)).

Expatriates, on the one hand, are a source of creating and managing competitive advantage ([Rui, Zhang, & Shipman, 2017](#)), but, on the other hand, are a significant cost driver ([Nowak & Linder, 2016](#)). Researchers have devoted much consideration to the topic of expatriate adjustment (EA) ([Morris & Robie, 2001](#); [Takeuchi & Chen, 2013](#); [Van der Laken et al., 2019](#)). EA is the degree to which expatriate experiences being psychologically relaxed and familiar with a new situation ([Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991](#); [Schneider & Asakawa, 1995](#)). EA is directly related to the organization's outcome ([Takeuchi, 2010](#)) and is very important not only for the expatriate but also for the organization as the success of international assignment ([Tsai-Jung Huang, Shu-Cheng Chi, & John J Lawler, 2005](#); [Mello et al., 2023](#)).

Organizations provide political skills to expatriates to help them cope with the new environment ([Bentley et al., 2015](#)). Political skills are social competencies that allow individuals to operate the often storming seas of office politics ([Pfeffer, 1981](#); [Pfeffer, 1992](#)). If employees want to succeed in the organization, having political skills is one of the most critical competencies they need to possess ([Ain et al., 2022](#); [Lee, Yun, & Kim, 2019](#)). Ferris and colleagues ([2005](#); [2007](#)) suggested that political skills are an ability to understand other people at work and manage them and influence them in a way that will enhance personnel and organizational objectives.

Expatriates sometimes prematurely terminate their assignments; one of the main reasons for this is poor cross-cultural adjustment ([Banai, 2022](#); [Chang, Chen, & Chau, 2023](#); [Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002](#)). It has been observed that many expatriates face difficulties in working in the host countries because expatriates cannot adjust to various features of the host country ([Hussain & Zhang, 2023](#); [Wu, Bui, & Dao, 2022](#)). Moreover, Shin, Morgeson, and Campion ([2007](#)) suggested that expatriates should change to core attributes of the local culture to adjust there. Thus, an expatriate with a high level of CQ and who is politically skilled will adapt more quickly to a cross-cultural environment ([Bentley et al., 2015](#); [Lvina et al., 2012](#)).

1.1. Research Gap

Globalization has also caused an increase in expatriates around the globe ([Morence et al., 2021](#)). Expatriates are also important for a globalized economy as they work as a bridge to interconnect different regions of the world with each other ([Roehl, 2021](#)). It has been observed that expatriates add value to their organizations to attain globalized competitive advantage and sustainability by utilizing their expertise ([Anggraini & Sholihin, 2023](#); [Farooq et al., 2019](#)). In contrast, expatriate adjustment (EA) is related to the performance and satisfaction of the expatriates ([Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005](#); [Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003](#); [Takeuchi et al., 2002](#)). It has been observed that when expatriates fail to adjust, they come back before the stated time, yielding the assignments and an increase in the financial cost of the organizations ([Morence et al., 2021](#)). Moreover, when the cultural distance between the home country and the host country is more remarkable, the adjustment by the individuals to a new cultural setting becomes more complex ([Guang & Charoensukmongkol, 2020](#); [Mello et al., 2023](#)).

The concept of expatriate adjustment is of growing interest to researchers of different disciplines, i.e., human resource management, international business relations, and cross-cultural management. Also, international business organizations are facing the problems of expatriate adjustment that how they can deal with because several barriers occur for the better performance of the individuals. For that purpose, we use CQ as an antecedent of EA in this research and argue that CQ would positively influence EA, and PS will enhance this relationship. If expatriates are culturally intelligent, they can manage their nervousness and ambiguity associated with a new environment because they feel social isolation whenever they join an organization of different cultures, working backgrounds, and languages. Thus, they will put more effort into accomplishing work-related tasks and try to integrate much more effectively into the new environment. Previous studies have focused on CQ and EA relationship with different moderators and mediators ([Akhal & Liu, 2019](#); [Lee & Sukoco, 2010](#); [Malek & Budhwar, 2013](#); [Martins & Tomé, 2015](#); [Zhao, Liu, & Zhou, 2020](#)) and the present study contribute to the literature of CQ by uncovering the prospects of political skills, which is the least explored area so far in this domain and suggested by Morin and Talbot ([2023](#)). Further, this study uses CQ as an antecedent of EA in response to the future research directions of Wu et al. ([2023](#)), where they suggested a need to explore the impact of cross-cultural training for the higher performance of expatriates. Moreover, this study uses a sample from different sectors (i.e., banking, software, public, and telecom) for the generalizability of the results and to answer the call for research by Morin and Talbot ([2023](#)). Using the theoretical lens of social learning theory (SLT), we explore this unidentified area of TSP as a moderator between CQ and EA.

1.2. Research Objectives

Research on international mobility of employees shows that the failure rate of experience of expatriation is much high which is, approximately 30% - 50% ([Burakova & Filbien, 2020](#)), and the main reason for this failure is prematurity of individuals (return to their homes without completion their assignments) which leads to higher financial cost of the organizations. To address the answer to this problem, the researchers of this study have taken CQ as an antecedent of EA acting as an independent variable and CA as a dependent variable, and this relationship is being investigated with the moderation effect of PS using the theoretical lens of social learning theory (SLT). By following these notions, the give below is the central questions of this study:

Q1. Does CQ have an impact on CA?

Q2. Does PS act as a moderator between CQ and CA?

1.3. Theoretical Underpinning

CQ is built on the developing interest in “real-world intelligence” ([Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2012, p. 32](#)) and is often identified as up to what extent an individual is capable of managing and performing effectively in socially diverse settings ([Van Dyne, Ang, & Livermore, 2010](#)). Moreover, SLT explains that individuals learn through direct experiences, observation, motivation, and reinforcement mechanisms ([Bandura, 1977](#); [Bandura & Hall, 2018](#)). Those individuals with high CQ are sensible of and know about local customs and are interested in acting in a culturally sensitive approach ([Kim, Kirkman, & Chen, 2008](#); [Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022](#)). Moreover, individuals with high CQ may be more efficient, more satisfied, and better adapted to employment overseas than those with low CQ ([Iskhakova et al., 2022](#); [Lam et al., 2022](#)). Based on this notion, we argue that individuals high on CQ tend to adjust more likely in culturally diverse environments.

Training aspect help in improving work skills and behavior ([Tennant, Boonkrong, & Roberts, 2002](#)); a competent global boss must have a set of context-specific competencies, such as knowledge of the industry, and qualities, such as cultural awareness, a willingness to handle obligations, and the ability to collaborate ([Bird & Osland, 2017](#); [Jackson, 2009](#)). These all are the characteristics essential for competencies, which can be developed through effective international training ([Shen, 2005](#)). PS is a strong determinant of EA, as pre-departure training helps individuals to adjust to any situation or circumstance in the host country ([Puck, Kittler, & Wright, 2008](#)). In increasingly complex global assignments, many expatriate managers have had difficulty adjusting properly ([Harvey & Novicevic, 2002](#)). The confidence in oneself and the ability to intervene socially with deep thoughts and ideas, as well as the ability to adapt to social settings by getting the confidence of others, influencing them, and being known as genuine and sincere among other people and expatriate managers, is considered as political competence or political skills ([Brinkmann, 2018](#); [Harvey & Novicevic, 2002](#); [Kimura, 2015](#); [Rains & Barton-Kriese, 2001](#); [Treadway et al., 2005](#)).

SLT ([Bandura, 1977](#); [Bandura & Hall, 2018](#)) asserts that learning is a process swayed by observation and experience. Moreover, SLT illustrates that individuals predict actions and consequences related to these actions; this determines the behavior of individuals as how to behave; individuals learn from direct experiences, and their behavior depicts what they learn and what their future behaviors will be ([Bandura, 1977](#); [Bandura & Hall, 2018](#)). In a nutshell, pre-departure training aims to facilitate success and demolish the chances of failure in international assignments ([Brynningsen, 2009](#)). Moreover, multinational corporations are aware of the fact that an introductory session of expatriates ([Webber & Vögel, 2019](#)) before the beginning of their assignment considerably adds to their adjustment and, in the long run, their performance and goal achievement in the host country ([Minter, 2008](#); [Patel et al., 2022](#)).

2 | HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 | Cultural Intelligence and Expatriate Adjustment

The emergence of globalization and its increase in the last twenty years has given rise to international business arrangements, leading to the formation of multinational enterprises ([Taamneh et al.](#)) ([Lu, 2012](#)). Black and associates’ ([1991](#); [1989](#)) contributions to expatriate management are noteworthy and led to much research. Through their knowledge, expatriates contribute value to organizations by enabling them to attain or sustain competitiveness worldwide ([Anggraini & Sholihin, 2023](#)). Additionally, when there are insufficient native-born

professionals with particular technical and managerial skills, employing expatriates is frequently a viable option ([Morence et al., 2021](#)). The ability to cross-culture adjustment of expatriates is one of the most critical factors in the success of expatriates ([Black et al., 1991](#); [Hechanova et al., 2003](#)). In contrast, EA involves work and non-work-related adjustment ([Black, 1988](#); [Black & Stephens, 1989](#)). Hiring expatriates is a solution for managing organizations when native-born professionals are scarce. However, individuals and organizations face many challenges during departure, displacement, and return to their home country ([Morence et al., 2021](#)).

Past research showed that culture is one of the main aspects associated with expatriate success ([Lu, 2012](#)). Cultural intelligence (CQ) means the ability to relate and work effectively across cultures originally coined by Ang et al. ([2007](#)) to measure intercultural performance. CQ is a critical intercultural competency that enhances expatriates' success factor in international assignment and adjustment ([Ang et al., 2007](#)). It is the adaptation ability of a person to an unfamiliar, new, and diverse cultural environment and how they work and interact successfully in such environment ([Ang et al., 2007](#); [Earley & Ang, 2003](#)). It is one of the extensions of multiple intelligences ([Gardner, 1993](#)), but CQ is distinct from other forms of intelligence, i.e., social and emotional, in such a way that it requires an ability to switch from one cultural setting to the other ([Brislin, Worthley, & Macnab, 2006](#); [Earley & Ang, 2003](#)). So, we can infer that people with high CQ can better monitor new and changed environments and apply their coping strategies more effectively than people with low CQ. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: *Cultural Intelligence has a positive relation with Expatriate Adjustment.*

2.2 | Political Skills as Moderator

CQ is one of the numerous dominant paradigms in research on cross-cultural competencies ([Morin & Talbot, 2023](#)). CQ is defined as “a person’s capability for success in new cultural settings, that is, for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context” ([Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 9](#)). CQ factor can be used to predict the attitudes and behaviors of expatriates ([Alon & Higgins, 2005](#)), and individuals with CQ have cognitive strategies that they use as coping strategies ([Kour & Jyoti, 2022](#); [Malek & Budhwar, 2013](#)). Various studies have shown that people with high CQ can adjust their behaviors according to the changing and unfamiliar environment ([Earley & Ang, 2003](#); [Earley & Mosakowski, 2004a, 2004b](#); [Earley & Peterson, 2004](#)). It is suggested in earlier studies that the positive experience of expatriates can be increased with a higher level or in changes in the CQ of the individuals ([Wilson, 2008](#)). The affective, psychological, behavior-related, and encouraging features of CQ are also regarded as indispensable ([Bird et al., 2010](#); [Lee & Sukoco, 2010](#); [Osland et al., 2023](#)), which further facilitate the expatriates to adjust in the unfamiliar and new environment.

Various studies showed that expatriate training is one of the essential factors for EA ([Naeem et al., 2020](#); [Okpara, Kabongo, & Lau, 2021](#)). Through training, organizations can provide sufficient knowledge of the host country, especially about the culture, before landing and start of assignments ([Earley & Mosakowski, 2004a, 2004b](#)). Earlier research asserted that organizations, by conducting a series of cross-cultural training programs for their individuals, can facilitate the adjustment as expatriate, which on the other side, reduces the level of failure due to premature return and also decrease the financial cost of the projects ([Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003](#); [Yavas & Bodur, 1999](#)). Moreover, training provides different types of knowledge to the employees before departure about the host country, i.e., historical, political, and religious factors and major political differences ([Mendenhall & Stahl, 2000](#); [Okpara et al., 2021](#); [Tahir, 2022](#)).

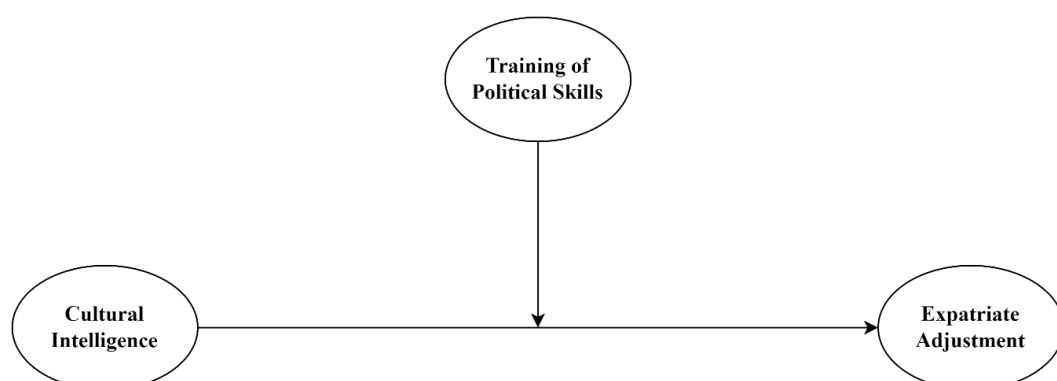
Political skill is a competency that can be shaped or developed through training and socializing ([Ferris et al., 2005](#); [Ferris et al., 2007](#)). Political skill is defined as “an interpersonal style construct that combines social astuteness with the ability to relate well and otherwise demonstrate situationally appropriate behavior in a disarmingly charming and engaging manner that inspires confidence, trust, sincerity, and genuineness” ([Ferris et al., 2000, p. 30](#)). Political intelligence encompasses having the ability to comprehend individuals in a professional environment ([Hung, Tian, & Lee, 2023](#)). It has been observed that individuals having political skills are better at impression management, especially in a new environment, and perform better ([Munyon et al., 2021](#); [Summers et al., 2020](#)). Moreover, individuals with high political skills have strong and accurate observations, and they can interpret the behaviors of others accurately and then adjust their behaviors in different scenarios and contexts ([Ferris et al., 2005](#)) and effectively influence others ([Treadway et al., 2005](#)). It has also been observed that individuals with higher political skills hold the ability to diversify their networks, which can help them to achieve their goals through effective performance ([Ferris et al., 2007](#); [Jawahar et al., 2008](#); [Meurs, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2011](#)).

People with political skills can communicate with other people in work environments, which allows them to understand other people and influence them in a professional environment; also they use this ability to influence others and improve personal or organizational performance ([Harris et al., 2007](#); [Munyon et al., 2021](#); [Summers et al., 2020](#); [Templer, 2018](#)). People with better political abilities know how to act in a way that looks real and conceals their self-interest, enabling them to influence other individuals ([Crawford et al., 2019](#)). By following this, we argue that individuals with higher political skills and solid cultural intelligence can be led to increased cooperation at the workplace, with strong communication and interpersonal trust. This interaction of both concepts enables the expatriates to adjust to social, organizational, and workplace settings through intercultural and interpersonal competence and effectiveness. Based on this notion, we argue that PS enables the individuals to handle and manage the unfavoured and unfamiliar situations being expatriates; individuals with higher levels of CQ hold the ability to better utilize their political skills for the higher performance and success of the projects. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: *Political Skills moderate the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Expatriate Adjustment, such that this relationship will be stronger when Political Skills will be higher than lower.*

Figure1

Theoretical Framework



3 | METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

3.1 | Data Collection and Sample

The information or response is accessed and gathered using our personal and professional contacts from different multinational organizations operating in the telecom, banking, software, and public sectors. We have collected data and have received the responses of our variables, CQ, PS, and EA, through self-reported questionnaires. Data for the present study were collected from the participants in a single phase through the survey method using closed-ended questionnaires. Moreover, we distributed questionnaires containing 54 items to the participants of this study with this assurance that their responses should be kept confidential and will not be provided to their organizations and only be used for academic purposes. Furthermore, they were instructed and requested to return the survey questionnaires directly to the researchers. We distributed 450 questionnaires and received 407; after excluding incomplete questionnaires, our sample included 391 respondents, so our response rate was 86.89%. Of all the respondents, 68.5% were male. We have taken organizations from different sectors 38.4% were from the public sector, 9.8% were from software companies, 11.5% were taken from the banking sector, and the rest, 40.4%, were from the telecom sector. The average age of our sample was 31 years. Of all the respondents, in terms of educational qualification, 55.3% were at bachelor's or below bachelor's level, whereas 44.7% were masters and above.

3.2 | Measurement Scales

Self-report measures of adjustment were obtained from all participants. Participants were asked to “indicate how well adjusted (how comfortable) they were with each of the following aspects of living in the Tri-border area” and responded to the items on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (very unadjusted) to 7 (very adjusted) for the measurement of EA of the individuals. Moreover, to measure the CQ and PS, participants responded to the items on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

3.2.1 Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

The cultural intelligence scale (CQS) developed by Ang et al. ([2007](#)) was used in this study to assess the CQ level of the individuals. The scale contained 20 items with four subscales, i.e., 6-items of cognitive intelligence (sample item of this subscale is “I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures”), 4-items of meta-cognitive intelligence (sample item of this subscale is “I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions”), 5-items of motivational intelligence (sample item of this subscale is “I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me”), and 5-items of behavioral intelligence (sample item of this subscale is “I change my non-verbal behaviors when a cross-cultural situation requires it”).

3.2.2 Expatriate Adjustment

EA was measured using a 16-item EA scale drawn from Black & Stephen's ([1989](#)) study of the partner's influence on American EA. The scale comprises three facets of adjustment, including general adjustment (7 items), interaction adjustment (4 items), and work adjustment (3 items). In addition to the fourteen-item EA scale, the researchers of this study added two items to the general adjustment subscale to assess participants' adjustment to both the transportation and the weather in the Tri-border area. Sample items include “Living conditions in general,” “Cost of living” (general adjustment), “Performance standards and expectations” (work adjustment), and “Speaking with host nationals” (interaction adjustment).

3.2.3 Political skills

For measuring the political skills of the individuals, we used the Political Skill Inventory developed by Ferris et al. (2005), which contains 18 items. The sample items include: “At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected,” “I understand people very well,” “I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others,” and “I try to show a genuine interest in other people.”

4 | RESULTS and ANALYSIS

Table 1 presents the values of the research variables' means, standard deviation, correlation, and internal consistency reliability estimates. CQ is significantly and positively correlated with EA at ($r = 0.283^{***}$, $p < .000$) and PS ($r = 0.313^{***}$, $p < .000$).

Table 1

Means, Standard deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Org Name	0.12	0.32	-				
2	Education	1.47	0.50	-				
3	CQ	4.69	0.87	.106*	.165**	(.929)		
4	PS	4.91	0.89	.032	.136**	.597**	(.930)	
5	EA	4.68	1.03	-.154**	.104*	.457**	.482**	(.925)

Note: $N = 391$; CQ = Cultural Intelligence; PS = Political Skills; EA = Expatriate Adjustment; Cronbach alpha reliabilities are in parenthesis. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

We used hierarchical regression to test the direct effect of the predictor variable (CQ) on the criterion variable (EA); in the first step, we entered the control variables, and in the second step, we entered the predictor variable. Results shown in Table 2 indicate that control variables, i.e., organizational name, have a positive influence on EA where $\beta = .181^{***}$, $p < .001$, and education also have a positive impact on EA where $\beta = .139^{**}$, $p < .01$ and CQ have also a positive influence on EA where $\beta = .469^{***}$, $p < .001$; thus, these results support the first hypothesis of this study.

Table 2

Regression analysis for the direct effects

Expatriate Adjustment			
Predictors	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step-1			
Controls		.042***	
Organization Name	.181***		
Education	.139**		
Step-2			
Cultural Intelligence	.469***		
		.255***	.137***

Note: $N = 391$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Then we did multiple moderated regression (MMR) to test the second proposed hypothesis of this study. In the 1st step, we entered control variables (organization name and education) followed by predictor variable (CQ).

In the end, we entered interaction (CQ x PS) of predictor and moderating variable in the third step comprising of. In the moderated regression analyses, we mean-centered all predictors. The MMR analysis results are presented in Table 3, where step 2 shows the main effects, and step 3 shows the 2-way interaction effects. The results presented in Table 3 show that control variables, i.e., the organization name, are positively and significantly influencing the EA where $\beta = .181^*$, $p < .05$, education is positively and significantly influencing the EA where $\beta = .139^*$, $p < .05$. Moreover, the CQ (predictor variable) positively influences the EA where $\beta = .283^{***}$, $p < .001$ and PS (moderating variable) also positively and significantly influences the EA where $\beta = .313^{***}$, $p < .001$, further, the interaction (CQ x PS) also significantly and positively influencing the EA where $\beta = .150^{**}$, $p < .01$, thus, these results support the second hypothesis of this study.

Table 3

Regression analysis for the direct effects

Expatriate Adjustment			
Predictors	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Step-1			
Controls		.042***	
Org Name	.181*		
Education	.139*		
Step-2			
CQ	.283***		
PS	.313***	.317***	.275***
Step-3			
PS*CQ	.150**	.319***	.202***

Note: N = 391; * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

5 | DISCUSSION

We have attempted to offer an extension of CQ literature into EA research. This study sought to assess whether CQ is related to EA and whether PS moderates the relationship between CQ and EA. Consistent with the first hypothesis and previous literature, we found that CQ is directly and positively related to EA ([Konanahalli et al., 2014](#); [Malek & Budhwar, 2013](#)). We found support for our hypothesis from previous literature as, according to it, individuals who are high in CQ have some specialized social-cognitive skills for living and transferring knowledge in cultural groups; they know how to communicate with others, how to learn from others and especially how to read other's minds in complex ways ([Ang et al., 2007](#); [Bogilović, Černe, & Škerlavaj, 2017](#); [Ng et al., 2012](#)) as CQ is an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings ([Earley & Ang, 2003](#)). So, a person with a high CQ will be much more easily adjusted to a new culture. Our findings are consistent with the assumption of SLT ([Bandura, 1977](#); [Bandura & Hall, 2018](#)) as it states that learning is a continuous process, and observations and experiences enhance it. Additionally, individuals learn through direct interactions and experiences, and their responses portray what they learn and their future behavior ([Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2002, 2005](#)). People with high CQ will be able to learn more quickly and then will adjust easily to that new environment ([Afsar et al., 2020](#); [Bogilović et al., 2017](#); [Roehl, 2021](#)). Moreover, we found that PS moderates the relationship between CQ and EA, which reveals that highly trained individuals who were strong in CQ are much more able for EA than less trained or untrained individuals with lower or higher CQ. These findings increase the importance of training for individuals ([Feitosa et al., 2014](#)) to increase their self-confidence to deal with the unexpected, unfamiliar, and uncertain circumstances that individuals face while working in multinational firms ([Caligiuri et al.,](#)

2001). Moreover, the theoretical lens of SLT ([Bandura, 1977](#); [Bandura & Hall, 2018](#)) further explains that organizational and social environmental approaches and social contacts also influence the learning process of individuals, and the findings of this study when individuals observe their social environment and other cultures deeply they feel comfortable and cognitively strong to be adjusted in expatriates circumstances.

SLT ([Bandura, 1977](#); [Bandura & Hall, 2018](#)) further emphasize the perspective on learning through direct experience; therefore, if PS is given to individuals, they will be able to understand their peers at work more efficiently and influence others, results in enhancing and achieving organizational and personal goals. An individual who possesses good political skills will be able to move in a culturally diverse environment more efficiently, they will be able to cope with stressful situations, and their learning through observation and experience will be enhanced, and they will be more motivated towards organizational and personal goals, and it will also help them in relationship building; therefore, the organization will value them as an important asset because of their capability to adjust themselves in diverse cultures, it ultimately results in increased reputational capital.

5.1 | Theoretical Implications

Organizations during the change process, especially in rapidly changing environments, require self-directed behaviors from the workforce. These situations attract the attention of growing scholars to find out the factors which promote positive behaviors and attitudes of the employees to deal with and manage the uncertainty and complexity of the change. Theoretically, the current study defines new understandings of the literature on change management, leadership, and positive psychology. The present study is an extension of the literature on leadership by explaining that COL's support work as physical and psychological support to the subordinates through guidance and assistance so that they can handle the risks, stress, and uncertainty of the organizational change. This study adds knowledge to the body of knowledge in the field of change management using the lens of JD-R theory, which explains that to fulfill the job demands, employees need some social, organizational, physical, and psychological resources ([Demerouti, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2019](#)). Therefore, the findings of this study add to the JD-R theory by demonstrating that support of COL provides social, physical, and psychological support, which helps ([Chien et al. 2020](#)) the subordinates to reduce their fear about the change ([Bakker & de Vries, 2021](#)), enabling them to tackle the complexity of the organizational changes through CO_OCBs ([Cao, Peng, & Xu, 2022](#)). Further, this study's results explain that support of leadership (i.e., COL) enhances the confidence level of subordinates for the acceptance of challenging circumstances during changes ([Berson et al., 2006](#)), which indirectly increases the CO_OCBs. These results further elaborate that CSE, an intervening mechanism, enables individuals to demonstrate extra-role behaviors (i.e., CO_CB) at the workplace ([Bayraktar & Jiménez, 2020](#); [Roczniewska, Puchalska-Kamińska, & Ładka-Barańska, 2020](#)), which are the core requirement for meaningful change with the support of COL. The findings of this study are also in line with the previous studies, which discussed the positive influence of COL on extra-role behaviors of individuals (i.e., CO_OCBs) ([Mikkelsen & Olsen, 2018](#); [Yukl, 2012](#)) and the indirect effect of CSE for the enhancement of positive outcomes of the employees during organizational change ([Bayraktar & Jiménez, 2020](#); [Cunningham et al., 2002](#); [Roczniewska et al., 2020](#)). In addition, the findings of this study reveal that PP works as a psychological source of encouragement for enhancing the change-related self-confidence of individuals with the support of leadership (change-oriented). These findings also add to the JD-R theory, which explains that personality traits, also being a personal source of motivation, boost the psychological

strength of individuals so that they can accept, handle and manage uncertain circumstances at the workplace ([Bakker & de Vries, 2021](#); [Bateman & Crant, 1993](#); [Crant & Bateman, 2004](#)). Moreover, these study's findings explain that the organizational environment also gives a sense of obligation to the individuals for constructive change with higher CSE, which boosts their motivation and enables them to demonstrate beyond the administrative responsibilities, i.e., CO_OCBs. These findings also align with the earlier studies ([Du, Hu, & Wang, 2021](#); [Moorman & Harland, 2002](#)) and add to the JD-R theory.

5.1 | Practical Implications

The findings of this study reveal that PS is a major factor that enables individuals to manage expatriates' expectations. For the improvement of the political skill of the employees, organizations can use different effective training methods, i.e., classroom training, where a trainer can train the expatriates by applying different techniques, like by assigning a different role in hypothetical scenarios and then by observing them that how that can manage, handle and tackle the situation ([Bennett, Aston, & Colquhoun, 2000](#)). However, this training method is time-consuming and costly, and CD-ROM training programs are an alternative that can benefit organizations ([Mendenhall & Stahl, 2000](#)). Another training method is real-time training, in which expatriates take training and information from people with first-hand experience ([Magnini, 2009](#)). Common examples of this method are internet chatrooms, repatriates, other more experienced expatriates, local nationals, and materials provided by the company. Organizations can help their employees by learning the host country's language expatriates' pre-departure, so it can help them better adjust to a foreign country in a new culture.

The present study was conducted in Pakistan with a sample of those organizational sectors which are the major contributors to the economy of Pakistan and are working with the multinational companies and the second significant contributors for creating employment opportunities. The lack of proper training infrastructures in these organizations creates hindrances for the employees, due to which their level of CQ is lower, which resultantly becomes the cause of different problems working with multinational companies. The findings of this study highlight the importance of CQ for the individuals and stress for the organizational climate to support CQ, which leads to ease for the employees during the adjustment process. Failing of expatriates in adjustment leads to terrible outcomes in organizations, from turnover to dissatisfaction, and that results in enormous costs for businesses as well as loss of qualified people; so being a developing country (Pakistan), there is a need for special attention on this topic which will not only be beneficial for the economy of the country but also able the organization for the utilization of qualified individuals. Likewise, a higher level of CQ enables individuals, especially Pakistani expatriates, to engage in their careers, increasing their career satisfaction ([Faran, Dastgeer, & Akhtar, 2021](#)). Moreover, training in political skills and awareness about the cultural intelligence of Pakistani expatriates also enables them to respect and practice the traditions and norms of other cultures ([Faran et al., 2021](#)).

5.2 | Limitations and Future Directions

The present study has some limitations which need to be discussed here; this study was cross-sectional in nature, and it is suggested that future researchers adopt a time-lag or longitudinal approach for the collection of data, which reduces the thread of common method bias ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)). Another limitation is that Pakistan is a collectivistic country with high power distance, and most organizations are bureaucratic. Employees experience fear in reporting facing difficulties that they might get replaced by labelling as incompetent, and the fear of losing a job is much higher due to poor economic conditions.

Moreover, in the present study, we examine the impact of CQ on EA; it would be beneficial to expand this study's model if future researcher examines the social intervening mechanisms, i.e., social self-efficacy, cross-cultural competencies, and social well-being. Knowledge of culture may help individuals enhance their self-confidence to deal with the new social environment and different cultures. Likewise, some personal factors, i.e., career commitment, life satisfaction, and adaptation, also play a vital role in facilitating expatriate adjustment with cultural intelligence ([Morin & Talbot, 2023](#)). Moreover, this study uses a single moderator; it is suggested that future researchers test other moderating variables between the relationship of CQ and EA, i.e., leadership style, psychological contract, work-family satisfaction, knowledge sharing, and cross-culture adaptation ([Chen et al., 2023](#); [Morin & Talbot, 2023](#)). Moreover, it would be interesting if future researchers find out the antecedents of CQ, i.e., personality traits and emotional stability ([Morin & Talbot, 2023](#)), or use CQ as a mediator or moderator, as research is scarce on CQ with these positions ([Morin & Talbot, 2023](#)).

6 | CONCLUSION

Previous studies found different consequences for the better performance of expatriates, but organizational and personal factors are unexplored with explained in this study. Our study using a sample of multiple organizations explained that CQ positively impacted the EA and PS, enabling individuals to better adjust at the workplace. This study elaborates on the relationships using social learning theory and how individuals can learn from their other culture if they have strong political skills to perform better and contribute to the success of multinational projects.

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