

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The chapter gives a detailed explanation of the research results regarding the connections between Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Employee Engagement, and Employee Productivity in multinational companies in Sierra Leone. The discussion critically interprets the empirical findings of the structural model, in which each of the hypotheses is associated with the existing theoretical frameworks and previous empirical research in the area of cross-cultural management and organizational behavior. It studies the contribution of the various dimensions of Cultural Intelligence such as metacognitive, cognitive and motivational in determining the attitude of employees and performance outcome, both directly and via the mediating variable of employee engagement. The purpose of this chapter is to enrich the understanding of how cultural intelligence can affect workplace performance in a multicultural setting, both by combining the statistical results with the available literature and by pointing out similarities and differences to the current research.

4.1 The Effect of Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence on Employee Engagement

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that metacognitive cultural intelligence can positively and significantly influence the employee engagement in multinational companies in Sierra Leone. The result suggests that individuals with the ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their cultural

assumptions when engaging in cross-cultural interactions, are more likely to become involved in their work. Multinational financial institutions have workers who are frequently dealing with people who have different cultural backgrounds in their work with co-workers, supervisors, and customers. Hence, the importance of reflecting on cultural differences and adapting thought towards the other becomes relevant to reduce misunderstandings, enhance communication and increase psychological commitment in the workplace. This result is in line with Earley & Ang, (2003) who noted that cultural intelligence is needed to perform effectively in culturally diverse settings, Ang et, al. (2007), who stated that metacognitive cultural intelligence represents higher-order thinking mechanisms to learn and understand cultural knowledge in the process of intercultural interaction.

The findings also resonate with the work of Zhang et al., (2022), who demonstrated the relationship between metacognitive cultural intelligence and adaptation and well-being in multicultural settings, and Min et al., (2023c), who established the link between cultural intelligence and employee engagement and workplace outcomes. Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence can be defined as tacit knowledge capability from the Knowledge Management point of view, because employees use metacognitive cultural intelligence to receive cultural information, contemplate their experiences at work, and apply cultural understanding in their day-to-day life. This aligns with Chatterjee et al., (2023), who considered human capital and knowledge sharing significant factors in determining organization performance in a multi-national setting. From a practical perspective, the results

indicate that multicorporate companies in Sierra Leone need to design programs that reinforce reflective cultural thinking, which involves questioning assumptions, assessing intercultural experiences, and modifying communication styles to promote successful interactions with a multicultural customer base within a banking context.

4.2 The Effect of Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence on Employee Productivity

The results show that metacognitive cultural intelligence has a positive and significant effect on employee productivity. This translates to workers who can be reflection and aware of cultural differences and adjust their cultural perception are more likely to be able to do their work effectively. Multinational financial institutions rely on not only the technical skills of their employees but also their communication, coordination and cooperation abilities with people from other cultures. Metacognitive cultural intelligence is used to prevent employees from culturally misunderstanding others, to make decisions with regard to cultural differences, and to adjust their work to different organizational contexts. It confirms the argument of Earley & Ang, (2003), who believe that CQ helps the individual to be effective in culturally diverse environments, and Ang et. al (2007), who expounded that metacognitive CQ helps an individual plan and adjust his mental models when he encounters other cultures. As part of Sierra Leone's cultural diversity and post-conflict environment, multinational corporations need this reflective capability to enhance their work performance.

This result also aligns with the results of Presbitero, (2017) who found that cultural intelligence has a positive relationship with employees' adaptation and performance in multicultural environments, and the result of Bücken et al., (2014), which indicated that cultural intelligence enhances communication effectiveness and cross-cultural adjustment. Metacognitive cultural intelligence is knowledge capital from the Knowledge Management point of view because it helps the employees to process cultural information, analyze the experiences within the organization and use cultural intelligence to optimize performance. This corroborates the findings of the study conducted by Chatterjee et al., (2023) which concluded that knowledge-based abilities increase the coordination, cooperation, and performance of multinational enterprises. Hence, the need of multinational banks in Sierra Leone to invest more in the development of metacognitive cultural intelligence by providing employees with reflective training, cross-cultural mentoring, feedback sessions, and team discussions to increase their ability to convert cultural knowledge into better task performance, teamwork, and productivity.

4.3 The Effect of Cognitive Cultural Intelligence on Employee Engagement

The findings suggest that if the effect of cognitive cultural intelligence on employee engagement is found to be positive, it is not significant. That does not necessarily mean that workers' understanding of cultural norms, values, beliefs, language rules and social practices will automatically lead to greater participation at work. While cultural knowledge is important, the finding indicates that if it isn't used in a way that employees are actively involved in the workplace interaction, it

can be passive. In Sierra Leone, employee engagement seems to hinge upon reflective cultural awareness, rather than knowledge of culture alone, as well as other support systems, leadership, involvement in decision making, trust in the organization, and a positive work climate. This study is a partial replication of Ang et. al. (2007) who have found that cognitive cultural intelligence is one of the key elements of cultural intelligence. Yet, the non-significant result suggests that simply being informed of other cultures may not lead to psychological attachment or to a sense of involvement without having some sort of experiential interaction with other cultures and having organizational support.

The finding also provides an explanation for the varied results in previous research on cultural intelligence and employee outcomes. Previous research by Bücken et al., (2014) has shown the relationship between cultural intelligence and communication effectiveness and job satisfaction, and Presbitero, (2017) linked the cultural intelligence with employee adaptation and performance. But most of them have assessed cultural intelligence as a general construct, while the current study focuses on the cognitive dimension of cultural intelligence as an independent predictor. Cognitive cultural intelligence is a type of explicit cultural knowledge, however, employees must internalize and apply the knowledge and really understand the relevance of that knowledge to their work in order to be engaged. This is consistent with Massa & Testa, (2009) who argued that value of knowledge occurs when it is properly managed and utilized for organizational advantage. So, multinational companies cannot just rely on cultural briefings or cultural awareness sessions alone but need to integrate cultural knowledge

training with experiential learning, mentoring, role playing, team-based problem solving, leadership support to enable their employees to convert cultural knowledge into better engagement.

4.4 The Effect of Cognitive Cultural Intelligence on Employee Productivity

The results indicated that the cognitive cultural intelligence had negative and not significant impact on employee productivity. This also implies that workers' understanding of cultural norms, values, legal systems, language rules and social practices does not directly enhance productivity in the sampled multinational financial institutions. This finding emphasizes the difference between knowing and doing. Soon et, al. (2007) described cognitive cultural intelligence as knowledge about cultural systems and practices, but it is found that knowledge is not sufficient to improve performance in the present study. For multinational banks in Sierra Leone, staff could be aware of cultural diversity but what matters is how they apply their awareness to the challenges of working with others and customers, collaborating, decision making and adjusting to evolving organisational needs. Thus, cognitive cultural intelligence can be seen as a base for cross-cultural understanding but without the reflective, motivational and behavioural capacities it will not directly lead to measurable productivity.

The finding contrasts with previous studies like Jyoti & Kour, (2017), which have revealed that cultural intelligence has a positive relationship with job performance, Presbitero, (2017), which have concluded that cultural intelligence is correlated with adjustment and performance of employees. However, the studies typically looked at the cultural intelligence construct as a whole or at other

types of organizational contexts, whereas the present study focuses on the cognitive aspect of cultural intelligence as a distinct predictor. The relationship to the result is also linked to that of Bücken et al., (2014) who pointed to communication effectiveness and cross cultural adjustment as the latter may help in understanding, but not necessarily in performance. Cognitive cultural intelligence is explicit knowledge from Knowledge Management point of view and productivity is related to the utilization of knowledge. This is consistent with the findings of Chatterjee et al., (2023), who stated that knowledge in an organization would facilitate knowledge sharing, coordination, and cooperation leading to organizational outcomes. So, the culture should be incorporated into the learning systems of multinational banks, where it becomes useful via hands-on training, supervision, cross-cultural team work and problem solving in the workplace.

4.5 The Effect of Motivational Cultural Intelligence on Employee Engagement

The results show that motivational cultural intelligence has a positive but not significant effect on employee engagement. This means that employees' confidence, interest, and willingness to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds do not automatically increase their engagement at work. Although motivational cultural intelligence is important, engagement is also shaped by organizational support, job meaningfulness, leadership quality, recognition, fairness, and workplace climate. This finding supports Ang et al. (2007), who explained that motivational cultural intelligence reflects the energy and

confidence required to function in culturally diverse situations, and Peng et al., (2015), who emphasized its role in cultural adjustment and intercultural effectiveness.

This finding is also relevant to Min et al., (2023a), who linked cultural intelligence with employee engagement and workplace outcomes. However, the present study shows that the effect differs across CQ dimensions, because metacognitive CQ significantly affects engagement while motivational CQ does not. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employees become engaged when they perceive support, trust, fairness, and reciprocal value from the organization. Therefore, multinational corporations should support employee motivation through inclusive leadership, recognition, culturally sensitive communication, mentoring, and employee participation.

4.6 The Effect of Motivational Cultural Intelligence on Employee Productivity

The results show that motivational cultural intelligence has a positive and significant effect on employee productivity. This finding indicates that employees who are confident, interested, and willing to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds tend to perform better in multinational financial institutions in Sierra Leone. Motivational cultural intelligence helps employees remain open to diversity, persist in challenging intercultural situations, and maintain confidence when working with culturally diverse colleagues and customers. This finding supports Ang et al. (2007), who described motivational cultural intelligence as the drive and self-efficacy required to function effectively in

multicultural environments, and Peng et al., (2015), who highlighted its role in cultural adjustment and intercultural effectiveness. Employees with higher motivational cultural intelligence are more likely to approach multicultural tasks positively and sustain effort in diverse workplace settings, which ultimately enhances productivity.

This result is also consistent with Jyoti & Kour, (2017) and Presbitero, (2017), who found that cultural intelligence contributes to job performance and employee adaptation in multicultural workplaces. From the Knowledge Management perspective, motivational cultural intelligence encourages employees to seek, share, and apply knowledge more effectively. This supports Chatterjee et al., (2023), who emphasized that knowledge sharing and coordination contribute to organizational performance. Therefore, multinational corporations in Sierra Leone should strengthen employees' motivational cultural intelligence through cross-cultural coaching, intercultural teamwork, leadership development, and exposure to diverse work experiences to improve productivity and organizational performance.

4.7 The Effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Productivity

The results show that employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee productivity. More engaged employees are, the more productive they are, since they are more committed, concentrated, enthusiastic, responsible, and willing to contribute to organizational objectives. International Financial Institutions are particularly concerned with engagement as they face the challenge of meeting customer expectations, performance targets, working with

diverse teams and dealing with organisational change. This finding is consistent with Hanaysha, (2016b) who revealed that employee engagement and workplace factors are positively linked to employee productivity and AbuKhalifeh & Som, (2013) who showed that employee engagement is correlated with organizational performance.

The same result is found in other studies that relate work engagement with organizational commitment and employee performance, as done by Cesário & Chambel, (2017), or that relate work engagement to vigor, dedication and absorption, as explained by Schaufeli et al., (2006). In theory, employee engagement acts as a behavioral mechanism connecting the capability of employees to the results of the organization. While cultural intelligence can help to ready employees for a variety of settings, it is engagement that will motivate them to put effort and commitment into tasks. Thus, the multinationals in Sierra Leone need to further build relationships through effective leadership, equitable performance measurement, rewarding performance, career progression, employee engagement, and culturally responsive working methods to boost productivity.

4.8 The Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement on the Relationship Between Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence and Employee Productivity

The results indicate that there is a significant mediating effect between metacognitive cultural intelligence and employee productivity in the case of employee engagement. This is because metacognitive cultural intelligence positively affects productivity directly, as well as indirectly by promoting employee engagement. The ability of employees to think about cultural

assumptions, consider intercultural situations, and adapt their thinking is likely to get them more involved in what they do, which will in turn help improve productivity. This finding is consistent with Earley & Ang, (2003) who argued that cultural intelligence can be used to successfully manage culturally diverse environments, and Ang et al. (2007) who argued that metacognitive cultural intelligence is awareness and regulation of cultural intelligence. In this regard, metacognitive cultural intelligence is not just a reflective ability but a tool that also serves to build engagement.

This mediation result aligns with the findings of Hanaysha, (2016b), who demonstrated that employee engagement has a positive relationship with productivity; and with the results found by (Min et al., 2023a) which showed that cultural intelligence has a positive relationship with employee engagement and workplace outcomes. Metacognitive cultural intelligence enables employees to reflectively process cultural knowledge, and engagement makes it more likely to translate cultural knowledge into productive behaviors, from the Knowledge Management view. This aligns with Chatterjee et al., (2023), who discussed the vital roles of coordination and cooperation in the use of knowledge resources for performance. Thus, cross-cultural reflective training should be combined with engagement strategies like recognition, leadership support, participatory communication and team-building programmes in multinational corporations.

4.9 The Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement on the Relationship Between Cognitive Cultural Intelligence and Employee Productivity

Through the results, it was found that there is no significant mediation of the relationship between cognitive cultural intelligence and employee productivity by employee engagement. This implies that cultural knowledge gained is not likely to make a significant contribution to productivity in engagement. Employees may have a knowledge of cultural values, norms, language rules or social practices but this does not mean that they are more engaged or productive. This finding confirms the previous study that showed that there is no significant direct impact of cognitive cultural intelligence on employee engagement or employee productivity. While Ang et, al. (2007) defined cognitive cultural intelligence as knowledge of cultural systems and practices, in the present study it was demonstrated that knowledge may be theoretical unless employees have the reflective ability, motivation and organizational support to put it into practice.

This is inconsistent with other research like that of Jyoti & Kour, (2017) and Presbitero, (2017), which found positive correlations between CQ, job performance and adaptation. In the majority of the studies, however, cultural intelligence is considered as a more general concept, whereas this study considers only one dimension, cognitive cultural intelligence. As Massa & Testa, (2009) and Jaziri, (2019) have highlighted, from the Knowledge Management point of view, explicit cultural knowledge would gain value only if it is made use of by organizational systems and experiences. Hence, it is suggested that the cultural knowledge training be followed by simulations, mentoring, workplace application

and problem solving in groups of multinational corporations in order to come up with cultural knowledge that is translated into engagement and productivity.

4.10 The Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement on the Relationship Between Motivational Cultural Intelligence and Employee Productivity

According to the results, there is no significant mediating influence of employee engagement between motivational cultural intelligence and employee productivity. Although motivational cultural intelligence has a direct significant effect on productivity, its indirect effect through engagement is not significant. This translates to a direct boost in employee confidence, interest, and willingness to engage in cultural interaction, which in turn has a direct impact on productivity; not necessarily by enhancing their psychological connection or involvement with the organization. This finding is in line with Ang et. al, (2007) who noted that motivational cultural intelligence comprises of motivation and self-efficacy for intercultural interaction, and Peng et al., (2015) who suggested that it is one of the factors involved in cultural adjustment and intercultural effectiveness. Thus, motivational cultural intelligence is more likely a performance capacity rather than a commitment process.

The finding is partly supported by Jyoti & Kour, (2017) who reported positive relationship between cultural intelligence and job performance and Presbitero, (2017) who reported the relationship between cultural intelligence and adaptation and performance. But the non-significant mediation result provides a more specific understanding: Not every dimension of CQ impacts productivity in the same way. As per the Knowledge Management (KM) perspective,

motivational cultural intelligence can help the employees look for information, disseminate knowledge, collaborate and persist in culturally challenging tasks, as stated by Chatterjee et al., (2023). Hence, there is a need for multinational companies to further build motivational cultural intelligence, as well as build up leadership support, recognition, inclusive policies, and meaningful work opportunities, in order to raise productivity and employee engagement.