Cultural Intelligence and Diversity in Higher Education: A Case Study from Bahrain

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Abstract: Universities and different higher education instructions in Bahrain are multicultural in nature. In this context, cultural intelligence (CQ) is a tool that can increase an individual's ability to interact with people outside their culture. This study aims to provide a shred of empirical evidence on the value of using a coherent organizational framework of Cultural Intelligence to pursue tasks effectively in diverse contexts. Hence, a qualitative research design was used to achieve the research objectives. The study employs in-depth Interviews with 72 participants from different higher education instructions in Bahrain Company to collect the required data for this research effort. The open-ended qualitative questions have enabled participants to provide supplementary evidence around cultural intelligence and were valid for interpretation. This study provides an understanding of how individuals perform in multicultural environments, which can be helpful to managers in formulating new motivational strategies to enhance employee performance in higher education. The results show significant characteristics that predict employees' ability to function effectively in a multicultural work environment. These findings have implications for different higher education instructions in Bahrain and other companies looking for survival and growth in the global marketplace. Given the research findings, senior leaders of additional higher education instructions in Bahrain should prioritize CQ, define and develop its goals, and value employees with high CQ to improve organizational performance in international assignments.

Keywords: Cultural Intelligence. Higher Education, NVivo, Cross-Cultural Competence; Leadership, Diversity, Content Analysis.

1 Introduction

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is one such construct that is "motivated by the practicality of globalization in the workplace," and it is a measure of an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings [1]. Further, cultural intelligence is an essential individual component because it focuses specifically on the skills required when navigating between many different cultures, so it is increasingly important in today's international business situations, as the ability to work effectively in cultural situations is important for employees, managers and organizations, and gives us knowledge of others' cultural environment and insights on how to interact with them in multicultural situations, engage rigorously in intercultural interactions and appear effectively in culturally diverse workgroups
The world is becoming increasingly globalized, companies are becoming more culturally diverse and the global regulatory environment is becoming more complex, dynamic and competitive. Not only is the regulatory

environment increasingly diverse and complex, but it is also fast-moving and unpredictable. Cultural shifts are happening suddenly, with massive repercussions on the continued expansion of global civil society. The trend of market globalization requires companies to devote their attention to the worldwide market, and cross-cultural communication activities of enterprises are more frequent. Companies require their employees to engage in multicultural work to have a larger foreign market working across cultures; cultural intelligence plays a crucial role.

Against the background across cultures, the influence of personality traits on cultural intelligence has been studied by most scholars. Xu [2] believes that cultural intelligence differs from ordinary intelligence and refers more to the ability to relate to individual adaptation across cultures. A study of Bernardo [3] confirms that cultural intelligence helps people make cultural judgments and make better decisions. A study of Depaula, Azzollini, Cosentino, & Castillo [4] confirms that the strength of an individual's personality traits positively predicts cultural intelligence

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much more than other predictors [5] Cultural intelligence refers to the characteristics and skills of individuals who are quick to face some stress while interacting collectively in other cultures [6]. The study confirmed that the individual could open up to different cultures through cultural intelligence, interact, and adapt to them. People with high cultural intelligence are quick to adjust to others and their culture and go along with it. Some believe that cultural intelligence stems from and consists of the four intelligences: general intelligence, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and practical intelligence. Cultural intelligence is the ability for personal growth through continuous learning and a good understanding of cultural heritage, wisdom and different values, and effective interaction with culturally diverse individuals [7].

Recently, cultural intelligence (CQ) has captured the attention of global leaders and researchers' attention. However, relatively little research focuses on factors that can improve cultural abilities [8]. In particular, research on individual capacities for intercultural efficacy is scanty and unsystematic; Primarily because of the novelty of construction, which leaves an important gap in our understanding of why some individuals are more effective than others in culturally different circumstances, and thus, this research examines some of the factors likely to influence the presence of CQ in the personalities of some individuals naturally.

There is a lack of studies and little is currently known about the factors that cause individuals to have more positive intentions towards working with multicultural colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this research will help enhance the understanding of the impact of some personality traits on the level of cultural intelligence. The importance of the study comes from the aspects that the study provides empirical support for the validity of cultural intelligence skills in leading diversity in the organization [9].

Eventually, this study provides an understanding of how individuals perform in multicultural environments, which can be useful to managers in formulating new motivational strategies to enhance employee performance. Specifically, the study raises specific research questions as the following:

- How does the participant describe their cultural intelligence CQ level?
- How does the participant explain the importance of cultural intelligence within their organization?
- How does the participant describe assess the cultural intelligence to their organization?

2 Literature Review

Cultural intelligence means the individual's ability to interact, communicate and successfully adapt to different cultures. It is measured procedurally by the degree that the student obtains in the cultural intelligence scale with its dimensions (metacognition, knowledge, motivation,

behavior) [10]. Many researchers have studied a wide range of cultural intelligence outcomes.

The term cultural intelligence partly refers to the general thinking skills that an individual uses to create a concept related to the following question: why and how people assimilate into a new culture different from their original culture and act as the new culture wants [11].

According to Earley and Peterson [12] that, cultural intelligence is: the ability to engage in a set of behaviors that require the use of specific skills such as language skills and social skills, and a set of characteristics such as flexibility that are transformed in accordance with the values and attitudes of the individuals with whom the individual interacts.

Sternberg and Grigorenko's [13] argue that cultural intelligence is a multidimensional complex targeted in situations involving interactions between cultures that arise from differences in race, ethnicity, and nationality as an individual's ability to establish efficient interpersonal relationships in pluralistic situations.

Aldulaimi and his colleagues [14] examined the relationship between personality traits, with the five dimensions: extraversion, resilience, emotional stability, neuroticism, openness to experience, and cultural intelligence. Therefore, the study's main objective is to understand the role of personality traits in enhancing the level of cultural intelligence among expatriate employees working in multicultural environments in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

DOGUTAS [15] aimed to verify and examine the effect of CQ on the organization. This study draws on the literature on CQ and OE to explain a model in which leaders in a multicultural context can balance the tension between their deeply embedded values and those of their culturally different counterparts. Cultural intelligence CQs outperform those with lower levels of CQ in a global regulatory environment, making a strong case for enhancing CQ training and awareness in diverse work environments.

The work environment in the communications industry, with clients, partners and colleagues from different countries to maintain a friendly working relationship capacity, including language, emotional and interpersonal ability and so on [2]. Also, the concept of "location" of intelligences has been expanded by Ang to four dimensions or aspects of cultural intelligence: metacognition, cognition, and motivation as mental abilities residing in the head as well as overt actions as behavioral abilities [16].

3 Methodology and Design

The research methodology was applied to examine the cultural intelligence (CQ) among leaders working in diverse work environments in Bahrain. The qualitative research methods were used to accomplish this research and

achieve the objectives, including an overview of the research methodology, research design and procedures, research population and sample, and statistical data analysis tools used.

Qualitative research seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within a natural setting and relies on direct experiences. It is rich and holistic and helps interpret various viewpoints and stories [17]. Interviews allow researchers to explore further complex phenomena that may be hidden. Structured interviews generally use a list of questions that are repeated across all participants [18]. Data analysis in the current phenomenological study is similar to data analysis in other qualitative approaches where the data can be organized either manually or through computer software such as NVivoThe qualitative study was designed to gain a deeper understanding of cultural intelligence among participating leaders. Cultural intelligence was explored using open-ended questions with the survey participants. Six open-ended qualitative questions permitted participants to provide useful information on cultural intelligence. Sixty participants responded to the qualitative questions.

The qualitative study feedback were entered into the statistical software NVivo, coding process was used for themes and statements examined. The data was reviewed four times to ensure accurate coding and examination. Frequency distribution, tables, and charts were developed to represent the final data [19].

4 Results and Findings

The open-ended qualitative questions were included as being nested within the cultural intelligence assessment to analyze different questions. Furthermore, the conceptual foundation of this study was the four capabilities of cultural intelligence: "CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, CQ Strategy, and CQ Action" [20].

The findings were examined via six open-ended qualitative questions that guided the respondents to provide their views regarding cultural intelligence. The collected data were recorded and entered into the Nvivo for content analysis, focusing on the theme of cultural analysis answering the research questions. Figure.1: shows screening the Nvivo output of Cultural intelligence analysis.

How do you describe the value of cultural intelligence to your company?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to know and control your emotions while at the same time understanding the feelings of others. This ability includes three skills firstly, emotional awareness; It is the ability to perceive your feelings and the feelings of others. Also, is the ability to harness these emotions and feelings and apply them to specific planning and problem-solving tasks. The ability to manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. Respondents felt that emotional intelligence reflects positively not only on the person's personal or family environment but also on his working life and his role within the organization in which he works or the projects in which

he is active. Participants sensed a welcoming environment linking business success, whether at the individual level or the level of organization and institutions, because emotional intelligence helps people make better decisions, that is, to know themselves and others better.
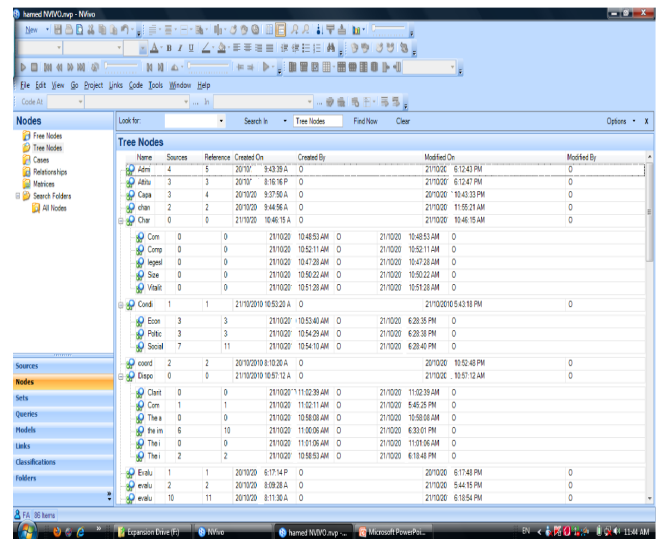

Fig.1: Screening the Nvivo output of Cultural intelligence analysis.

Likewise, one respondent expressed, "We are constantly working with people from different backgrounds, it's important to be able to be open to understanding others perspectives."

What makes your motivation to work through challenges associated with cross-cultural situations you encounter in your company?

The majority (92%) expressed that they are motivated to work through challenges that come with cross-cultural situations encountered in their company "I want to help my community members be successful, and it is a key part of my job to help them be successful. Therefore, it is important to work through any challenges." Another participant stated:

As a result of the changes that have occurred due to development and technology, we interact and share daily with people from different cultural and geographical backgrounds and environments, and cultural diversity has become an essential and important criterion for success, creativity and innovation, and an essential element in overcoming the challenges facing the world today.

What is your cultural understanding of the diversity in your company?

This question was asked to gain more insight into participant experiences: The majority expressed they have the cultural understanding. They said that cultural diversity in society has contributed to raising competencies by exchanging knowledge, experiences, and skills. If it contains more diversity, it will have more competencies, experiences, and thus more productivity. Increased productivity Several studies and research related to cultural

diversity have found that cultural diversity in the work environment in particular and in society, in general, is a reason and a measure of productivity and achieving more profits and a reason to achieve customer satisfaction meet their needs. Enhancing respect among members of society Promoting the idea of cultural diversity in society is capable of promoting the concept of respect for difference and diversity, strengthening ties of cooperation, interdependence and tolerance, and building bridges of trust and respect among members of the same society, thus achieving more excellent stability and acceptance for them. Level of racism Cultural diversity reduces discrimination and racism in society. When we see new things for the first time, we may find them unfamiliar because they deviate from the usual experience, but it will become normal once we see more of them [21]. The same applies to cultural diversity in society, as promoting the idea of diversity is the first step to tolerance and acceptance, avoiding negative and hasty judgments on others, and reducing the level of crime in society

How often have you modified your actions to adapt to different cultural norms within your organization?

There were forty-four responses and an abundance of great examples of modifying and adapting behaviors within the library workplace for this item. Factors that lead to different cultures. Cultural preferences: It is well known that every international market has diverse cultural preferences for products or foods, as well as for product or food quality levels, and even for brands. Shapes and colors can have certain connotations and distinguishing features, which has an important cultural significance. He must approach these cultural differences carefully to determine whether the products are appropriate for the market or whether they can be equalized for great success on all fronts. Languages: The languages spoken and used in any country impact the field of marketing, the market for trade names, and the collection of information through surveys, interviews, advertising, or the conduct of commercial relations. Languages may vary according to region, and some countries have more than one official language. Education: The optimal level of comprehensive education in a given area can indicate the quality of the expected workforce and the level of consumers. It is an expression of the peoples of the world and their progress. Religion: Religion is a significant cultural influence and can affect many aspects of living, including the role of women within society, ways of eating and drinking, clothing habits, activities, and holidays. Ethics and values are expected to impact international business, primarily when conducted from another country's depth. However, researchers need to know that everyone in the target market does not maintain ethics and values [22].

Many people are not given the status they deserve in life due to cultural differences. Building a workplace that supports these groups and never condone aberrant behavior and discrimination against them is ethically conscious and the whole company with society in general is a better

environment. Moreover, having a diverse workforce in terms of backgrounds can strengthen employee engagement and productivity, but unlike the work-related benefits, creating a healthy workplace for different groups is an unexpected value. The following are some of how cultural difference affects the workplace, and the workforce, as follows: Offers Diverse Views: Diverse and different experiences and backgrounds come with a variety of perspectives. Better problem solving: Different perspectives result in a more diverse workforce that motivates people to work harder, be more creative, and do better quality work.

Larger audience base: The strength of a culturally diverse workforce is demonstrated through a commitment to equal opportunities, giving the company a positive reputation and gaining a larger market share. More job applicants: Job seekers are likely to want to work with a particular company, which in turn gives a larger pool of applicants to choose from.

How important is cultural intelligence in your current role?

The majority stated that great positive role in creating a sense of cultural awareness among employees, which helps them to interact with individuals belonging to other cultures, in addition to enabling them to solve their problems and control the new obstacles they may encounter as a result of differences related to cultural understanding between individuals, which enhances their abilities to Acquisition of different new skills, which is called the efficiency of intercultural interaction, which achieves the ability for successful communication between people of different cultures and the assimilation of the concepts of multiple cultures and the related sensory perception, ways of thinking, feelings and behavior. In order for the organization to make good use of this diversity, it must look at this diversity and difference as a significant source of its strength, which prompts it to link its goals to this diversity from the beginning. Some organizations may intentionally or unintentionally fail to manage this diversity, which leads to the spread of conflict and the prevalence of a spirit of discord among individuals due to racism, discrimination and bullying, and this is one of the worst things that may befall the organization [23, 24].

There has always been a lot of work and little time. It is essential to understand the causes of conflict between employees, as it may result from differences in needs, goals and values, rather than cultural differences. Not to rush to intervene and judge between the disputants in the work environment if there is room to calm the dispute between them, which will raise their awareness and enable them to practice problem-solving skills and conflict management consciously and competently in the work environment. They suggest to offering courses of problem-solving and conflict-solving skills for employees and investing their energies and ideas by posing hypothetical problems and allowing them to solve them, which enhances them with

many good life skills. Also, creating an intimate atmosphere at work among employees through networking meetings and allocating an open day for exchanging information and enhances the positive spirit in the work environment and has to achieve goals and increase productivity.

5 Discussion

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is a core cross-cultural ability that is important for employees working internationally within contemporary companies. The changes that are occurring globally and locally in cities and communities around the world require culturally savvy employees. Here are the points that illustrate the importance of cultural intelligence [3].

Communication Effectiveness: CQ Cultural intelligence is important for effective communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. Knowing cultural differences prepares individuals for proper verbal and nonverbal communication. Cultural intelligence helps to know what is desirable or undesirable in a particular culture regarding its behaviors, customs, religious and other beliefs, marriage systems, arts and crafts [26].

Multicultural Team Effectiveness: Attempts to work internationally are hampered by different languages, preferences, and understanding of the situation. An individual with a high degree of CQ' has a seemingly natural ability to understand the unfamiliar and ambiguous behavior of others in the way that of the natives.

Competitive advantage: The cultural intelligence of individuals is what determines whether an organization's diversity encourages or deters innovation. Moreover, CEOs from multi-skilled, multi-cultural countries are considered one of the most important competencies needed to compete in the world. In business organizations, risk is reduced because managers who are more culturally savvy have greater knowledge of the cultural attributes of markets, behavioral flexibility, and intrinsic motivations to fully engage with culturally distant markets [20; 27].

Intercultural Collaboration: CQ Cultural intelligence is another complementary form of intelligence that can account for variation in dealing with diversity and working in new cultural environments; The set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable an individual to detect and assimilate cultural cues, reason and act upon them appropriately. It increases awareness of differences with other culture and enables a person to use appropriate behaviour, while stimulating an understanding of cognitive differences in culture. Simply put, the higher an individual's cultural intelligence, the more likely they are to manage diverse cultural settings effectively. This applies to both; Local and international situations, which require effective multidisciplinary leadership [28].

Strategic expansion into culturally diverse markets: Although "some workers may never work outside their country of nationality, many will interact with clients, customers, suppliers, and co-workers who are themselves outside their home country. Cultural intelligence is a valuable tool for managing any form of Forms of cultural diversity, whether it is gender, nationality, race, generation, sexual orientation, health status, or any other subculture, to turn risks into strategic strengths [29].

The CQ model highlights the importance of developing a comprehensive set of understanding, strategy, skills, and motivation that enables an individual to enter and exit from many different cultural contexts.

6 Conclusions

This study provides strong empirical evidence for the value of using a coherent organizational framework of Cultural Intelligence CQ. The qualitative research methods were used to accomplish this research and achieve the research objectives, including in-depth Interviews and data analysis through computer software such as NVivo.

Understanding, predicting, and developing CQ is very essential in workplaces that are increasingly global. In addition, incorporating the CQ approach into international project management brings many benefits such as enriched management of cultural differences and more effective cultural interactions among teamwork members. One of the most important features in enhancing a person's ability to complete tasks and achieve goals while interacting with people of different cultural backgrounds, CQ also improves communication in culturally challenging situations by increasing trust and building relationships [30].

CQ development will enhance individual and organizational ability to navigate across cultural boundaries. CQ is a system consisting of three interactive components: (a) cultural knowledge, (b) intercultural skills and (c) metacognition. These components have been developed in various ways as follows [31].

1. Cultural knowledge: which emphasizes knowledge of other cultures, such as how people behave in disagreements and when they communicate with each other, how social relations of other cultures occur and what values other cultures consider important, is obtained from different channels, such as newspapers and films, Having friends with people from a different culture, individuals can use this knowledge to find out what is unique in cultures and analyze that uniqueness [32, 33].

2. Cross-cultural skills: which includes a wide range of skills affecting intercultural effectiveness such as uncertainty tolerance (dealing with uncertainties, ambiguities, and unexpected changes in intercultural interaction), relationship skills (interacting with people from other cultures), and empathy (Putting yourself in the shoes of others in culturally different situations), adaptability (changing your behavior according to cultural requirements), perceptive acuity (understanding people's feelings during intercultural interactions), can be developed through experiential learning in which you test cultural skills in a foreign culture through tracing And by acquiring cross-cultural skills it will be easier to act appropriately in that culture [34].

3. Metacultural: Refers to knowing and observing an

individual's thinking and learning activities in a particular area of cultural experience and strategies. Individuals need to pay attention to how others interact in several situations. In addition, this helps to test the effectiveness of behavior. However, this study studies have mainly reached to main findings. Cultural intelligence reduces the level of anxiety caused by the ambiguous environment and unfamiliar company culture. Cultural intelligence is positively correlated with job satisfaction, an important outcome that acts as a driver for maintaining communication in intercultural interactions [35]. MCI positively enhance task performance in culturally diverse environments. Individuals with a high degree of motivational cultural intelligence act with intrinsic interest, a sociocultural sense of adaptation, and feel confident about their skills and abilities to adapt to a culturally diverse workforce. Motivational cultural intelligence facilitates learning of the expected role, while behavioral cultural intelligence is used to demonstrate appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors to meet role expectations from others [36, 37]. Metacognitive and cognitive cultural intelligence is applied in cultural judgment and decision-making. The outcomes here are decisions in which several mental processes are used, for example, critical thinking and problem solving, evaluating information, and comparing alternative outcomes [38]. That individuals with a high level of cultural intelligence are more socially tolerant and behave very efficiently in intercultural communication. Cultural intelligence plays an important role in the successful adaptation of diasporas, which in turn influences performance and helps as intercultural competence that supports their job performance in international contexts. This study, like others, has limitations to the generalizability of study.

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