

Exploring the Role of Cultural Intelligence in Mitigating Expatriate Stress: Strategies for Enhancing Well-being in Cross-Cultural Contexts

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Background/purpose: As global business and education environments become increasingly cross-cultural, prolonged stress faced by individuals navigating unfamiliar territories can lead to symptoms of burnout. This study explores the relationship between expatriate stress and Cultural Intelligence, considering moderating factors such as age, motivation, length of experience, and age group.

Methods: A comprehensive survey was administered to over 300 expatriates —individuals who engaged in international experiences of at least three months for work- or study-related reasons— of 40 different countries worldwide, encompassing diverse age groups, motivations, and duration of stay. Validated scales assessed expatriate stress levels and Cultural Intelligence scores. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted on the collected data.

Results: Findings reveal a significant negative correlation between Cultural Intelligence and expatriate stress, suggesting that individuals with higher Cultural Intelligence experience lower stress during international experiences. Motivation, length of stay abroad, and age did not yield statistically significant stress level differences, highlighting Cultural Intelligence's importance as a mitigating factor.

Conclusion: By emphasizing the link between Cultural Intelligence and reduced expatriate stress, this study underscores the need for intercultural training and interventions in preparation for (or during) this experience. The study also provides HR training and approach recommendations to improve on these CQ levels.

Keywords: *Expatriate stress, Cultural Intelligence, Moderating factors, Cultural adaptability*

1 Introduction

The past decade has witnessed a marked increase in the global workforce's cross-cultural mobility, leading to an intensified focus on the well-being and adaptability of expatriates (OECD, 2020). There has been a noticeable surge in stress levels experienced by individuals engaged in cross-cultural work environments.

This phenomenon is verified by the findings of Cigna Global (2022). Alarming, 84% of employees reported experiencing stress. Particularly concerning are the escalating stress levels among younger generations, with 87% of individuals aged 25 to 34 and 91% of those aged 18 to 24 acknowledging heightened stress. Furthermore, a staggering 98% of Generation Z respondents disclosed experiencing symptoms of burnout, ranging from physical and

mental manifestations (Queensland Health, 2021) to the persistent feeling of being unable to get off work-related matters.

Expatriates often face stress due to factors such as culture shock, language barriers, and social isolation. These stress factors and the financial and family components (Cigna Global, 2022) collectively contribute to adverse outcomes for individuals and organizations. Notably, decreased job satisfaction, impaired work performance, and premature return from assignments are documented consequences of expatriate stress (Doghan & Malik, 2022).

In this context, Cultural Intelligence (also referred to as CQ or Cultural Quotient), defined as the ability to effectively adapt to and function in cross-cultural contexts (Earley & Ang, 2003), has been identified as a critical factor in expat success. However, while existing research has already identified the CQ as a critical factor in managing cultural differences among employees (Ang et al., 2007), a knowledge gap exists concerning its potential to alleviate stress levels among expatriates. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the significance of cultural intelligence in mitigating expatriate stress.

Therefore, the primary objectives of this research are three: firstly, to identify the predominant source(s) of stress experienced by expatriates; secondly, to explore the role of cultural intelligence in mitigating these stress levels; and thirdly, to determine optimal strategies for cultivating and harnessing cultural intelligence to decrease expatriate stress. Addressing this imperative issue holds the potential to offer valuable insights for expatriates, human resources practitioners, and organizations alike, facilitating the effective management and reduction of stress levels among expatriates. Ultimately, the outcomes of this study aspire to enhance the adjustment, performance, and overall well-being of expatriates immersed in cross-cultural contexts.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Stress Levels Rising and Symptoms of Burnout

This rise in stress raises pertinent questions about the related phenomenon of burnout. Examining the symptoms and underlying causes of burnout within the context of expatriates is crucial. According to Darling Downs Health (Queensland Health, 2021), burnout's symptoms manifest through three distinctive categories: Physical symptoms, emotional symptoms, and behavioral signs, which lead from procrastination and reduced performances to outbursts and the use of substances to cope.

The origins of burnout are varied and can derive from both professional and personal spheres. Stressors within the professional realm include workload, the balance between effort and reward, incongruence with personal

values, and interpersonal dynamics within the workplace (Sanders, 2019). On the other hand, personal aspects like community involvement, familial relationships, and partnerships can also contribute to burnout (Psychology Today, n.d.). In the specific case of expatriates, other stressors are recognized as potential additional causes that may heighten stress levels and eventually lead to burnout: A language barrier, local customs, loneliness, bureaucracy, access to healthcare, the feeling of safety, connecting to locals, and Homesickness.

While it is true that during the past year, the pandemic was the cause of exceptional stress for the masses, even causing a significant number of expatriates a solid desire to withdraw from their host countries (Koveshnikov et al., 2022), stress levels in 2021 have shown a slight decline (Cigna Global, 2022). This underscores that although some of the stressors mentioned may have witnessed an increase due to the pandemic, as Dr. Peter Mills said in one of his interviews, "We cannot attribute all our modern stress levels to COVID; there are myriad other factors from the pressure of being 'on' all the time at work to the number of media we consume, through to the cost-of-living crisis." (Mills, 2022: 4).

While expatriates employ various strategies to combat stress, including meditation, introspection, and professional therapy sessions, it is still a known fact that the infamous culture shock can be a significant source of fear and stress, much like the sudden change in language (Naeem et al., 2015). In this context, it is mandatory to have the skills and competencies to face these situations; otherwise, as in numerous cases, individuals could come short due to environmental and contextual impediments, which would, in turn, show the existence of a gap between theory and practice, "knowing" and "doing" (Johnson et al., 2006). Here, Cultural Intelligence emerges as a potential mediator, as it not only analyses skills related to language or knowledge of the host country but also reflects how these are used in cross-cultural interactions and other relevant scenarios.

2.2 Concept of Cultural Intelligence

Cultural Intelligence was created just before the beginning of the 21st century. It was a time when cultural hatred had a major impact around the world with a constant flow of violence and conflicts. This cultural hatred was a force that acted almost like a backlash of globalization, which at the time was experiencing exponential growth too, and this drove researchers to ask themselves the question: "Why do some individuals adapt easily and effectively their views and behaviors cross-culturally, and others do not?" (Ang et al., 2011). However, given that the cultural-competency literature at the time was referred to by many as dubious and confusing, authors coined the concept of Cultural Intelligence as a result of four capabilities that express the

ability to function effectively in cross-cultural environments (Ang et al., 2015). In other words, Cultural Intelligence can also refer to the abilities of people who have the skills to rapidly adjust when they interact for more extended periods in cultures different than the ones they are used to, without this being the cause of excessive stress (Brislin et al., 2006). Whereas intelligence involves logical reasoning, communication skills, and behaviors such as admitting mistakes and proving interest in the world (Sternberg, 2000), Cultural Intelligence encompasses a broader range of intercultural skills and abilities.

During the first decade after the formulation of this concept, Cultural Intelligence rapidly grew in popularity among researchers. It started to be analyzed from multiple perspectives and in connection to other factors. Research after research, this new concept seemed to prove an essential skill to develop for expatriates and in other multicultural contexts, showing potential for international leadership (Kym & Van Dyne, 2012), becoming an essential element for decision-making and cultural judgment (Ang et al., 2007), proving its usefulness in voice behaviors (Ng et al., 2019) and more.

We should step back and expound on how the original concept was formulated. Starting from the four loci of individual intelligence proposed by Sternberg at the end of the 80s (Sternberg, 1986) – these being metacognitive intelligence, cognitive intelligence, motivational intelligence, and behavioral intelligence – and applying them in the cross-cultural context, Earley & Ang (2003) identified the four factors of CQ. That defined the Cultural Quotient as a multidimensional construct that provides comprehensive information on the cross-cultural abilities of individuals (Rockstuhl & Van Dyne, 2018).

According to Sternberg, metacognition, cognition, and motivation are all mental capabilities that respectively reflect the cognitive processes of awareness of thoughts, acquiring and understanding information, and driving. The fourth one, however, behavioral intelligence, refers to physical actions, both verbal and non-verbal, and motions. On this base, Earley & Ang (2003) identified the four factors of CQ: Metacognitive CQ, Cognitive CQ, Motivational CQ, and Behavioral CQ.

3 Methodology and Research Design

While the significance of cultural intelligence has been widely acknowledged in various organizational contexts, ranging from managing cultural differences among employees to influencing voice behaviors, talent selection processes for leadership positions and expatriation, and decision-making strategies, a notable void still exists in the existing research. Specifically, this gap concerns a scarcity of studies that directly explore and analyze the critical role of cultural intelligence in mitigating stress levels ex-

perienced by expatriates during their stay abroad. As mentioned, expatriates, individuals who temporarily relocate to foreign countries for work assignments or study-related matters, often encounter many challenges connected to the adjustment to a new culture, norms, and social contexts. These challenges can be caused by dangerously high-stress levels, potentially affecting expatriates' overall well-being and job performance in the long term. While current research has demonstrated the positive correlation between cultural intelligence and successful cross-cultural interactions, the direct influence of cultural intelligence on reducing expatriates' stress remains relatively unexplored. In order to address the research gap and gather significant data that could be used to advance the study on this topic, the following Research Questions (RQs) and hypotheses (H) have been formulated:

1. RQ 1: Is there a negative correlation between the total levels of Cultural Intelligence (F.TOT) and the overall stress levels reported by the expatriates during their experience?

The first hypothesis is based on the assumption that the higher the level of CQ an individual presents, the better they can deal with stressful situations. This implies that Cultural Intelligence plays a significant role in the international experiences of expats and can potentially be used as a relieving or preventing factor for higher stress levels.

- H0: There is no significant negative correlation between F.TOT and STRESS LV.
- H1: There is a significant negative correlation between F.TOT and STRESS LV. If a significant negative correlation is found, this would also allow further hypotheses and/or assumptions on the usefulness of tools for CQ training. The prediction of negative relationships is based on the relevance of cultural intelligence in similar assessment tools such as the ICAPS (Matsumoto et al., 2007) and MPQ (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001) analyzed in existing literature, as well as studies that prove that different factors of the CQ individually have a positive influence on the challenges of an intercultural context. A compound variable will be called S.AVG, meaning "stress average." This will be set at the average of the score given to the eight stressors selected to appear in the survey as main stressors, and it will serve as a supplementary value to evaluate stress.

2. RQ 2: Is there a significant correlation between the total values of the CQ and the evolution of stress over time?

This RQ inquiries about the potential relationship between the overall levels of cultural intelligence (F.TOT) and the trajectory of stress evolution over time (S.EVO), a variable derived from a specific question posed in the distributed survey.

- H0: There is NOT a significant correlation between F.TOT and S.EVO.
- H1: There is a significant correlation between F.TOT and S.EVO. This research question derives its relevance from the intention to discover if Cultural Intelligence, as measured by F.TOT, has a noticeable relationship with how stress evolves among expatriates. Exploring this relationship carries implications for understanding the long-term impacts of Cultural Intelligence on the expatriate experience. The evolution of stress over time, captured by S.EVO, provides a measure that can provide potential further patterns or trends. By analyzing the potential correlation between F.TOT and S.EVO, this research hypothesizes that individuals with higher levels of Cultural Intelligence might experience distinct trajectories in stress evolution. Identifying a significant correlation would increase comprehension of the relationship between cultural intelligence and stress. However, it could also be used to plan interventions or strategies to improve long-term well-being during cross-cultural experiences.

The anticipation of a potential correlation is founded on the precedent of similar studies in the existing literature. While specific studies examining the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and stress evolution are limited, parallels can be drawn from analogous research endeavors. Assessment tools such as ICAPS (Matsumoto et al., 2007) and MPQ (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001), often used in assessing Cultural Intelligence, hint at the potential influence of Cultural Intelligence on dynamic cross-cultural processes.

3. RQ 3: Is there a significant difference between the generations represented by age groups and the total scores of CQ?

This RQ aims to reveal potential disparities across different generations, represented by distinct age groups (AGE), concerning the cumulative scores of Cultural Intelligence (F.TOT)

- H0: There is no significant difference in F.TOT between age groups (AGE).
- H1: There is a significant difference in F.TOT between age groups (AGE). The importance of this research question comes from the aspiration to encounter plausible variations in Cultural Intelligence (F.TOT) scores among different age groups. The parameter of age holds the potential to interact with an individual's capacity to assimilate and wield Cultural Intelligence abilities. Exploring these dynamic holds implications for understanding how generational attributes relate to the improvement and manifestation of Cultural Intelligence. This draws inspiration from the Chinese student study (Gebregergis et al., 2019), which

proposes age-based discrepancies in CQ scores by highlighting the adaptability of younger students to mainstream society and their potential integration skills aligning with the hypothesis examined. However, these attributes may be influenced by experiences of emotional immaturity or psychological challenges that affect the application of Cultural Intelligence skills. With this hypothesis, the potential differences in F.TOT scores across age groups will be inspected to prove or disprove the connection between age and Cultural Intelligence levels.

4. RQ 4: Is there a significant difference between the stress levels of younger expatriates and their older counterparts?

This fourth RQ aims to discover whether or not a significant difference exists in stress levels between younger expatriates and their older counterparts, as defined by age groups (AGE).

- H0: There is no significant difference in the stress levels between age groups (AGE).
- H1: There is a significant difference in the stress levels between age groups (AGE). The relevance of this research question comes from the potential to discover variations in stress levels among distinct age groups of expatriates. The previous proposals made in the study of Chinese students (Gebregergis et al., 2019) affirmed that younger individuals express higher adaptability and integration skills in mainstream societies, specifically if younger people experience lower stress levels compared to their older counterparts. Extending this observation to stress levels, we hypothesize that this adaptability might translate into a difference in stress experiences between age groups. This will be proven or disproven by analyzing the perceived overall stress level (STRESS LV and S.AVG) that the participants declared during the survey, setting the age group 18-24 as the control group. Exploring the relationship between the two variables holds implications for understanding how generational differences might affect the perception and experience of stress during time abroad.

The results of these questions could be a starting point for targeted development of support strategies for varied age groups of expatriates, contributing to enhanced well-being and effective cross-cultural engagement.

5. RQ 5: Is there a significant difference between the stress levels of expatriates who had their international experience for work-related reasons and those who had it for study-related reasons?

This fifth RQ aims to explore potential differences in stress levels among expatriates based on the motivation behind their international experiences. The two

motivations under examination are work-related and study-related experiences (MOTIVATION).

- H0: There is no significant difference in the stress levels between work- and study-related experiences (MOTIVATION).
- H1: There is a significant difference in the stress levels between work- and study-related experiences (MOTIVATION).

This research question is essential to investigate potential variations in stress levels based on the diverse motivations driving individuals to undertake international experiences. If a significant difference were to be proved, this would create a foundation for exploring the potential influence of these two motivations on the perceived stress encountered by expatriates during their stay.

This will be analyzed by comparing the stress levels reported by individuals with these distinct motivations. This research question implies that if a significant difference in stress levels is found, the motives of the experience – be it work or study – could influence stress perceptions during international stay. This insight might lead both organizations and educational institutions to tailor specific support mechanisms that align with the motivations of expatriates, ultimately contributing to their well-being and practical adaptations in diverse cultural contexts. Furthermore, this research question contributes to a broader theoretical aspect by providing insights into how diverse motivations interact with the stress experiences of expatriates, offering a detailed view of how work-related and study-related goals might shape the cross-cultural experience.

6. RQ 6: Is there a significant difference between the stress levels of expatriates with shorter experiences and those with longer experiences?

RQ 6 explores the potential differences in stress levels between two distinct categories of expatriate experiences (LENGTH): shorter ones – up to a semester – and the ones of longer durations – up to a year and more than a year.

- H0: No significant difference exists in stress levels between longer and shorter experiences (LENGTH).
- H1: There is a significant difference in the stress levels between longer and shorter experiences (LENGTH).

The relevance of this RQ comes from searching for a possible impact of the length of an international experience on the stress levels encountered by expatriates. This would highlight the potential influence of the temporal dimension on the stress perception of cross-cultural experiences. Understanding whether the duration of an international experience correlates with variations in stress perceptions holds further implications for tailoring robust support systems and strategies for individuals about to partake in different durations of

expatriation, aligning them with the unique challenges posed by shorter and longer international experiences. Furthermore, it would show implications for practical interventions and theoretical inquiries. On the practical side, if a significant difference in stress levels is detected, it could underscore the role of temporal duration in shaping the stress experiences of expatriates. Additionally, for the theoretical side, this research question contributes to the discussions by portraying how the variable of temporal duration interacts with the stress dimensions of cross-cultural contexts.

While exploring the relationship between the duration of international experiences and stress, this research question based its formulation on existing literature that underscores the temporal aspect's role in cross-cultural adaptation and the associated stressors such as the ones illustrated in the ICAPS (Matsumoto et al., 2007) and MPQ assessments (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001).

7. RQ 7: Is there a significant correlation between the amount of HR training received prior to the experience and the overall CQ (F.TOT) scores?

The seventh and last RQ investigates the potential relationship between the extent of Human Resources (HR) training and the overall Cultural Intelligence (F.TOT) levels. This question addresses whether the amount of HR training received by expatriates correlates with the overall Cultural Intelligence scores obtained by the participants in the survey.

- H0: There is no significant correlation between F.TOT and HR Training received.
- H1: There is a significant correlation between F.TOT and HR Training received.

The context surrounding HR training within the distributed survey's framework provides a background for exploring the potential impact of training processes on expatriates' Cultural Intelligence. This exploration is particularly pertinent given the critical role of training in enhancing cross-cultural competencies. Therefore, the implications of this RQ extend to practical considerations for training interventions and theoretical investigations into the convergence of training and Cultural Intelligence. If a significant correlation between HR training and Cultural Intelligence scores is identified, it could provide insights into the effectiveness of training programs received by the expatriates prior to their experience, showing improvements in their cross-cultural competencies. These implications could lead to designing and implementing targeted training strategies, contributing to improved cross-cultural adaptability among expatriates. Moreover, this research question contributes to the theoretical framework by offering insights into the links between specific training interventions and Cultural Intelligence development.

Quantitative Approach

One of the purposes of this research is to gather brand-new data that could prove helpful in the future as a base for further research. For said purpose, a quantitative approach was chosen. Data was collected through a survey created on “questionpro.com.” This was later spread through social media such as LinkedIn and Instagram, networking circles, and other international connections. The survey was initially created in English and then translated into Spanish, Italian, and German to facilitate the international distribution process.

The sampling type is to be considered “random sampling”; therefore, the calculations for the minimum sample size are as follows:

- Population size: As the population in this case is relatively large, considering the definition of expatriate used for this research, the population size is UNKNOWN, therefore considered UNLIMITED.
- Confidence level: Given the unlimited population size, in order to achieve a realistically achievable goal of surveys completed, a confidence level of 90% was chosen.
- The margin of error: As a confidence interval, a margin of error of 5% was chosen
- Population Proportion: As the sampling is going to be random, the population proportion is considered to be 50%.

Using the following as the formula for Sample Size with an unlimited population

Where:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2}$$

- z is the z score – given a confidence level of 90%, $z=1.645$
- ϵ is the margin of error = 0.05
- \hat{p} is the population proportion = 0.5

The sample size resulting from the calculations is 270.6025, rounded to 271. This number would be the minimum number of surveys completed to achieve a confidence level such as the selected one.

Three requirements were set in order for a participant’s response to be considered valid and, therefore, used as part of the analysis:

1. At least one experience in a foreign country lasted at least three months. This was set because burn-out, or burnout syndrome, is defined as prolonged or chronic unmanaged stress (Guimaraes, 2023).
2. At least one of these experiences was done at an age of at least 18 years old.

3. At least one of the experiences that fall into the previous requirements in a foreign country had to be either work- or study-related.

Participants who failed to meet one or more of these requirements were discarded.

The survey was divided into four sections, plus the dedicated section to the introduction message:

1. General questions constituted of 7 questions define the general traits of the individuals.
2. Cultural Intelligence consists of 4 questions based on the four factors of the “Cultural Intelligence Scale” (Earley & Ang, 2003). As in the original CQS, each question contained five statements proposing scenarios with seven options on a Likert scale from “1-Strongly Disagree” to “7-Strongly Agree”.
3. Stress Factors in Host Country consisted of 3 questions. The eight stressors selected for this section were chosen according to the pre-existing literature and research on the stress levels of expatriates.
4. HR Training on Cultural Intelligence is composed of 3 questions.

5 Results

Firstly, the database was downloaded from the analytics section of questionpro.com; this data was then skimmed to reach the final database used for the analysis. Overall, the survey was seen by 374 individuals over 41 days and presented a completion rate of around 79.14%, with 296 responses marked as completed by the Question-Pro website. The remaining 78 responses were discarded as a result of incompleteness. Of the 296 completed responses, 11 of them (3.72% of the total) were also discarded as they did not meet the requirement of having lived in a foreign country for at least three months or the other two set requirements, therefore bringing the actual completion rate at 76.20% and 285 valid completed responses. Valid responses were collected from 40 different countries overall.

These are referred to as “O. REGION” in the analysis file, indicating the region of origin of the individuals. The exact geographical regions indicated where the international experience occurred are called “I.E. REGION.” The proportions in Table 1 show the frequencies of the selections for this question.

One hundred twenty participants stayed in the same geographical region for their international experience, whereas the remaining 165 traveled to a different geographical region.

Of the total 285 valid participants, 164 (or 57.54%) identified themselves as “Female,” 117 (or 41.05%) as “Male,” and 4 (or 1.4%) identified as “non-binary.” 198 (or 69.47%) reported being between 18 and 24 years old,

80 (or 28.07%) to be between 25 and 34 years old, and 7 (or 2.46%) chose the group 35 years old or more. However, as no valid participants fell into the groups of “45-54” and “55-64”, and as only one of the participants reported to be 64 or above during their experience, the groups were merged as a single group named “Above 35”.

Of the valid responses, 82 (or 28.76%) of them were reported to be work-related experiences, while the remaining 203 (or 71.23%) were reported as study-related experiences, which was to be expected considering the age trends of the sample leaning heavily on the younger age group. More than three-quarters of the 203 participants

with study-related experience (154) were in the “18-24” age group.

Regarding the length of international experience, “3 to 6 months” proved to be the most common option amongst both groups of participants being chosen a total of 185 times; “7 to 12 months” chosen a total of 64 times, and »more than 12 months” was chosen a total of 36 times. This again shows a potential connection to the theoretical framework, particularly with the study made by the Kozai Group (2022), which identified a trend of choosing closer destinations rather than “long-haul” destinations.

Table 1: Proportions of IE Regions

Proportions - I.E.REGION		
Level	Count	Proportion
Australia	1	0.00
Africa	3	0.01
Asia	24	0.08
Central America	24	0.08
Europe	175	0.61
Middle East	3	0.01
North America	36	0.13
South America	19	0.07

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Table 2: Average Scores per CQ Factor

Score F1	85,94%	Average F1	30,08
Score F2	80,40%	Average F2	28,14
Score F3	76,73%	Average F3	26,86
Score F4	79,66%	Average F4	27,88

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Analysis of CQS Results

The results of the second section of the survey were firstly analyzed factor by factor, meaning each CQ factor (F1 to F4) was evaluated singularly by calculating the average score out of 35 maximum points, and only after this compared to the rest. The highest scoring factor was F1 (Metacognitive CQ). Following F2 (Cognitive CQ) and

F4 (Behavioral CQ). Lastly, F3 (Motivational CQ) was the lowest scoring, as seen in Table 2.

These numbers show that the most challenging aspect for the expats was managing their own emotions and energy levels while responding appropriately to the emotions of others rather than understanding and accepting cultural norms and values or adapting to the new, unknown physical environment.

After analyzing the factors individually, the following step was to analyze the total CQ score, addressed in the database as “F.TOT.” The 285 participants averaged a mean value of 112.96 out of 140, with a minimum value of 51 and a maximum of 139. The scores were then separated into classes from “Way below average” to “Above average.” This separation was done by assigning a range to the average results; as shown in Table 3 below, the mean (112.96) and the median (115) are very close. Nonetheless, the mean score was lower than the median. This indicates that the distribution is skewed negatively (or to the left), as

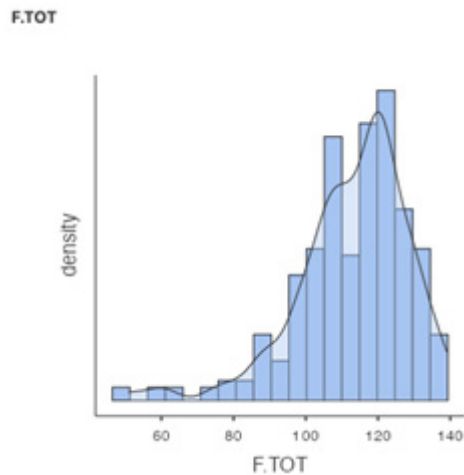
shown in Figure 1.

Due to this skewness, the median value was considered the average result. Considering this value as a starting point, class results were established to analyze the sample’s responses better. Firstly, an interval of the “Average” class as $110 \leq \text{F.TOT} < 120$ was created. The other classes were created maintaining an interval of 10 points, except the class “Way Below Average,” which represents all the results under a score of 90. The frequencies of the classes are shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Descriptives of FTOT

Descriptives	
	F.TOT
Mean	112.96
Median	115
Standard deviation	15.54
Minimum	51
Maximum	139
25th percentile	105.00
50th percentile	115.00
75th percentile	122.00

Source: Own calculations of the authors



Source: Own calculations of the authors

Figure 1: Density of FTOT

Table 4: Frequencies of F. Levels

Frequencies of F. LEVEL			
Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Way Below Average	21	7%	7%
Below Average	25	9%	16%
Slightly below Average	55	19%	35%
Average	75	26%	62%
Slightly above Average	76	27%	88%
Above Average	33	12%	100%

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Table 5: Frequencies of Stress Levels

Frequencies of STRESS LV			
Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
1	42	15%	15%
2	88	31%	46%
3	86	30%	76%
4	44	15%	91%
5	22	8%	99%
6	3	1%	100%

Note: 1= Very Low; 2=Low; 3=Somewhat Low; 4=Somewhat High; 5=High; 6 =Very High.

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Analysis of Stress Data

For the first question of this section, the participants were asked about their overall stress levels during their experience. They were presented with six options from Very Low to Very High. These are reported in the database and Table 5.

These frequencies indicate that the majority of the participants, 174 out of 285 (or 61.05%) to be exact, reported to have had an overall “Low” to “Somewhat Low” level of stress during their experience, with an almost equal split between the two categories, and even the third quarter of the distribution falling into the category 3. This indicates some discrepancies with the existing literature, as the general level of stress level participants in this study has only been reported to be higher in roughly 24% of the cases, with only 3 participants reporting very high levels of stress levels, also proven by analyzing the average of the total scores given to the eight stressors, which resulted in a 3.90 out of 10.

The single stressors were also analyzed singularly in order to determine if and which stressors affected the average stress levels the most. The results showed that the

stressor “S3–Loneliness” scored higher on average than all the others, followed by “S4–Bureaucracy”, “S1–Language Barrier,” and “S7–Connecting to Locals.” Whereas the last three stressors, “S5–Access to Healthcare”, “S6–Feeling of Safety,” and “S2–Local Customs,” all scored an average under 4 out of 10.

Additionally, the participants were asked about the evolution of their stress levels with time. In particular, they could choose whether they felt a decrease, slight decrease, no change, slight increase, or increased stress during their experience (S.EVO).

As shown in Table 6, 54% of the participants experienced a significant decrease in their stress level as time passed. A plausible explanation for this could be that some stressors affect an expatriate more during the beginning of their experience. Regarding the other participants, 6% – 17 individuals – experienced increased stress levels. Of these, only 7 reported that the increase was significant, whereas the remaining 32 participants did not experience any significant change in their stress level throughout their international experience as expatriates.

Analysis of HR-Related Data

Of the 285 participants, 37.19% reported not having had any training, making this the singular most chosen option amongst the displayed ones – closely followed by “Language Training,” which was selected by 36.14%. However, while this was the singular most chosen option, this still entails that the majority of the participants in the sample had at least some training before their experience as expatriates. Cross-cultural mentoring proved to be a pretty popular option, with 23.86% scoring just shy of 5 percentage points higher than the next training, “Cultural Competency Workshops,” with 17.89%. The last three options for training, “Online Courses,” “Diversity and Inclusion Training,” and “Cultural Immersion Programs,” scored 15.44%, 12.63%, and 10.18%, respectively. On average, each participant partook in 1.16 of the possible six trainings displayed in the survey.

When asked which of the training done, they considered valuable and/or which they think would have been helpful before their time as expatriates, the top 3 choices were “Language Training” with 57.19% (163 participants), “Cultural Immersion Programs” with 41.50% (117 participants), and “Cross-Cultural Mentoring” with 32.98% (94 participants). Following choices by popularity were “Cultural Competency Workshops,” selected by 28.42% of the sample (81 participants), “Diversity and Inclusion Training” with 23.51% (67 participants), and “Online Courses” with 13.33%, indicating that most participants rather have in-person scheduled training rather than virtual courses and online material to self-analyze. Additionally, only 31 of them chose the option for “None of them,” making it the least chosen option and indicating that 89.12% of the participants found or would have found it helpful to have CQ training or related training previous to their international experience with an average of 1.96 desired training out of the six displayed in the survey, essentially doubling

the average amount of training they experienced.

Figure 2 shows a visual representation of the received (in red) and desired training (in blue) as reported by the sample in a radar chart. Diversity and Inclusion, Training, and Language Training present a moderately higher demand than the sending institutions currently offer. The necessity of a cross-cultural mentor also proves highly relevant for the sample of expatriates that partook in the study. However, of the potential training shown, the opportunity to gather hands-on experience with Cultural Immersions Programs seems to be of significantly higher importance to the expatriates. This type of program’s need and expected usefulness come from having a direct connection to a culture rather than a mere result of a lecture or a workshop.

Moreover, the offer of online courses presents a slightly lower demand than the current offer by the organizations. However, this is not a surprising factor given that online courses, such as pre-registered lectures or the offering of literature, present a significantly lower cost to the organization than other training and activities listed.

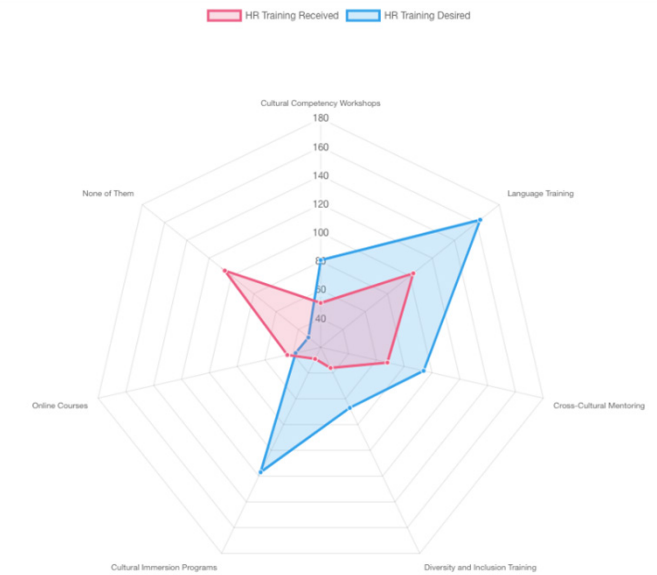
As a final question to the survey, participants were asked to express how important it was for them to receive these or other types of training from their sending institution. Table 7 shows the results of this question.

This shows once again not only that the expectation for a higher level of support from their sending institution in preparation for their experience is a priority for expatriates but that the expatriates value in a considerable manner their personal growth potential – in the form of CQ training – in the face of a challenge such as an international experience as expatriates. A company that offers desirable training may have more friction with the talent pool on a national and international level, obtaining a significant competitive advantage over other institutions and competitors. This, in turn, will help sustain their employee well-being while also supporting a better internal company culture across multicultural teams.

Table 6: Frequencies of S.EVO

Frequencies of S.EVO			
Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Decreased	153	54 %	54 %
Slightly Decreased	83	29 %	83 %
No Change	32	11 %	94 %
Slightly Increased	10	4 %	98 %
Increased	7	2 %	100 %

Source: Own calculations of the authors



Source: Own calculations of the authors

Figure 2: HR Received/Desired

Table 7: Frequencies of Importance HR

Frequencies of IMPORTANCE HR			
Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Not Important	9	3 %	3 %
Slight	44	15 %	19 %
Moderate	102	36 %	54 %
High	81	28 %	83 %
Extreme	49	17 %	100 %

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Table 8: Correlation Table RQ1

Correlation Matrix		
		F.TOT
F.TOT	Spearman's rho	—
	p-value	—
STRESS LV	Spearman's rho	−0.44
	p-value	<.001
S.AVG	Spearman's rho	−0.20
	p-value	<.001

Note. H. is negative correlation

Source: Own calculations of the authors

6 Discussion

Using the data collected and after finishing the database preparations for the analysis, Jamovi was used as the primary method to answer the research questions.

1. RQ 1: Is there a negative correlation between the total levels of Cultural Intelligence (F.TOT) and the overall stress levels reported by the expatriates during their experience?

- H0: There is no significant negative correlation between F.TOT and STRESS LV.
- H1: There is a significant negative correlation between F.TOT and STRESS LV.

In order to establish if a negative correlation is present between the variables F.TOT (total score of CQ) and STRESS LV (overall stress level), the type of analysis chosen was a correlation matrix. In order to proceed with the analysis, a correlation coefficient must be chosen. As both variables were previously analyzed with a Normality test (Shapiro-Wilk) and resulted as both not normally distributed ($p < .001$ for both), Spearman was chosen as the correlation coefficient. This choice lies in the fact that Spearman's coefficient is less sensible to outliers than Pearson's coefficient; however, the two show quite similar results in this particular case.

The analysis – circled in blue – gave a p-value of $< .001$ with a Spearman's rho value of -0.44 , indicating the presence of a moderate negative correlation. Analyzing this with Pearson's coefficient, we get the exact p-value with an r of -0.47 . Therefore, the null hypothesis is discarded, and the alternative hypothesis is validated, meaning there is a significant negative correlation between the level of CQ and the overall stress level during the experience as an expatriate.

The same test was also run using the average score of the stressors "S.AVG" – circled in red in the table – instead of "STRESS LV" as an additional way to analyze the relationship between the CQ score and stress, since as mentioned previously the variable S.AVG was created as an extra measure to ensure a better evaluation of stress lev-

els of the expatriates. Again, according to the Normality test (Shapiro-Wilk), it was confirmed that this variable is also not normally distributed ($p = 0.007$); therefore, Spearman's rho was again chosen as the correlation coefficient. This returned a similar result as the p-value was again $p < .001$, with a lower Spearman's rho value of -0.20 , showing a weak negative correlation.

This analysis delved into the relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and stress levels among expatriates, a crucial area often discussed in intercultural literature. By employing Spearman's correlation coefficient, known for its robustness against skewed distributions, our findings corroborate previous studies suggesting a moderate negative correlation between Cultural Intelligence and stress levels ($\rho = -0.44$, $p < .001$). This aligns with existing research indicating that higher levels of Cultural Intelligence may serve as a buffer against the stresses inherent in cross-cultural experiences. Furthermore, integrating S.AVG as an additional measure to evaluate stress provided nuanced insights, albeit revealing a weaker negative correlation ($\rho = -0.20$, $p < .001$). These findings underscore the importance of Cultural Intelligence training as a potential strategy for stress mitigation among expatriates, aligning with prior literature advocating for the integration of CQ development programs in cross-cultural contexts.

2. RQ 2: Is there a significant correlation between the total values of the CQ and the evolution of stress over time?

- H0: There is NOT a significant correlation between FT and S.EVO.
- H1: There is a significant correlation between F.TOT and S.EVO.

In order to establish if a significant correlation is present between the variables F.TOT (total score of CQ) and S.EVO (evolution of stress over time), the type of analysis chosen was a correlation matrix. In order to proceed with the analysis, a correlation coefficient must be chosen. As F.TOT is not normally distributed but skewed negatively, Spearman was chosen as the correlation coefficient, given the lower sensitivity to outliers.

Table 9: Correlation Table RQ2

Correlation Matrix		S.EVO	FTOT
S.EVO	Spearman's rho	—	
	p-value	—	
FTOT	Spearman's rho	-0.05	—
	p-value	0.443	—

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Table 10: Anova KW RQ3

Kruskal-Wallis				
	χ^2	df	p	ϵ^2
FTOT	2.14	2	0.344	0.01

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Table 11: Anova KW RQ4

Kruskal-Wallis				
	χ^2	df	p	ϵ^2
STRESS LV	0.17	2	0.917	0.00
S.AVG	4.36	2	0.113	0.02

Source: Own calculations of the authors

The analysis given as a result is shown in Table 9 with a p-value of $p=0.443$; therefore, as $p>0.05$, the alternative hypothesis is discarded, and the null hypothesis is validated, meaning that there is not a significant correlation between the level of CQ and the evolution of stress over time.

Contrary to expectations, our analysis did not reveal a significant correlation between Cultural Intelligence and the evolution of stress over time ($p = 0.443$). This finding diverges from some existing literature, suggesting that while Cultural Intelligence may influence immediate stress levels, its impact on the longitudinal trajectory of stress during an expatriate experience might be less pronounced. This underscores the complexity of cross-cultural adaptation processes and highlights the need for nuanced interventions tailored to the evolving needs of expatriates throughout their assignments.

3. RQ 3: Is there a significant difference between the generations represented by age groups and the total scores of CQ?

- H0: There is no significant difference in F.TOT between age groups (AGE).
- H1: There is a significant difference in F.TOT between age groups (AGE).

In order to establish if a significant difference is present in the three groups of the variable AGE (age groups) in regards to the variable F.TOT (total score of CQ), the type of analysis chosen was a non-parametric One-way ANOVA.

The One-way ANOVA is needed as the variable AGE presents more than two groups. At the same time, the choice of utilizing a non-parametric analysis (Kruskal-Wallis) was dictated by the fact that F.TOT is not normally distributed.

The analysis in Table 10 gave, as a result, a p-value of $p=0.344$; therefore, as $p>0.05$, the alternative hypothesis is discarded, and the null hypothesis is validated, meaning that there is not a significant difference between the three age groups in regards of the total scores of CQ.

In exploring the relationship between age groups and Cultural Intelligence scores, our analysis utilizing the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test did not reveal a significant difference ($p = 0.344$). While this finding contrasts with some literature suggesting age-based discrepancies in CQ scores, it emphasizes the need for a more nuanced understanding of how generational attributes intersect with Cultural Intelligence development. Practical implications include the design of targeted training programs that cater to the diverse needs of different age cohorts, fostering inclusive environments conducive to cross-cultural success.

4. RQ 4: Is there a significant difference between the stress levels of younger expatriates and their older counterparts?

- H0: There is no significant difference in the stress levels between age groups (AGE).
- H1: There is a significant difference in the stress levels between age groups (AGE).

In order to establish if a significant difference is present in the three groups of the variable AGE (age groups) regarding the variable S.AVG, the type of analysis chosen was a non-parametric One-way ANOVA. The One-way ANOVA is needed as the variable AGE presents more than two groups. At the same time, the choice of utilizing a non-parametric analysis (Kruskal-Wallis) was dictated by the fact that the variable S.AVG is not normally distributed.

As shown in Table 11, the analysis gave a p-value of $p=0.113$; therefore, as $p>0.05$, the alternative hypothesis is discarded, and the null hypothesis is validated. There is no significant difference between the three age groups regarding the stress the expatriates felt during their experience.

Our analysis, using the Kruskal-Wallis test, did not unveil a significant difference in stress levels between age groups ($p = 0.113$). This finding contradicts previous assertions suggesting higher adaptability and lower stress levels among younger expatriates. It underscores the need to reevaluate assumptions about age-based differences in stress experiences and to tailor support mechanisms accordingly, irrespective of age.

5. RQ 5: Is there a significant difference between the stress levels of expatriates who had their international experience for work-related reasons and the ones who had it for study-related reasons?

- H0: There is no significant difference in the stress levels between work- and study-related experi-

ences (MOTIVATION).

- H1: There is a significant difference in the stress levels between work- and study-related experiences (MOTIVATION).

In order to establish if a significant difference is present in the two groups of the variable MOTIVATION regarding the variable S.AVG, the type of analysis chosen was a non-parametric One-way ANOVA. The choice of utilizing a non-parametric analysis (Kruskal-Wallis) was dictated by the fact that the variable S.AVG is not normally distributed.

As shown in Table 12, the analysis gave, as a result, a p-value of $p=0.343$; therefore, as $p>0.05$, the alternative hypothesis is discarded, and the null hypothesis is validated, meaning that there is not a significant difference between work-related and study-related experiences, in regards of the stress the expatriates felt during their stay abroad. The p score of the variable STRESS LV seems to be significantly higher than the one obtained by the compound variable S.AVG. A plausible explanation of this might be the implication that the motivation of the expatriation has a more significant impact on the experience of the stressors rather than the general level of perception of overall stress. This could signify the possibility of a more complex relationship between the motivation of the expatriation and how much the stressors affect the expatriates during their experience.

Table 12: Anova KW RQ5

Kruskal-Wallis				
	χ^2	df	p	ϵ^2
S.AVG	0.90	1	0.343	0.00
STRESS LV	0.00	1	0.976	0.00

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Table 13: Anova KW RQ6

Kruskal-Wallis			
	χ^2	df	p
S.AVG	0.16	2	0.924
STRESS LV	2.97	2	0.226

Source: Own calculations of the authors

Contrary to expectations, our analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis test did not detect a significant difference in stress levels between work- and study-related experiences ($p = 0.343$). This suggests that while the motivation behind expatriation may influence stress perceptions, its impact might be more nuanced than previously assumed. Practical implications include the development of holistic support strategies that consider diverse motivations driving expatriate experiences.

6. RQ 6: Is there a significant difference between the stress levels of expatriates with shorter experiences and those with longer experiences?

- H0: No significant difference exists in stress levels between longer and shorter experiences (LENGTH).
- H1: There is a significant difference in the stress levels between longer and shorter experiences (LENGTH).

In order to establish if a significant difference is present in the three groups of the variable LENGTH regarding the variable STRESS LV, the type of analysis chosen was a non-parametric One-way ANOVA. The One-way ANOVA is needed as the variable AGE presents more than two groups. At the same time, the choice of utilizing a non-parametric analysis (Kruskal-Wallis) was dictated by the fact that the variable STRESS LV is not normally distributed.

The analysis gave, as a result, a p -value of $p=0.226$ as shown in Table 13; therefore, as $p>0.05$, the alternative hypothesis is discarded, and the null hypothesis is validated, meaning that there is not a significant difference in the stress levels between longer and shorter experiences. The p score of the compound variable S.AVG is significantly higher than that of STRESS LV. A plausible explanation of this might be the implication that the length of the expatriation has a more significant impact on the experience of the general perception of stress rather than an impact on the experience of the stressors. This could signify the possibility of a more complex relationship between the length of the expatriation and how much stress was perceived during their experience.

Our analysis did not reveal a significant difference in stress levels between shorter and longer expatriate expe-

riences ($p = 0.226$). These finding challenges previous assumptions about the temporal dimension's impact on stress perceptions and underscores the need for tailored support systems that accommodate the unique challenges posed by different durations of expatriation.

7. RQ 7: Is there a significant correlation between the amount of HR training received and the overall CQ (F.TOT) scores?

- H0: There is no significant correlation between F.TOT and HR Training received.
- H1: There is a significant correlation between F.TOT and HR Training received.

In order to establish if a negative correlation is present between the variables F.TOT (total score of CQ) and HR Training received the type of analysis chosen was a correlation matrix. In order to proceed with the analysis, a correlation coefficient must be chosen. As both variables were previously analyzed with a Normality test (Shapiro-Wilk) and resulted in neither being normally distributed, Spearman was chosen as the correlation coefficient.

As Table 14 shows, the analysis gave, as a result, a p -value of $p=0.145$; therefore, as $p>0.05$, the alternative hypothesis is discarded, and the null hypothesis is validated, meaning that there is not a significant correlation between the level of CQ and the overall HR Training experienced by the expatriates.

This result may be discouraging for HR practitioners at first glance. However, the low number of trainings done on average by the sample (1.16 of 6 possible trainings displayed, plus the option to add any other different training as part of their answer, which was not chosen by any of them) could be a determining factor for this result. Keeping in mind that each of the 285 participants could have reported having received 6 different types of training (excluding other training that might have been added through the "other" option in the survey), we get a possible 1710 pieces of training received by the sample. However, only 331 were received by participants of this sample or less than 20% of the maximum. Thanks to the results of the last section of the survey (subchapter 3.4.4), the expectations for more training and practices are significantly higher than the currently offered HR practices aimed at improving

Table 14: Correlation Table RQ7

Correlation Matrix		HR Training	S.AVG
HR Training	Spearman's rho	—	
	p-value	—	
S.AVG	Spearman's rho	0.09	—
	p-value	0.145	—

Source: Own calculations of the authors

cultural intelligence factors.

Another plausible explanation might be derived from the expats' level of satisfaction with these trainings. In the last section of the survey, participants were asked to mark which of the training proved useful or would have proved helpful as preparation for their international experience; this section was used for an additional brief analysis. By pairing the results of the training received and the training considered valid, the number of times each individual reported to have received training while also marking it as applicable turns out to be 154. In simpler terms, out of the 331 trainings done as preparation, only 154 (a mere 46.53%) were considered helpful by the expatriates. Unfortunately, given the type of data collected in this research, it will not be possible to explain why this is. However, this could be a starting point for further research.

Contrary to expectations, our analysis did not identify a significant correlation between HR training received and Cultural Intelligence scores ($p = 0.145$). However, the low level of reported training utilization and the mismatch between received and perceived effectiveness highlight opportunities for HR practitioners to reassess training strategies and align them more closely with expatriates' needs.

7 Conclusion

The study showed a significant negative correlation between CQ scores, as measured by the Cultural Intelligence Self-Assessment (CQS) test, and the stress levels experienced by expatriates, both in general stress levels and in the average experience of the eight selected stressors. This observation underlines the critical role of higher levels of Cultural Intelligence in mitigating stress within cross-cultural contexts. The ability to adapt to diverse cultural interactions and situations, communicate effectively, and adapt to unfamiliar physical environments contributes to reduced stress perceptions among expatriates. However, an exciting aspect comes to light when considering the evolution of stress levels over time. The findings reveal that while CQ scores are indeed linked to stress experiences, there is no significant correlation between these scores and the stress trajectory over time. This suggests that the CQ scores act as a buffer against stress, but the subsequent increase or decrease of stress levels does not necessarily correlate with the CQ scores.

Moreover, the age of expatriate experiences has been explored as a potential factor impacting CQ scores and stress levels. Nonetheless, the study did not identify significant differences in CQ scores or stress levels among different age groups. Similarly, the length of expatriation experiences, whether short-term or more extended, did not yield significant differences in stress levels either. Additionally, no significant difference was detected between participants with study-related and work-related experiences concerning stress levels.

After analyzing the findings, implications for both theory and practice emerge. The correlation between CQ scores and stress levels emphasizes the significance of improving cross-cultural competencies as a means of stress reduction. Organizations could leverage this insight to design tailored training programs that aim to enhance CQ and consequently support the well-being of their expatriate workforce. While this entails a more significant amount of resources, this is a solid competitive advantage for the institution.

Several limitations were identified, which should be acknowledged for the interpretations of the results:

- Limited Demographic Diversity - Although the participant pool may lack representation across various demographics, affecting the generalizability of the findings, this study sheds significant light on the critical role of cultural intelligence in mitigating stress levels experienced by expatriates during their stay abroad. It is essential to acknowledge this limitation as it provides context for interpreting the results and underscores the need for future research to encompass more diverse participant demographics.
- Scarce Responses of Individuals Over 35;
- Limited Participation of Long-Term Expatriates;
- Reliance on Memory for Stress Identification;
- Absence of Specific Workplace-Related Data;
- Absence of Comparable Datasets.

The limitations identified in this study and the need for deeper exploration suggest areas in which future research and in-depth studies can contribute to a more exhaustive understanding of the complex relationship between CQ levels and stress in cross-cultural experiences. One significant limitation of this study is the limited demographic representation within the participant pool. The absence of diverse demographics may hinder the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Additionally, reliance on self-reported measures, although common in research of this nature, introduces potential biases and limitations in the accuracy of data collected. Future research endeavors should aim to address these limitations by incorporating more diverse participant demographics and employing a mix of objective and subjective measures to ensure robustness and reliability of the findings.

One of the promising directions for future research involves conducting longitudinal studies to capture the exact evolution of stress factors over time in conjunction with the development of cultural intelligence throughout expatriation. By tracking stress factors at different points throughout an individual's cross-cultural experience, researchers could discover an in-depth model of the evolution of stress in the experiences. Additionally, investigating how these stress factors correlate with the overall CQ scores could further explain which specific skills are more relevant and adaptive as individuals become more culturally intelligent.

Moreover, further research could focus on understanding the trajectory of CQ development during an expatriate's time abroad. This could be done with a comprehensive analysis of how various components of Cultural Intelligence evolve with a full-immersion experience in a foreign culture, such as in an expatriation while considering factors such as initial CQ levels, level of exposure to new cultural contexts, and the impact of training done with HR practices versus the experiential learning.

In order to gain a more detailed understanding of the factors influencing CQ development, future research could inquire into the role of specific cultural contexts. Investigating whether certain cultural environments facilitate or hinder the acquisition of a determined CQ skill could lead to a more personalized approach to training and support.

The significance of HR training in enhancing Cultural Intelligence emerges as a key theme within cross-cultural experiences. As highlighted by the survey's findings, expatriates' desire to receive training underlines the role of HR professionals – or equivalent stakeholders responsible for training initiatives – within organizations. This section will give insights into the critical role that HR training plays in promoting improved CQ levels and linked abilities and skills.

The survey results indicate a notable trend, considering that a significant majority of expatriates within the sample expressed the desire for increased training opportunities from their organizations, particularly in the areas highlighted by the study. This discovery is a strong call for HR professionals to recognize the untapped demand for targeted training interventions to enhance CQ-related skills.

Identifying training as an area for improvement indicates individuals' readiness and desire to improve their cultural intelligence. However, the viability of training programs depends upon the amount of organizational resources and the policies of sending institutions. The varied availability of resources calls for tailored approaches to training implementation depending on the organization. This training should ideally reflect the diverse nature of the expatriates' backgrounds and organizational contexts.

Organizations can identify and target skills that can be improved by utilizing assessments such as the CQS – or one of the other assessments mentioned, such as the ICAPS and the MPQ. This would contribute to higher CQ while mitigating or preventing stress-induced burnout symptoms over time. This is especially true for organizations striving to achieve a high degree of employee diversity since these are the ones that would stand to gain substantially from investments in targeted CQ-focused training.

To summarize, the desire for training and its potential to alleviate stress and promote individual growth highlights its strategic significance for both individuals and organizations. Recognizing these varied benefits, HR professionals are incited to formulate targeted training initiatives that expand on CQ competencies, contributing to a broader

spectrum of successful cross-cultural interactions.

To effectively leverage the study's findings and enhance intercultural training initiatives, HR professionals and organizations can consider the following detailed guidance:

1. **Tailored Training Programs:** Utilize the insights from the study to design tailored training programs that address specific CQ-related skills identified as crucial for expatriate success. These programs should cater to the diverse backgrounds and needs of expatriates, acknowledging the unique challenges posed by different cultural contexts.
2. **Needs Assessment and Skill Identification:** Conduct thorough needs assessments to identify the specific CQ-related skills that require enhancement within the organization. This could involve utilizing assessments such as the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), or Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) to pinpoint areas for improvement.
3. **Resource Allocation and Policy Development:** Allocate adequate resources and develop supportive policies to facilitate the implementation of targeted training initiatives. This may include budget allocations for training programs, time allowances for participation, and policies that promote a culture of continuous learning and development.
4. **Incorporation of Assessment Tools:** Incorporate assessment tools such as the CQS, Intercultural Competence Assessment Portfolio (ICAPS), or MPQ into training programs to track participants' progress and measure the effectiveness of interventions. Regular assessment and feedback loops can help tailor training content to address evolving needs.
5. **Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion:** Recognize the strategic importance of promoting diversity and inclusion within the organization and align training initiatives with these goals. Investing in targeted CQ-focused training not only enhances individual competencies but also contributes to creating a more inclusive and culturally competent workplace environment.
6. **Stress Reduction and Well-being Support:** Acknowledge the role of intercultural training in mitigating stress and promoting well-being among expatriates. Integrate stress management techniques and resilience-building strategies into training programs to equip expatriates with the necessary tools to navigate cross-cultural challenges effectively.
7. **Continuous Evaluation and Improvement:** Implement mechanisms for continuous evaluation and improvement of training initiatives based on feed-

back from participants and stakeholders. Regularly review training content, delivery methods, and outcomes to ensure alignment with organizational objectives and expatriate needs.

By adopting a proactive approach to intercultural training based on the study's findings, HR professionals and organizations can foster a culture of cultural intelligence, enhance cross-cultural competencies, and ultimately drive success in global business endeavors.

In conclusion, our study contributes valuable insights into the nuanced interplay between Cultural Intelligence, demographic factors, and expatriate experiences. These findings not only enrich the existing literature but also provide practical implications for designing targeted interventions aimed at enhancing expatriate well-being and cross-cultural success. Further research is warranted to delve deeper into the complexities of cross-cultural adaptation and to refine strategies for supporting expatriates in diverse organizational contexts.

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