Bridging Cultures in Teams: How Cultural Intelligence Drives Effectiveness Through Cross-Cultural Competence, Moderated by Social Support

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Abstract: Purpose: The current research explores the role of cultural intelligence (CQ) in the growth of multicultural team effectiveness, with cross-cultural competence as a mediator and social support as a moderator. It aims to understand how employees in multinational corporations navigate cultural complexity to achieve enhanced team performance. Method: A quantitative method was applied, targeting a sample of employees working for multinational companies. The data were collected from 188 employees using a standardised questionnaire. Cultural intelligence was measured using the 20-item Gozzoli and Gazzaroli (2018) scale, cross-cultural competence using the 11-item Chen (2019) scale, multicultural team effectiveness using the 6-item Shan et al. (2021) scale, and social support using the 10-item Pope et al. (2013) scale. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the data. Findings: The results validated that cultural intelligence is a key determinant in enhancing multicultural team performance. Cross-cultural competence proved to be the mediator of the relationship, and social support was discovered to strongly moderate the effect, augmenting the effect of cultural intelligence on team performance.Originality/Implications: This study contributes to the growing body of evidence on cultural dynamics within multinational contexts by incorporating psychological and behavioural factors. It offers HR practitioners applicable guidelines for designing interventions that enhance cultural intelligence and positive work environments.
Keywords: Cultural Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Competence, Social Support, Multicultural Team Effectiveness, Multinational Corporations

1. INTRODUCTION

With a more globalized world, organizations are cooperating increasingly across borders, which leads to the formation of multicultural teams comprising individuals with different cultural, linguistic, and national origins. Such teams introduce a new mix of viewpoints, approaches to

problem-solving, and innovative capabilities. They also share some peculiar communication issues, values' differences, and inefficiencies in collaboration (Adikwu et al., 2023). To address such complexities, cultural intelligence (CQ) has emerged as a determinant skill that assists the individual in comprehending, adapting to, and excelling in multicultural settings (Davies et al., 2023). Cross-cultural competence (CCC) is also called an operational skill set for successful cross-cultural interaction (Adebayo et al., 2024). The increasing significance of ethnically diverse teams in global business firms emphasizes the need for building theory and empirical understanding related to how cultural intelligence and associated competencies influence team performance (Beck et al., 2024). Following the trend set by most empirical research, what part cultural intelligence plays in shaping the performance of the individual and group in multicultural environments has been heavily studied. (Fu & Charoensukmongkol, 2023) offered initial evidence that CQ increases cross-border collaboration, flexibility, and negotiation performance. Follow-up studies have substantiated that those with higher CQ are better in resolving intercultural conflict, easing trust, and helping construct inclusive climates (Gozzoli & Gazzaroli, 2018). In team settings, especially multicultural constituent teams, CQ is positively associated with cohesion, creativity, and collective efficacy (Karimova et al., 2024). Besides this, cultural intelligence has also been found to neutralize the negative outcomes of cultural distance and misinterpretation, leading to more knowledge sharing and psychological safety on multinational teams (Lyu, 2024). Concurrently, cross-cultural competence has also been found empirically. For example, (Kilicoglu et al., 2023) showed that people with high CCC are more adaptable, open, and productive on intercultural team environments. CCC has also been associated with more forceful leadership behaviours and role definition in global collaborations (Maduku & Phadziri, 2025). Additionally, empirical evidence has been presented that contextual and environmental factors, including social support, play an important role in determining the capacity of culturally competent staff to translate their capacity into quantifiable team performance (Kim & Lee, 2024). Together, these establish a strong empirical basis connecting CQ, CCC, and team performance. Despite a large body of research on cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence, there are still several empirical gaps to be addressed. First, most of the previous research has engaged with individual-level consequences of CQ and CCC, including adjustment, job performance, and intercultural sensitivity (Adair et al., 2024). There is still limited empirical attention given to how these competencies work together

in team contexts, specifically multicultural teams whose group dynamics, interdependence, and collective outcomes are the focus (Chang et al., 2023). Second, while CQ and CCC have been researched in separate terms, the link between them and the mechanism by which CQ affects team effectiveness through CCC is under-theorised and empirically underdeveloped (Knap-Stefaniuk, 2023). Few tests have examined mediation models that describe how CQ leads to improved multicultural team performance through the development of cross-cultural skills, behaviours, or attitudes (Guzmán-Rodríguez et al., 2023). This is a constraint on an integrative understanding of the mechanisms of effective multicultural teamwork. Third, contextual moderators like social support are infrequently incorporated into models. Although earlier studies recognise that ecological support can facilitate cultural abilities, the social support effect's moderating influence on the relationship between CQ and team performance is yet to be adequately examined in multicultural teams (Ma et al., 2024). Failure to consider this factor is likely to simplify the CQ–outcome process. Finally, most empirical work has focused on either expat contexts or static cross-cultural exchanges, instead of considering dynamic multicultural teams working in actual-time organisational environments (Shan et al., 2021). With growing reliance on globally dispersed teams and hybrid work arrangements, understanding these dynamics in live team environments is essential. In sum, there is a pressing need to explore how cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence interplay in multicultural teams, how CCC mediates the effect of CQ on team effectiveness, and how social support conditions this relationship. These gaps constitute the base of this research and put into sharp relief its potential contribution to cross-cultural management theory and practice. Based on the gaps that have been identified, the current study aims to expand the knowledge of how cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence affect multicultural team performance. In particular, it attempts to test whether cultural intelligence can significantly predict the effectiveness of teams in multicultural environments and whether the process is mediated by cross-cultural competence. In addition, it also explores the moderating effect of social support on amplifying the impact of cultural intelligence on team performance. The primary research questions are: (1) How does cultural intelligence affect multicultural team effectiveness? (2) What is the mediator role of cross-cultural competence in this relationship? and (3) Does social support facilitate the relationship between cultural intelligence and multicultural team effectiveness?

This study is based theoretically on the Cultural Intelligence Theory

advanced by Earley and Ang (2003), which details CQ as a multidimensional ability with metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions. According to the theory, people high in CQ are believed to be able to decipher new cultural signs, stay motivated across cultures, and adapt their behaviour accordingly, abilities critical to working within multicultural teams. In addition, Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) offers a general framework for how the social environment, cognition, and behaviour interact. The theory emphasises that individuals learn and modify their behaviours via observation, social reward, and feedback systems, which directly lends itself to the introduction of social support as a moderating variable. In order to conceptualise cross-cultural competence as a mediator, this study also relies on the Input-Process-Output (IPO) Model of Team Effectiveness by (McGrath, 1964). In this conceptualisation, cultural intelligence is defined as an input, cross-cultural competence as a process, and team effectiveness as an output. CCC captures the process of transposing culturally intelligent awareness into actual-time behaviours that influence group performance and dynamics. The convergence of these theoretical frames enables the research to not only question whether CQ influences team performance, but also how, when, and under what circumstances it does so, hence fulfilling the research aims fully.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's fast-connected business world, cultural diversity within teams is not only a strength but also a problem. Scholars have noted that effective collaboration between culturally diverse team members relies heavily on how people interpret and respond to differences in culture (Adair et al., 2024). Cultural intelligence (CQ), or the capacity of an individual to work and function in culturally diverse environments, has emerged as a critical competency to enhance team performance and unity (Adebayo et al., 2024). Researchers such as (Earley & Ang, 2003) divide CQ into four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural, which collectively enable an individual to understand distant cultural environments, regulate their reactions, remain inspired to interact across cultures and act appropriately in intercultural interactions. These kinds of skills are very important in multiculturally diverse teams where differences in norms, communication style, and expectations can cause misunderstandings, lowered trust, and conflict (Guzmán-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Teams whose

members possess high CQ are better placed to handle these subtleties, build mutual respect, and leverage diversity of thought to enable innovation and problem-solving. Empirical analysis shows that such teams will be inclined to look after cultural tension and turn it into an aggregating rather than a disuniting force (Kuoribo et al., 2024). Cultural intelligence is also a bridge that brings people with different worldviews together through enabling perspective-taking and removing ethnocentric biases. Cultural intelligence provokes members to transcend the surface knowledge of culture to a deeper, empathetic level of understanding colleagues' values and work habits (Lundula, 2024). Such capability is especially useful in virtual or geographically dispersed teams, where cultural cues are limited and misinterpretations build fast (Osaghae & Olatunji, 2024). High-CQ individuals are most likely to elicit inclusionary communication patterns, adapt their followership or leadership approach, and create psychologically safe environments that encourage contribution from the entire team (Shan et al., 2021). In addition, studies have also shown that cross-functional high CQ teams are more likely to achieve synergy because they can leverage cultural diversity as a strategic advantage and not an obstacle (Adair et al., 2024; Adebayo et al., 2024; Gozzoli & Gazzaroli, 2018). These findings underscore the importance of building cultural intelligence not just on an individual basis through training but also as part of organisational efforts towards enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Lastly, the presence of CQ at the team level supports shared norms development, interpersonal fit, and general effectiveness and sustainability of multicultural team compositions.

3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Previous empirical works have invariably focused on the central role that cultural intelligence (CQ) plays towards the achievement of multicultural team effectiveness (Knap-Stefaniuk, 2023; Park et al., 2023; Shan et al., 2021). ((Earley & Ang, 2003) originally developed the idea of CQ as a multidimensional construct that allows for the knowing, interpreting, and responding to situations in cultures. Several studies since then have found team members who score high on CQ to handle cultural ambiguities more effectively, adjust to communicating with others, and create inclusive cultures that have cross-cultural collaboration opportunities (Lee et al., 2024; Maduku & Phadziri, 2025; Park et al., 2023; Yam et al., 2023). Organizational psychology and international business research also affirm

CQ's positive linkage to team-level performance, such as task performance, creativity, and team cohesiveness (Maduku & Phadziri, 2025). CQ has also been demonstrated to relate to fewer conflicts between people and greater trust and satisfaction among team members in multicultural virtual teams (Rost et al., 2023). Unsurprisingly, researchers assume that CQ promotes successful knowledge transfer and role comprehension in multicultural environments, which are critical to teamwork performance (Adikwu et al., 2023; Mishra et al., 2024; Sylwia et al., 2024). Such evidence supports the claim that CQ is a root interpersonal skill that assists team members to overcome cultural diversity to facilitate team performance.

On this empirical base, it can be seen that cultural intelligence does not simply exist as a personal attribute but also as a competence of interpersonality that has an impact on team performance and team dynamics (Kim & Lee, 2024). The higher the CQ, the greater the chances of the individuals taking perspective, managing intercultural conflict effectively, and formulating culturally diverse practices, each of which is critical for multicultural team performance. In multicultural populations, cultural miscommunications resulting in misunderstandings often get in the way of coordination and diminish morale. CQ can, however, serve as a cushion against these types of breakdowns by encouraging culturally sensitive communication and flexible behavior (Lundula, 2024). Studies by (Guzmán-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2024; Maduku & Phadziri, 2025) suggest that those with high CQ, particularly team members and leaders, result in more cohesive team identification and common goals, which facilitate harmony and respect. Besides, cultural intelligence enables more effective attribution of behaviour in cross-cultural contexts, which optimises trust and reduces attributional bias factors most closely related to team performance and teaming (Lee et al., 2024). Such competencies are crucial in multicultural teams where conventional team-building mechanisms cannot be effective because of the intricacies of cultures. Hence, it is assumed that cultural intelligence plays a strong role in making multicultural teams effective on a strong empirical foundation, stressing its behavioural, cognitive, and motivational effects on team performance.

H1. Cultural intelligence significantly influences the effectiveness of multicultural teams.

Cross-cultural competence (CCC) to include the knowledge, attitudes, and competencies required for successful communication with people of other cultures has also seen significant empirical support in the performance of multicultural teams (Walkowska et al., 2023). Scholars have contended that CCC is vital in overcoming misconceptions and enhancing

effective communication in multicultural environments (Adikwu et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2023; Sylwia et al., 2024). Evidence suggests that individuals with higher levels of CCC are likely to demonstrate adaptability, empathy, and tolerance needed when operating in multicultural teams (Rost et al., 2023). CCC, in particular, has been proven to enhance the ability to anticipate and understand cultural differences in decision-making, conflict resolution, and timelines, which are typical areas of conflict within global teams (Richter et al., 2023). In addition, cross-cultural competency facilitates smooth transfer of knowledge, improved integration of conflicting opinions, and improves leadership performance in international project teams (Maduku & Phadziri, 2025). These results support that CCC is not only essential for interpersonal relationships but also organizational objectives in a multicultural setting. In terms of hypothesis construction, CCC is a behavioural and applied complement to the cognitive and motivational components of cultural intelligence. While CQ does psychological foundation work for engagement with diverse cultures, CCC does this work and makes it tangible, situation-specific action that consequently has an immediate effect on team performance (Maduku & Phadziri, 2025). High CCC personnel are better positioned to manage ambiguity and adapt to varying cultural expectations, thus enhancing task coordination and respect among team members in multicultural teams (Lyu, 2024). Unlike typical interpersonal skills, CCC includes subtle cultural decoding and encoding skills that enable respectful and accurate communication, serving an important purpose in high-stakes, culturally embedded work environments (Kilicoglu et al., 2023). Researchers like (Adebayo et al., 2024; Beck et al., 2024; Karimova et al., 2024) have proved that exposure and cross-cultural training greatly enhance team effectiveness and adaptability, especially in multinational companies. CCC also facilitates inclusive leadership behaviours that emphasise diverse viewpoints and promote equity in teams, further enhancing psychological safety and shared objectives (Sylwia et al., 2024). Empirical research conducted by (Maduku & Phadziri, 2025) supports that cross-cultural competence has a strong correlation with team cohesion, job satisfaction, and performance. Therefore, it is predicted that CCC has a highly significant impact on multicultural team effectiveness, as it allows for the practical application of culturally intelligent actions in multifaceted team environments.

H2. Cross-cultural competence significantly influences the effectiveness of multicultural teams.

Empirical research has increasingly indicated a tiered connection between cross-cultural competence, cultural intelligence, and team

effectiveness. Although CQ provides individuals with the metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural competencies to interact in intercultural environments, its impact on team performance tends to be indirectly experienced through more concrete competencies like cross-cultural competence (Davies et al., 2023). Findings of (Fu & Charoensukmongkol, 2023) indicate that CQ in itself does not necessarily lead to effective teamwork behaviour unless supported by culturally embedded skills and usage. Cross-cultural competence then serves as a link between CQ and team effectiveness by translating culturally intelligent behaviours into team-relevant action (Gozzoli & Gazzaroli, 2018). For example, a team member may have high CQ and be aware of the importance of cultural sensitivity, but only by using CCC is this knowledge translated into culturally respectful communication, leadership, and teamwork (Ma et al., 2024). Empirical models that have studied analogous mediation mechanisms have established that competency based on skills will frequently act as the mediators between psychological abilities and organisational results (Sumardjo & Supriadi, 2023). From a hypothesis development perspective, it is plausible to infer that cross-cultural competence mediates between cultural intelligence and multicultural team effectiveness. CQ offers the cognitive models and motivation necessary to interact with diverse team members (Kim & Lee, 2024). However, CCC is necessary to translate those into on-the-job behaviour within the team environment. This involves culturally shaped conflict management, making use of diverse input for creativity, and inclusive participation factors repeatedly tied to high team performance (Mishra et al., 2024). The CCC mediating influence is also evidenced by research that indicates training and development interventions aimed at CCC significantly increase the utilisation of CQ in the field (Shan et al., 2021). Hence, whereas cultural intelligence sets the stage for intercultural wisdom, it is through cross-cultural competence that these learning are utilised in a manner that increases team coordination, cohesion, and performance (Yam et al., 2023). The hypothesis, in that case, suggests a mediating process by which CCC converts the psychological capability of CQ into functional effectiveness in multicultural teams.

H3. Cross-cultural competence significantly mediates the relationship of cultural intelligence and multicultural team effectiveness.

Social support has also been identified as a salient contextual factor in determining how individual characteristics and abilities affect team dynamics and performance (Cho et al., 2023). Empirical evidence from organisational behaviour and cross-cultural management underscores the fact that peer and supervisor social support increases psychological safety,

lowers stress, and creates a climate of mutual respect and trust (Ding et al., 2024). In multicultural teams, where members may feel isolated, experience cultural differences, or encounter communication problems, the presence of supportive relationships plays a vital role in performance and motivation (Adair et al., 2024). A study by (Chang et al., 2023) demonstrates how culturally diverse employees who offer quality social support are likely to leverage their cultural abilities to advance the team. In addition, support systems serve as buffers against cultural adjustment stress so that members can focus on task performance and cooperation. This setting is where the hypothesis assumes social support moderates the cultural intelligence-multicultural team effectiveness relationship positively. Although individuals with high CQ are personally more capable of understanding and adapting to cultural differences, whether or not they utilise these skills optimally usually depends on the environment around them (Lee et al., 2024). In supportive environments, CQ is most likely to be expressed through inclusive behaviours, adaptive communication, and active listening, and thus enhances team effectiveness and collaboration (Lu et al., 2024). In non-supportive environments, however, even the highest CQ may struggle to tap into their abilities due to fear of rejection, non-affirmation, or emotional burnout (Alrawadieh et al., 2023). This moderating effect is underpinned by research that emphasises the contribution contextual enablers make towards realising individual potential (Usman et al., 2023). Social support also strengthens feedback loops so that culturally intelligent individuals can change their behaviour based on interpersonal cues, further increasing team adaptability and cohesion (Wang & Lei, 2023). Hence, it is predicted that the positive correlation between CQ and multicultural team effectiveness will be higher under high social support conditions.

H4. Social support positively moderates the relationship of cultural intelligence and multicultural team effectiveness.

4. THEORETICAL EXPLANATION

The theory for this study is primarily based on the Cultural Intelligence Theory (Earley & Ang, 2003), with a further incorporation of the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) and the Input-Process-Outcome (IPO) Model of Team Effectiveness . Cultural Intelligence Theory (McGrath, 1964) serves as the fundamental basis by describing how higher CQ individuals traverse intercultural interactions through higher cognitive,

metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural abilities. Social Cognitive Theory enhances this through a focus on the contribution of learning in social environments, specifying how self-efficacy and social support (e.g., reinforcement) enhance behaviour adaptation in multicultural environments. Moreover, the IPO model informs the design of this study by framing cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence as key inputs, social support as the moderating context, and multicultural team effectiveness as the outcome. The convergence of these theories makes possible a multi-level explanation of how individual competencies (CQ), behavioural capabilities (CCC), and social setting (support) dynamically interact to shape team processes and outputs. Through the synergy of these theoretical frames, the model (Figure 1) explains both individual agency and contextual factors in influencing successful multicultural teamwork.

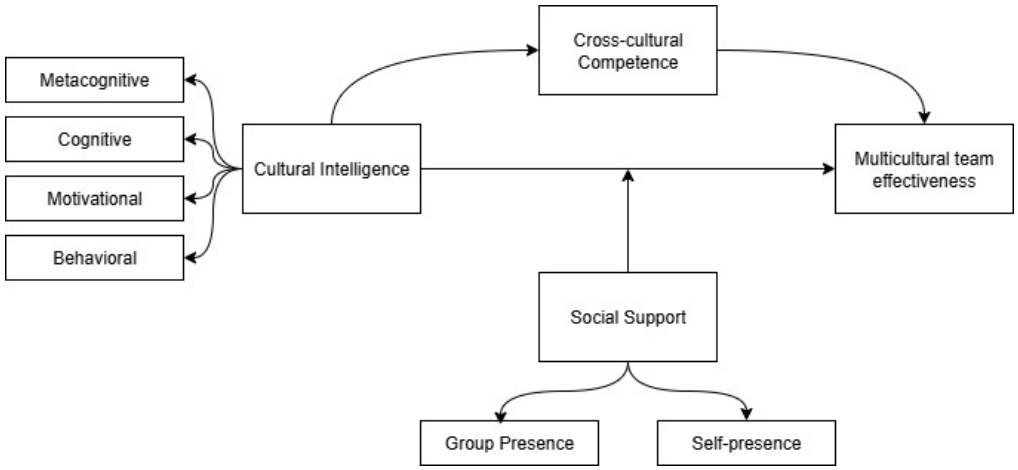

Figure 1: Theoretical Model

5. METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative framework to examine the impact of cross-cultural competence and cultural intelligence on multicultural team performance, with specific emphasis placed on the moderating and mediating functions of cross-cultural competence and social support, respectively. The research was conducted among the staff in multinational firms, as their settings naturally comprise varied cultural teams and hence provide a perfect environment for an investigation into cultural constructs. Data was gathered through a standardized questionnaire comprising pre-validated scales. 188 responses were gathered, representing employees from various sectors and departments of multinational corporations. The target population comprised middle to senior-level professionals who frequently work in multicultural team environments. Non-probability

purposive sampling was used to ensure that the respondents were suitably experienced in working in cross-cultural team settings, hence enhancing contextual validity of the research. The 20-item scale developed by (Gozzoli & Gazzaroli, 2018) was employed for assessing cultural intelligence and captures metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral elements of cultural intelligence. For cross-cultural competence, the 11-item scale developed by (Chen, 2011)was employed, encompassing elements such as adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and interpersonal effectiveness across cultures. Multicultural team performance was measured on a scale of 6 by (Shan et al., 2021)regarding factors such as the quality of collaboration, decision-making, and the effectiveness of communication in multicultural teams. Social support was measured on a scale of 10 by (Pope et al., 2013), which sought to capture emotional, informational, and instrumental support offered to employees within organisational settings. All the items in the scales were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to ensure consistency and uniformity in the interpretation of the responses. For the analysis of data, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique was used with SmartPLS software because it was suitable for exploratory models and has the capability of handling small to medium-sized samples and non-normal distributions. The analysis was performed in two broad stages: first, the measurement model was tested for validity and reliability based on indicator reliability, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. Secondly, the structural model was evaluated to test hypotheses established through path coefficients, R^2, effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was applied to determine the significance of the significance of path relations. The analytical strategy allowed for the testing of direct, indirect (mediating), and moderating relationships, allowing for a detailed understanding of the effect of cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence on multicultural team effectiveness.

6. RESULTS

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the validity and reliability of the measurement model for all of the major constructs: Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC), Multicultural Team Effectiveness (MTE), and Social Support. Both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were employed to measure reliability, both of which were more than the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Hair et

al., 2012), showing internal consistency. For instance, Cronbach's Alpha for Cultural Intelligence in general is 0.935 and composite reliability is 0.942, indicating superb reliability. All four CQ dimensions, behavioural, cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational, exhibited good CR values from 0.855 to 0.903 and Cronbach's Alphas from 0.788 to 0.865, which reflect internal consistency between items within each subscale.

Table 1(a): Variables Reliability and Validity

Variables		Indicator	Original Sample	T Values	P Values	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Cultural Intelligence		Cultural Intelligence				0.935	0.942	0.548
	Behavioral	BCQ1	0.730	19.573	0.000	0.788	0.855	0.541
		BCQ2	0.767	21.917	0.000			
		BCQ3	0.739	15.207	0.000			
		BCQ4	0.691	10.258	0.000			
		BCQ5	0.748	13.279	0.000			
	Cognitive	CCQ1	0.724	15.377	0.000	0.828	0.875	0.538
		CCQ2	0.739	14.883	0.000			
		CCQ3	0.754	18.547	0.000			
		CCQ4	0.712	16.570	0.000			
		CCQ5	0.724	15.191	0.000			
		CCQ6	0.747	17.729	0.000			
	Metacognitive	MCQ1	0.775	13.007	0.000	0.788	0.862	0.611
		MCQ2	0.766	13.624	0.000			
		MCQ3	0.787	19.172	0.000			
		MCQ4	0.798	26.708	0.000			
	Motivational	MLCQ1	0.793	23.566	0.000	0.865	0.903	0.650
		MLCQ2	0.800	22.002	0.000			
		MLCQ3	0.814	22.461	0.000			
		MLCQ4	0.855	34.236	0.000			
		MLCQ5	0.768	17.270	0.000			
Multicultural Team Effectiveness		MTE1	0.624	11.372	0.000	0.808	0.863	0.514
		MTE2	0.787	21.089	0.000			
		MTE3	0.782	21.338	0.000			
		MTE4	0.766	14.432	0.000			
		MTE5	0.595	7.644	0.000			
		MTE6	0.723	16.173	0.000			
Social Support		Social Support				0.883	0.910	0.527
	Self-Presence	SP1	0.885	14.095	0.000	0.731	0.827	0.533
		SP2	0.778	21.487	0.000			
		SP3	0.859	43.260	0.000			
		SP4	0.833	30.815	0.000			
		SP5	0.788	24.604	0.000			

Table 1(b): Variables Reliability and Validity

Variables		Indicator	Original Sample	T Values	P Values	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Group Presence		GP1	0.892	51.756	0.000	0.905	0.929	0.725
		GP2	0.824	28.242	0.000			
		GP3	0.859	37.626	0.000			
		GP4	0.855	38.354	0.000			
		GP5	0.824	25.121	0.000			
Cross-Cultural Competence		CCC1	0.808	19.826	0.000	0.890	0.911	0.534
		CCC10	0.686	12.703	0.000			
		CCC11	0.714	13.328	0.000			
		CCC2	0.773	16.135	0.000			
		CCC3	0.747	16.390	0.000			
		CCC4	0.717	12.105	0.000			
		CCC5	0.702	13.463	0.000			
		CCC6	0.743	15.342	0.000			
		CCC7	0.676	13.834	0.000			

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures for all constructs were also adequate, predominantly exceeding the 0.50 threshold, which is a check for convergent validity. For instance, the AVE for motivational CQ is 0.650, and for metacognitive CQ, it is 0.611. CCC also exhibits strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.890$, CR = 0.911, AVE = 0.534), with all indicators having strong and statistically significant factor loadings ($p < 0.001$). All of the T-values were above 1.96, ascertaining the indicator loadings' significance. MTE ($\alpha = 0.808$, CR = 0.863, AVE = 0.514) and Social Support ($\alpha = 0.883$, CR = 0.910, AVE = 0.527) also show good psychometric properties. Overall, these findings attest that indicators are measuring their respective intended latent constructs and ascertain the measurement model's overall validity (Figure 2).

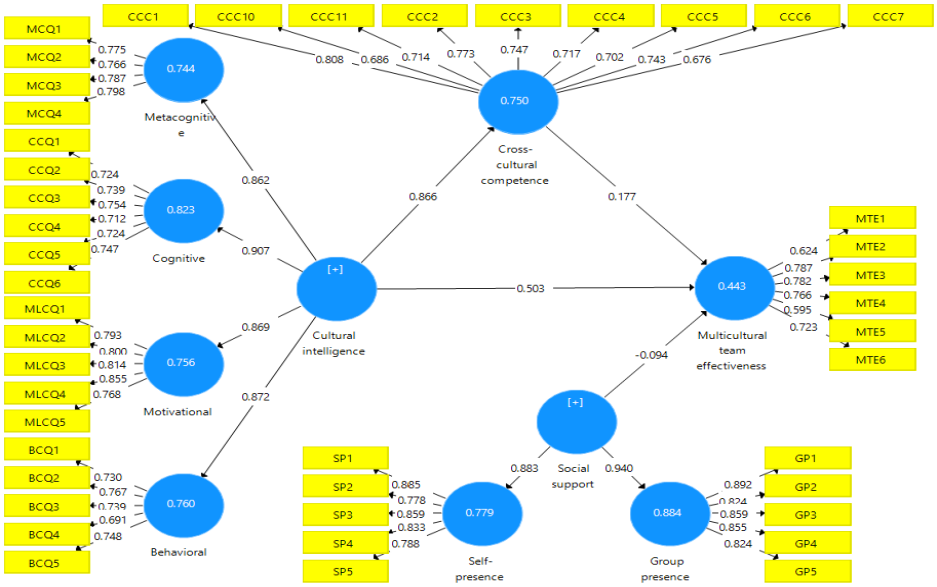

Figure 2: Estimated Model

Table 2 gives the HTMT ratios utilised to measure the discriminant validity of the constructs. According to (Henseler, 2017), values of HTMT should preferably be less than 0.85 or, at most, less than 0.90 to ascertain discriminant validity between constructs. Most of the HTMT values in this table are within these limits. For instance, the HTMT score between Cultural Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Competence is 0.726, which is far below 0.90, verifying these are different constructs. Likewise, scores of 0.749 (between Cultural Intelligence and MTE) and 0.708 (between CCC and MTE) also affirm that the constructs are empirically different. In addition, the low values of HTMT among social support subcomponents (e.g., self-presence and group presence) and other variables point toward negligible threat of multicollinearity or conceptual redundancy. For example, the HTMT between social support and motivational CQ is 0.147 and, with CCC, is merely 0.124, in favour of discriminant clarity. Of interest is the HTMT between motivational and behavioural CQ at 0.841, close to the ceiling but still within tolerable limits. These findings together validate that the constructs applied within the structural model are empirically and conceptually different, supporting the quality of the measurement framework.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Behavioral										
Cognitive	0.865									
Cross-Cultural Competence	0.871	0.884								
Cultural Intelligence	0.413	0.529	0.726							
Group Presence	0.076	0.113	0.081	0.085						
Metacognitive	0.834	0.644	0.422	0.593	0.753					
Motivational	0.841	0.800	0.804	0.625	0.050	0.772				
Multicultural Team Effectiveness	0.790	0.697	0.708	0.749	0.129	0.693	0.634			
Self-Presence	0.263	0.200	0.164	0.241	0.776	0.178	0.256	0.230		
Social Support	0.165	0.160	0.124	0.161	0.123	0.127	0.147	0.183	0.796	

Table 3 presents R-square (R^2), F-square (f^2), and model fit measures, which explain the explanatory power and effect sizes in the structural model. The R^2 value for Multicultural Team Effectiveness is 0.443, meaning that about 44.3% of the variance in MTE is accounted for by the

independent variables in the model. This indicates a moderate level of explanatory power (Cohen, 2013). Likewise, Cross-Cultural Competence shows an R^2 value of 0.750, indicating a strong relationship in prediction from Cultural Intelligence to CCC. The F-square statistics provide a further estimation of the effect sizes of individual predictors. Cultural Intelligence exhibits a large effect size ($f^2 = 3.004$) on Cross-Cultural Competence, meaning that it has a powerful effect. By contrast, its effect on MTE is modest ($f^2 = 0.114$), whereas Social Support has a substantial moderating effect ($f^2 = 1.158$) on the same measure. These results not only reveal significant associations but also practically significant effect sizes for the most important constructs within the model. On model fit, the Saturated Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) of 0.052 for the saturated model and 0.070 for the estimated model are all below acceptable levels (<0.08), which is an indication of excellent model fit. Similarly, the d_ULS measures of 29.375 and 30.649 are also within permissible levels, which further indicate that the model structure is valid. All these measures collectively testify to the model being predictive and structurally sound.

Table 3: R-square, F-Square, and Model Fit Statistics

	F Square		**R Square**	
	Cross-Cultural Competence	**Multicultural Team Effectiveness**	**R Square**	**R Square Adjusted**
Cross-Cultural Competence		0.140	0.750	0.749
Cultural Intelligence	3.004	0.114		
Social Support		1.158		
Multicultural Team Effectiveness			0.443	0.436
		Model Fit		
		Saturated Model	Estimated Model	
SRMR		0.052	0.070	
D_ULS		29.375	30.649	

Table 4 indicates the path coefficients of the structural model (Figure 3), providing empirical evidence for the hypotheses of the study. All four hypotheses were statistically confirmed at the $p < 0.05$ level. For H1, the path coefficient from Cultural Intelligence to Multicultural Team Effectiveness is 0.510, T-value 4.426, and $p = 0.000$, which is substantial. This highlights the direct effect of CQ in improving team performance and team dynamics in multicultural environments.

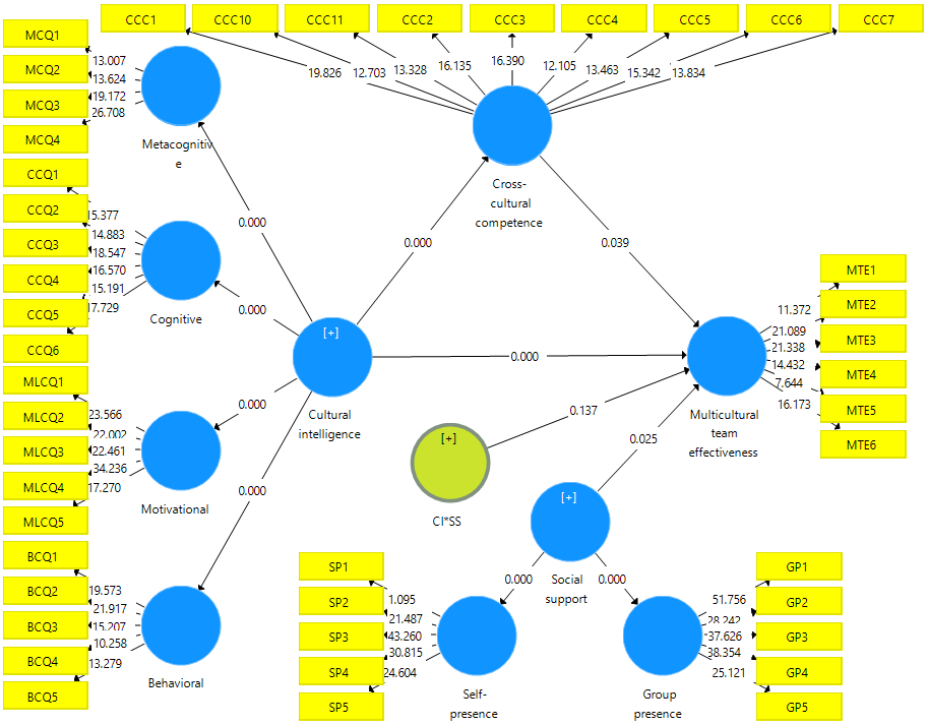

Figure 3: Structural Model for Path Analysis

For H2, Cross-Cultural Competence also had a significant effect on MTE (β = 0.180, T = 1.767, p = 0.039), indicating that real intercultural behaviours and competences play a significant part in contributing to team outcomes. H3, which examined the mediating effect of CCC between CQ and MTE, also evidenced a significant indirect effect (β = 0.156, T = 1.997, p = 0.041), supporting the argument that practical cross-cultural competencies mediate the positive effects of CQ on team performance. Finally, H4 also validated the positive moderating effect of Social Support to strengthen the CQ–MTE relationship (β = 0.079, T = 1.995, p = 0.038), reflecting how positive social environments enhance the expression and effectiveness of cultural intelligence in teams. These path estimates support this study's integrated framework and confirm the theoretical model.

Table 4(a): Path Analysis

Hypotheses	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
H1. Cultural Intelligence Significantly Influences the Effectiveness of Multicultural Teams.	0.510	0.115	4.426	0.000
H2. Cross-Cultural Competence Significantly Influences the Effectiveness of Multicultural Teams.	0.180	0.102	1.767	0.039

Table 4(b): Path Analysis

Hypotheses	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
H3. Cross-Cultural Competence Significantly Mediates the Relationship of Cultural Intelligence and Multicultural Team Effectiveness.	0.156	0.090	1.997	0.041
Social Support Positively Moderates the Relationship of Cultural Intelligence and Multicultural Team Effectiveness.	0.079	0.072	1.995	0.038

7. DISCUSSION

With today's global working environment, in which multicultural collaboration is not an option but a requirement, knowledge about how people and teams bring together different cultures has become a common agenda in the study and practices of scholars and practitioners. This study aimed to investigate the subtle processes by which cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence influence multicultural team effectiveness and how cross-cultural competence and social support mediate and moderate this process. The findings of this study provide strong evidence supporting all hypothesised relationships, having theoretical and practical implications for international organisations interested in optimising collaborative synergy between cultures. The implications of these results are addressed in this chapter and are considered in terms of past research with the added understanding of what the mechanisms behind successful multicultural teamwork are. Confirmation of the first hypothesis that multicultural team effectiveness is influenced by cultural intelligence reinforces and solidifies earlier research depicting the centrality of CQ in cross-cultural team interaction. The findings revealed that individuals with higher cultural intelligence were more effective in fostering inclusive communication, handling ambiguity, and constructing mutual goals in multicultural teams. These results are consistent with (Fu & Charoensukmongkol, 2023) research that concluded that the four dimensions of CQ metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural interact to develop adaptive functioning in intercultural settings. This research supports the fact that high CQ individuals can read cultural cues better and adjust their responses accordingly, which maximizes interpersonal comprehension and task performance. This is especially important in multi-cultural environments

where cultural misunderstandings can frustrate team integration. Further, our results also suggest that CQ is not merely a latent ability but an active facilitator of relationship building, collaboration, and team shared identity, supporting earlier conclusions drawn by (Kim & Lee, 2024). Therefore, cultural intelligence appears to act as an in-built psychological tool set that prepares one to operate and directly traverse cultural borders, thereby improving team functioning. The second hypothesis, which was testing the significant influence of cross-cultural competence (CCC) on multicultural team performance, was also strongly supported by the evidence. This is even stronger support for the growing acceptance of CCC as a core set of skills in intercultural cooperation. Whereas CQ gives the general capacity for understanding and interpreting cultural differences, CCC converts the capacity into specific, behaviorally expressed skills like empathy, flexibility, and cross-cultural interaction (Lyu, 2024). Results indicate that high CCC-scoring team members were better at conflict management, perspective-taking, and harmony maintenance despite underlying cultural differences. These results are consistent with previous research by (Rost et al., 2023), which had reported that CCC is essential to guarantee good communication, decision, and task achievement among multicultural teams. The present research contributes to knowledge by empirically illustrating that CCC is a predictor of team performance in an independent manner, not an outcome of CQ. This distinction is significant inasmuch as it highlights the applicability of experiential, behavioral learning along with cognitive knowledge. More importantly, CCC in this research seemed to play a positive role in impacting psychological safety and trust within teams, which are key ingredients for innovation, cooperation, and long-term team performance (Walkowska et al., 2023). As a result, organisations need to take CCC into account not only at the stage of international assignment preparation but also in standard team development programmes of global teams.

Together, the findings of H1 and H2 suggest a two-pathway model whereby cultural intelligence is a foundation ability, and cross-cultural competence converts this ability into real team interaction. Contrary to expectations, the study showed that both the co-presence of both CQ and CCC enhance their relative influence on multicultural team performance, suggesting a complementary over redundant relationship (Adebayo et al., 2024). For instance, culturally intelligent individuals were most likely to be open to learning and reflecting, thereby increasing their capacity for developing pragmatic intercultural skills. This finding conforms to the developmental model proposed by (Sylwia et al., 2024). In addition, the

results dispel any suggestion that it is enough to have CQ or cross-cultural training. Rather, dynamic cultural engagement and in situ collaboration may be needed continuously to ensure high levels of team performance. This dynamic between CQ and CCC presents an integrated perspective that integrates theory with the practice of leading multicultural teams. It also emphasises the significance of developing interventions that cultivate both the psychological and behavioural aspects of cultural effectiveness.

The third hypothesis, which posits that cross-cultural competence heavily mediates the relationship between cultural intelligence and multicultural team effectiveness, adds an original depth to our knowledge of how CQ is translated into concrete team results. The findings suggest that although CQ equips people with cognitive and motivational readiness to perform across cultures, it is through CCC that readiness is translated into effective interpersonal behaviour and teamwork. This result lends support and extension to the claims of (Yam et al., 2023), who postulated that culturally intelligent employees become effective only when they gain and showcase suitable cultural competencies. In the present research, CQ alone did affect team effectiveness, but this became much stronger and meaningful when CCC was controlled for as a mediating variable. That is, CCC serves as the process mechanism through which the potential of CQ is activated and implemented in team contexts (Fu & Charoensukmongkol, 2023). This mediational effect accounts for the earlier incongruent findings in literature where CQ alone did not always translate to enhanced team outcomes potentially because of a lack of behavioral skill acquisition. Our research thus stresses that for cultural intelligence to be functionally practical, it needs to be complemented by cross-cultural behavioural competence that facilitates adaptation, problem-solving, and trust across cultures.

The fourth hypothesis that social support has a positive moderating effect on the link between cultural intelligence and multicultural team effectiveness was also highly confirmed. The findings showed that within contexts where team members were socially supported by colleagues, leaders, or the organisational culture, the impact of CQ on team performance was greatly amplified. This result is in line with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), which supposes that individual abilities are frequently developed and manifested under the influence of social reinforcement. It also corroborates evidence by (Kim & Lee, 2024), whose work showed that perceived social support improves role performance in challenging and unclear situations like multicultural teams. Without social

support, even high CQ was underleveraged at times, since individuals might have been without self-efficacy, psychological safety, or positive reinforcement to exhibit culturally adaptive behaviours. Supportive environments, on the other hand, facilitated the activation of CQ through active communication, participative decision-making, and empathetic listening (Davies et al., 2023). This discovery has significant practice implications for organisations, implying that training in cultural intelligence needs to be supplemented by a supportive climate that justifies and promotes the deployment of culturally adaptive competence. It also highlights the significance of inclusion-oriented leadership styles, emphasising psychological safety and social cohesion at the team level.

Together, the results of H3 and H4 are a more complex and deeper understanding of how and when cultural intelligence impacts multicultural team effectiveness. While CQ is the building block, its impact is not inevitable or assured; it develops through the behavioural process of CCC. It is amplified or diminished by contextual influences like social support. This serves to highlight the significance of contextual contingency in cross-cultural management, where internal characteristics are combined with external contexts to dictate behaviour and performance. Such findings are particularly relevant for international organisations seeking to maximise performance within diverse teams. They suggest that building cultural capabilities at the individual level (CQ) should be strategically supplemented with continuous skill development (CCC) and buttressed by relational infrastructure (social support). The research, therefore, contributes to an integrated and functional model of multicultural team performance, beyond trait explanations in the direction of a more comprehensive, systemic account of team efficacy in globalised work settings.

Together, the results of all four hypotheses provide strong evidence for a multi-dimensional and context-sensitive understanding of multicultural team effectiveness. This study supports the notion that cultural intelligence is a foundational factor. However, it is only when it is transmitted through behavioural cross-cultural competence and fostered in an environment of a socially supportive team that its full effect can be achieved. These findings not only strengthen theoretical cultural effectiveness models but also provide practical recommendations for organizations working in cross-cultural and global environments. Plans for improving team performance should therefore be anchored in a blend of capability building, skill use, and enabling structures that allow people to operate confidently, empathetically, and with direction in cultural complexity.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research provides theoretical contributions of importance by enriching knowledge on the role of cultural intelligence (CQ) and cross-cultural competence (CCC) on multicultural team effectiveness, refining previous conceptual frameworks of intercultural dynamics within teams. By empirically establishing the direct impact of CQ and CCC and the mediating impact of CCC between CQ and team effectiveness, the study emphasises the interdependent nature of these constructs. Additionally, the moderating impact of social support introduces a new level to the theoretical modelling of intercultural performance by demonstrating how contextual variables amplify or insulate individual abilities in multicultural teams. These results are consistent with and extend theories like Cultural Intelligence Theory and Social Exchange Theory to emphasise the conditional and dynamic processes by which intercultural abilities contribute to successful collaboration. Thus, the research not only enhances the conceptualisation of team processes within multicultural settings but also paves the way for integrative theoretical frameworks taking into account both individual capacities and social-environmental moderators. The applied significance of this study is profound for companies that operate in multicultural settings. The results indicate that improving the cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence of employees can enhance the productivity of multicultural teams directly. This is the very reason why organisations need to implement specialised training programs and ongoing development efforts aimed at cultural awareness, flexibility, and communication tactics. In addition, the established moderator role of social support means that organisational climates supporting trust, peer support, and open communication are essential for optimising team performance. HR professionals and team leaders would thus need to develop inclusive environments where employees feel supported, particularly when dealing with cultural complexities. Moreover, integrating CQ and CCC assessments in recruitment and leadership development can enable organisations to build and maintain effective multicultural teams, which is of importance in globalised workplaces.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although this study is valuable, it is not immune to limitations. First, the

data were gathered from employees in multiple organisations. They thus may introduce heterogeneity in team designs, industry settings, and levels of cultural diversity, which can restrict the generalizability of the results. Second, although the study employed a cross-sectional design, the dynamic and changing nature of cultural competence and team effectiveness implies that longitudinal studies would yield richer insights into how the relationships evolve. Third, the self-reported data could have introduced standard method bias, even with procedural and statistical controls. These limitations can be overcome in future research using multi-source data, including behavioural measures of CQ and CCC, and examining these relationships within particular industries or cultural regions. Furthermore, future research may investigate other potential mediators and moderators like psychological safety, leadership style, and team conflict to delineate better the intervening mechanisms by which intercultural competence affects team performance. Incorporation of qualitative methods could also add richness to the interpretive depth and contextual validity of future research.

10. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate the complex interplay between cultural intelligence, cross-cultural competence, social support, and multicultural team effectiveness. The findings empirically supported that CQ and CCC are essential drivers of team performance in culturally diverse settings, and CCC is a key bridge connecting individual-level cultural awareness to team-level effectiveness outcomes. The mediating role of CCC is that although cultural intelligence lays the cognitive and motivational bases for intercultural behaviour, it is through the actual implementation of cross-cultural behaviours that team performance is achieved. In addition, the social support moderating effect supports the premise that the team context is central to promoting or inhibiting the translation of individual strengths into group outcomes. Together, these findings provide a comprehensive picture of the individual and contextual factors that underpin effective teamwork in workspaces under globalisation. Through the incorporation of several constructs and the examination of their interrelations, this research furnishes an all-encompassing model for how culturally astute individuals can promote performance in multicultural team settings, particularly when cross-cultural competencies are provided and a supportive social environment exists. The

results of the study not only augment scholarly discussion but also form actionable strategies in organisational practice. They confirm that multicultural team success is not just a matter of knowledge or awareness but a subtle interplay of individual capacity and team climate. As companies globalise and diversify, the findings from this research are timely and crucial for maximising team synergy, creativity, and performance in multicultural settings.

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