Cultural Competency among Expatriates: Exploring Role of Linguistic Challenges, Host National Connectedness, and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: This research studied the dynamic relationships of linguistic challenges, cultural competency, host national connectedness, and self-efficacy among expatriates. It examines how these factors affect the process of cultural accommodation in a multicultural society. The research first used a mixed-methods study, interviewing 14 expatriates to discover their personal stories and attitudes. There followed a quantitative phase. From the qualitative data, hypotheses were derived and tested empirically with a questionnaire of 211 expatriates. Statistical analysis was done with STATA software, using advanced statistical techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis. This research finds that linguistic proficiency significantly influences cultural competency and host national connectedness. Furthermore, host national connectedness mediates the relationship of linguistic difficulties and cultural competence; self-efficacy moderates the impact of linguistic challenges on cultural competence. These results underscore the very complicated relationship between language competence, social integration, and self-efficacy in expatriates 'cultural adaptation. The current research significantly contributes original insights into the field of expatriate management and cross-cultural studies. This research highlights the manifold nature of cultural adaptation. It offers a nuanced understanding of the role of linguistic challenges, social integration, and self-efficacy play in shaping expatriates' cultural competency. The findings have significant implications for designing effective support and training programs for expatriates, enhancing their success and well-being in foreign cultural settings.
Keywords: Cultural Competency, Linguistic Challenges, Host National Connectedness, Self-Efficacy, Expatriate Adaptation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the age of growing global mobility and developing intercultural interactions, the research on cultural competency among expatriates

has gained a significant level of importance. As businesses continue to hasten global processes and expand the use of expatriate assignments in particular, determining how one can successfully adapt to a foreign culture has become increasingly important (Caligiuri et al., 2020). Cultural competence is the ability to work and integrate well within a different culture. It is an important indicator for safe practice in cross cultural settings (Anwar et al., 2023; Maican & Cocorardă, 2021). It's an important area of research, because expatriates face unprecedented challenges and opportunities as they adjust to a new cultural environment.

Many of the most recent studies examine particular aspects of cultural competence, such as language proficiency, social integration and psychological adjustment in different cultural environments (Zaman et al., 2021). A large amount of work in this area shows that expatriates' multilayered process of cultural adaptation is something people are extremely curious about (Anwar et al., 2023; Caligiuri et al., 2020). The results of this study help to deepen our understanding of the conditions that promote or impede successful acculturation in foreign environments. In this study, the focus is on four pivotal variables integral to the cultural adaptation process for expatriates: linguistic obstacles, cultural competence, identification with the host nation and self-efficacy. Language competence becomes a determining factor which leads to an expatriate's cultural adaptability (Lou, 2021; Wu et al., 2022).

The host country's language is vital, not only for simple communication but also for comprehension of hidden meanings behind the words (Tenzer et al., 2021). Another factor, cultural competency (Guo et al., 2021), the ability to live and work in a new culture successfully on both the professional and personal levels for expatriates is key. Also, host national connectedness, or the level to which an expatriate feels a sense of belonging with their host country, predicts better cultural adaptation and overall satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2022). Expatriates' beliefs about their own capability to succeed under certain circumstances, called self-efficacy by researchers (Shen et al., 2021; Squires et al., 2020), are also important in shaping how expatriates deal with cultural obstacles. Combined, these variables present a pluralistic model for interpreting the complex process of cultural adaptation among expatriates.

Cultural adaptation is closely related to language skills (Akhimien & Adekunle, 2023). Furthermore, feeling connected to the host nation has also been associated with increased psychological well-being and job satisfaction (Neto et al., 2019). In addition, self-efficacy is considered an

important factor in cultural adaptation (Mavroudi, 2020; Wang & Kanungo, 2020). Existing research is useful, but there are several gaps. Studies of these factors have generally looked at them separately instead of considering their combined influence (McEown & Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Wang & Kanungo, 2020).

More thorough research is needed which studies how these variables affect expatriates 'cultural competence. These gaps are what this study seeks to fill as it explores the joint impact of linguistic difficulties, identification with the host nation and self-efficacy on cultural competence. This research has rich practical and theoretical significance. This knowledge can help organizations and policymakers design more effective support and training programs for expatriates (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023). From a theoretical standpoint, this study adds to the existing body of literature on cultural competence by treating these factors more holistically and also by looking at their interactions in practice.

In so doing, it helps advance our analysis of cultural adaptations and provides concrete suggestions for dealing with a culturally diverse worldwide work force (Liu et al., 2022; Pot et al., 2020). In brief, this study covers the important factors related to cultural competency when it comes to expatriates. By so doing, it will both enhance academic research and provide direct applications for international human resource management and training of expatriates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the circles of international relations, psychology and sociology, cultural competence has become a topic of intense interest. It refers to people's ability of getting along well in cultural surface and cross-cultural conditions (Li & Lindo, 2022). The linguistic problems involved in this process is a major thread running through literature. Scholars say that language is not only a communications tool, but also the conveyor of culture (Bilá & Ivanova, 2020; Mavroudi, 2020). Communication problems often go beyond superficial language limitations to affect the more fundamental levels of cultural comprehension and absorption (Tenzer et al., 2021). In addition, Shaules (2019) observe that these linguistic obstacles can greatly impede not only the efficiency of professional and personal communication in an international environment but also an individual's own effectiveness and well-being.

Another important issue raised by the debate on cultural competency is

that of host national connectedness (Cooke et al., 2019; Hack-Polay & Mahmoud, 2023). It examines the way that individuals attach themselves to their host nation. Tenzer et al. (2021) believe that such sense of connectedness is related to the role of social networks and community engagement. They say that to truly get an idea of a country's culture, you have to soak yourself in the local environment and make friends (Puzzo et al., 2023). This interconnectedness not only helps with cultural focalization, but also boosts mental and psychological well-being, which then affects quality of life and professional satisfaction in the host country (Akhimien & Adekunle, 2023; Kamalova et al., 2020). How closely connected the individual feels to his host nation will have a heavy influence on his integration into and adaptation to this new cultural environment.

Furthermore, the literature demonstrates that self-efficacy plays an important role in the development of cultural competency. Self-efficacy refers to the sense that one can achieve one's goals and handle situations. It is a very important factor used in judging how people deal with problems of cross-cultural interchange (Thomas & Waugh, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). Those with high levels of self-efficacy are often more proactive in mastering the language and integrating into the host culture. They tend to be more tolerant and flexible when it comes to cultural differences. Wang and Kanungo (2020) notes that self-efficacy not only affects the ability to overcome linguistic obstacles, but it also profoundly influences one's attitude toward acculturation in general. Indeed, Tenzer et al. (2021) observe that self-efficacy is related to the perception of and plastic navigation between cultural difference. In other words, self-efficacy exerts a critical impact upon the attainment of cultural competence in global society.

Exploring cultural competency goes beyond the individual into society at large and beyond to global trends. Cultural competency becomes more and more important in a world that grows ever global, ever diverse (Guo et al., 2021; Papi & Hiver, 2020). In this sense, being able to interact cross-culturally is not just a personal skill but is essential for smooth professional and social integration. The concept of cultural competency has applications in a range of fields, from education to healthcare, business to international relations (Thomas & Waugh, 2020).

The challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity are unique for each sector, therefore the cultivation of competency also requires different approaches (Caligiuri et al., 2020). Scholars and practitioners have often raised the issue of how education and training can be used to advance cultural competency. Many educational institutions and workplaces have

started programs aiming to raise cultural awareness and sensitivity (Liu et al., 2022). Many of these programs include language instruction, cultural immersion activities and workshops on cross-cultural communication. Its objective is to give people the means to navigate different cultural terrains (Chen, 2023). According to studies, such educational and training programs can indeed have a profound effect on promoting understanding of culture and reducing prejudice and stereotypes (Bilá & Ivanova, 2020; Przytula, 2023). Technology and cultural competency is another area of interest on the rise. Cross-cultural interaction and learning are being brought about by digital platforms and social media (Przytula, 2023). The wide range of cultures people come into contact with on the Internet makes language learning tools, virtual exchange programs and global social networks a new breakthrough (Dang et al., 2022). These technological advances have the potential to narrow cultural differences and advance international understanding (Kaushik et al., 2016). At the same time, they pose problems of designing truly e-pathetic digital environments. Scholars such as Zaman et al. (2021) also highlight the need to develop one's own digital literacy and ethical guidelines in order to make best use of these new forms of intercultural exchange. By looking carefully at the topic of cultural effectiveness, starting with language problems and blade to host national cohesion; then going on to initiative taking we can see just which are the forces behind each individual person's effective contact and their interactive adjustment in a multicultural society. These factors, taken as a whole, form the basis for how cultural competency is approached and carried out in an international environment.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used a comprehensive mixed-method approach to explore the areas of cultural competence among expatriates in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including speech problems, closeness to host nationals and self-efficacy. The research methodology was bifurcated into two distinct phases: a comprehensive qualitative exploration and quantitative analysis.

3.1 Phase 1: Detailed Qualitative Exploration

The qualitative aspect of the study was based on semi-structured interviews with carefully chosen expatriates. They were recruited by purposive sampling to ensure a broad cross section in terms of nationality, age, gender, profession and length of stay in Saudi Arabia (see table 1).

Table 1: Respondents Profile

Respondent ID	Age Range	Gender	Nationality	Occupation	Length of Stay in Saudi Arabia	Proficiency in Arabic (1-5 Scale)
RESP001	25-34	Male	American	Engineer	1-2 years	2
RESP002	35-44	Male	British	Marketing Manager	3-5 years	3
RESP003	45-54	Male	Indian	Healthcare Professional	6-10 years	4
RESP004	30-39	Male	Egyptian	IT Specialist	Less than 1 year	3
RESP005	40-49	Male	Canadian	Educator	Over 10 years	5
RESP006	26-35	Male	French	Artist	2-3 years	1
RESP007	50-59	Male	South African	Business Consultant	4-6 years	4
RESP008	28-37	Male	Filipino	Nurse	1-2 years	2
RESP009	38-47	Female	Australian	HR Manager	5-7 years	3
RESP010	33-42	Male	Pakistani	Financial Analyst	3-4 years	3
RESP011	29-38	Male	Brazilian	Architect	Less than 1 year	1
RESP012	36-45	Male	Japanese	Chef	Length of Stay in Saudi Arabia	2
RESP013	31-40	Female	Russian	Journalist	1-2 years	3
RESP014	27-36	Male	Italian	Logistics Manager	3-5 years	2

This diversity was meant to reflect a wide range of experiences and opinions. The interviews, which were intended to be fairly structured and allowed for both directed questioning of specific questions and open-ended discussions, were attended by a total of 14 expatriates (see table 2). The interview protocol included questions exploring participants' experiences with language problems, their attachment to the culture and society of Saudi Arabia, and their self-assessment about how they deal with differences in cultural attitudes. All interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed verbatim to cover every detail. The qualitative data were analyzed by using a systematic method of thematic analysis. It meant coding the transcripts to tease out emerging themes, patterns and insights that relate to research questions. The qualitative analysis was carried out iteratively. At each step, the researchers refined and re-analyzed the codes and themes to make sure that they were adequate representations of the data. Based on this analysis, a number of very specific and verifiable hypotheses

about the concept of cultural competency among expatriates in Saudi Arabia were derived.

Table 2: Interview Guideline.

Section 1: Linguistic Challenges
Can you describe your proficiency in Arabic or other local languages since moving to Saudi Arabia?
How have language barriers impacted your daily life and work in Saudi Arabia?
Can you share any specific instances where language difficulties posed a significant challenge?
What steps have you taken to overcome these linguistic challenges?
How do you think language proficiency influences your interactions with the local community?
Section 2: Host National Connectedness
Describe your sense of belonging or connectedness to the Saudi culture and community.
What activities or interactions have helped you feel more connected to the local culture?
Have there been any cultural practices or norms in Saudi Arabia that you found particularly challenging to adapt to?
How do you perceive the attitude of the local community towards expatriates?
In what ways has your experience in Saudi Arabia altered your perception of the host nation and its culture?
Section 3: Self-Efficacy in Navigating Cultural Differences
How confident do you feel in your ability to navigate cultural differences in Saudi Arabia?
Can you recall a situation where you successfully managed a culturally challenging scenario?
What strategies do you employ to cope with cultural misunderstandings or conflicts?
How do you perceive your growth in terms of dealing with cultural differences since your arrival in Saudi Arabia?
How does your sense of self-efficacy affect your overall experience as an expatriate in Saudi Arabia?
Section 4: Linguistic Challenges and Cultural Competence
How do you assess your language skills in Arabic and their impact on your cultural understanding?
Describe any experiences where language barriers have affected your cultural interactions or integration.
How have you addressed linguistic challenges to improve your cultural competence?
In what ways do you believe language proficiency contributes to cultural understanding in a multicultural setting like Saudi Arabia?

3.2 Phase 2: Comprehensive Quantitative Analysis

The second phase of this study was a quantitative survey that helps to

empirically test the propositions derived from the qualitative findings. The themes and insights that emerged from the qualitative phase were used as a basis in developing a questionnaire. The questionnaire's items ranged from Likert-scale queries on linguistic problems, degree of host national connectedness and self-efficacy to demographic questions. This questionnaire was sent to a larger group of expatriates (211 individuals) spread across the various regions of Saudi Arabia. Participants were selected by stratified random sampling, ensuring the representation of all expatriate communities. Anonymous responses were gathered and entered into a dataset to be studied. It was collected on existing scales, adopted from the studies listed in Appendix 1. Linguistic challenges was measure on ten items scale of Aizawa et al. (2020). Moreover, cultural competency was measured on four items scale; adopted from the study of Fenech et al. (2020). Ten items scale was used to measure the self-efficacy of respondents in this study (Bonsaksen et al., 2013). Moreover, eighteen items instrument was adopted from the study of Ong and Ward (2005) to measure host national connectedness.

With the use of STATA software, which performs advanced statistical procedures. The descriptive statistics provided a brief sketch of the sample. Hypotheses obtained through the qualitative phase were also probed further by inferential statistics, including multiple regression analysis and exploratory factor analysis. The aim of this analysis was to sense how firm or loose are the links between these variables. Following this mixed-methods approach to combine in-depth qualitative insight with adequate quantitative analysis, we arrived at a comprehensive and multifaceted grasp of the level of expatriates 'cultural competence in Saudi Arabia. The rigorous methodological order and sequential link between the two phases guaranteed that the study's conclusions would have firm roots in reality, and be very contextualized.

4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

As for qualitative analysis here, we will take the problem experienced by expatriates in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a case study to consider language problems and foreign culture competence, self-efficacy and host nation bonding. They used a thematic way of analyzing the wealth of data gleaned from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with expatriates from several nations and occupational backgrounds. This allowed patterns and themes to emerge naturally from the participants 'own accounts. It also

included accurate transcription of interviews and a strict coding operation. From all the key ideas and concepts which participants raised, codes were constructed. Then these codes were collected together into larger themes, which are representative of the overall trends in the data. The purpose of the research, through digitizing for this repeated process, was to pick out the complexity and richness of expatriates 'experiences. Shows us a bit of how they made their way into another cultural environment. These themes reflected not only the personal and professional difficulties encountered by these players, but also their strategies and adaptations in response to a complex multicultural climate.

Numerous empirical studies have shown that linguistic problems affect the cultural competence of expatriates to a quite serious extent. Anwar et al. (2023) discovered a strong link between language comprehension and how well expatriates can adapt to cultural differences. Also, Shen et al. (2021) reported in a study that expatriates with good language ability easily adapt to different cultural environments. Their finding links directly between language proficiency and cultural competency. These results highlight how language is an important element in the cultivation of cross-cultural understanding and flexibility among expatriates. This issue of linguistic obstacles and cultural competency was repeated in the responses of interviewees. Such first-person accounts support the idea that language is no mere tool of communication but a key to entry into and full immersion in the local culture. Respondent 04 noted, "The language barrier made it difficult for me to get close enough to appreciate local customs or the cultural nuances." Respondent 07 said, "The better my own command of the language."

This point also has theoretical support. According to the Cultural Adaptation Theory developed by Shen et al. (2021), language, as one of the most basic tools for cultural adaptation, is also a bridge connecting those who are adapting with their environment. Neto et al. (2019) also believe that the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis-language affects thought and cultural perception--suggests that a firm grasp of the local language is necessary to truly comprehend the host culture. These theories offer a conceptual framework that emphasizes the pivotal role of language in the development of cross-cultural competence for expatriates. The empirical findings in the study, based on interview materials and framed within a theoretical perspective, all demonstrate that language problems are detrimental to expatriates 'cultural competence. In accordance with this proposition, learning languages and cultural immersion are very important parts of expatriate training, aid and support.

4.1 P1. Cultural competence Foreign language problems a big issue for expatriates.

Studies suggest that expatriates 'linguistic problems have an impact on their sense of belonging to their host nation. Li and Lindo (2022) were the first to show a very strong negative correlation between linguistic barriers and extent of expatriates 'integration into the host community. Also, a study by Tenzer et al. (2021) showed that those expatriates who did not know the local language felt more isolated and less rooted to the host country. These results show that language competence is not only necessary for communicating in a new environment, but also can engender a feeling of belonging and closeness. These empirical findings were reflected in personal perspectives revealed in interviews done for this study. says R03, lacking any language skills I was an outsider, and could not get in touch with local people. However as my Japanese improved it became easier to get involved in community activities and feel one with the indigenous culture. By definition, Social Identity Theory (Anwar et al., 2023; Shaikh et al., 2023) can be used to explore the link between language and host nation affinity. Therefore, SIT writes that language is an important foundation of social identity and belonging. Also, as stipulated by Anwar et al. (2023) model of acculturation, language proficiency is necessary in order to be able to become acculturated into the host culture.

Through these theoretical frameworks, we can understand just how important language is in helping expatriates create and maintain links with the host nation. These connections affect both their feelings of belongingness and sense of social connectedness. In brief, linguistic problems are very closely related to this feeling of belonging to the host country. This proposition indicates that learning a language is an integral part of the expatriation process, not limited to career but integrating personal and social welfare.

4.2 P2. The expatriates host national connectedness is greatly influenced by linguistic obstacles.

Much research has been devoted to expatriates 'host national connectedness as a mediating variable between language difficulties and cultural competency. A study by Shaules (2019) disclosed that expatriates who felt closer to their host country could conquer language difficulties easier and have greater levels of cultural competence. It was also confirmed by Caligiuri et al. (2020) research, which discovered that the extent to which host nationals are connected with each other is an important variable for

reducing or even offsetting the negative effects of language barriers on culture adaptation.

This implies that there is also a crucial difference in whether or not an overseas worker has close emotional connections with the host country. Interviews with expatriates offered anecdotal evidence to support this proposition. Respondent 06 noted, "Despite my initial problems with language, having a sense of belonging to the local community helped me learn and adjust very well culturally." As opposed to this, Respondent 09 said, "I had difficulty with the language and was always sort of an outsider looking in; as a result, it took much longer for me to integrate. This proposition is grounded in Social Integration Theory (Shaules, 2019; Sousa et al., 2017), which argues that you will only be able to adapt successfully culturally if there are social bonds with people in the host country. Moreover, according to the Linguistic Competence-Adaptation Theory, while linguistic competence is obviously a prerequisite for cultural adaptation, its value takes on another predominance when used in conjunction with a strong sense of belonging and integration within the host community (Caligiuri et al., 2020; Wen & Piao, 2020). These theories delve into the role of host national connectedness as a bridge between the difficulties posed by language and cultural competence. Thus, experience from expatriates together with the relevant theories provide consistent evidence that host national connectedness plays an important mediating role in the relationship between linguistic constraints and cultural competence. This proposal emphasizes the feeling of oneness that should be cultivated among expatriates. While this helps overcome language barriers, it also promotes overall cultural adaptation.

4.3 P3. host national connectedness both mediates the expatriate's linguistic obstacles and his or her cultural competence.

The moderating effect of self-efficacy between expatriates 'linguistic difficulties and cultural competency has received considerable attention in recent years. Liu et al. (2022) report that high self-efficacy can help expatriates overcome the language barrier. In this way, they can achieve better cultural competence. Caligiuri et al. (2020) conclusion on the mitigating role of self-efficacy in counteracting the negative impact of language problems on cultural adaptation is also consistent with this finding. These studies demonstrate that self-efficacy is a key factor in dealing with limited language proficiency in the process of cultural integration. And this proposition is also supported by the results of

interviews with expatriates. said Respondent 02, "The more efficacy I had in my abilities, the easier it was to work out language problems. Acculturation went better too." In contrast, noted Respondent 08, "Because of my deficits in the language area," I felt less confident culturally than before; but since I still thought highly of myself as a problem- In principle, this proposition is endorsed Social Cognitive Theory, which gives particular attention to self-efficacy as an interlocking factor between how individuals respond to challenges and cultural and linguistic adaptation.

Moreover, Liu et al. (2022) proposed Moderation-Mediation Model holds that self-efficacy moderates the effect of environmental pressures on individual outcomes such as cultural competence. These theoretical views emphasize self-efficacy as a crucial variable that can change how expatriates navigate the tradeoffs between linguistic challenges and cultural adaptation. In summary, empirical research, drawing on expatriates 'experiences and based in theoretical explanations of how self-efficacy can soften the impact of linguistic obstacles when it comes to cultural competency, verifies this. This proposition stresses the need to build up their sense of efficacy in expats, indicating that one who feels confident about himself is better able to overcome linguistic obstacles and reach a higher level of cultural competency.

4.4 P4. The expatriate's self-efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between language difficulties and cultural competence.
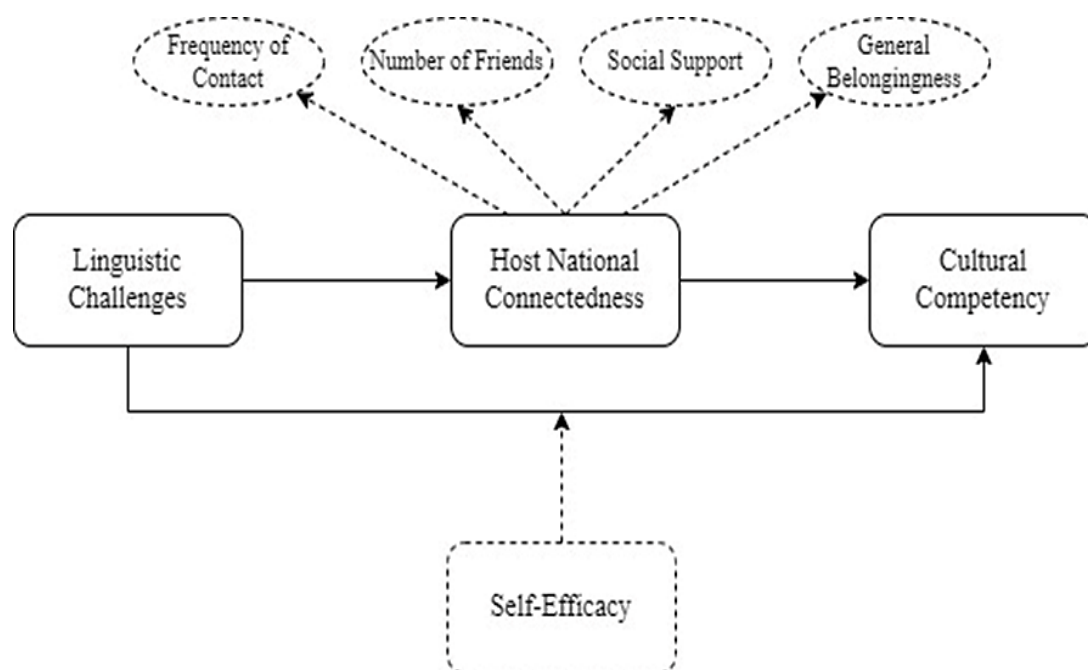
Figure 1: Conceptual Model

5. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Cronbach's alpha values for the scales used in this study are shown in table 3. Cronbach's alpha for linguistic difficulties was .849, which represents a high degree of internal consistency among the items in this scale. As well, the scale for cultural competition proved to be very reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.879. And the host national connectedness scale had a good internal consistency, as measured by its Cronbach's alpha of 0.812. Finally, the self-efficacy scale showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.840, confirming high reliability. All of these values are above the generally accepted threshold of 0.7, indicating that temp scales used in the study were good measures of their respective constructs and a sound basis for later analyses.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Linguistic Challenges	0.849
Cultural Competency	0.879
Host National Connectedness	0.812
Self-Efficacy	0.840

The validity and reliability confirmation outcomes are shown in Table 4. In terms of variable language problems, the composite reliability was determined to be 0.878, indicating high consistency and that a large portion of the variance in observed variables stems from this construct (AVE=0.545) (See figure 2).
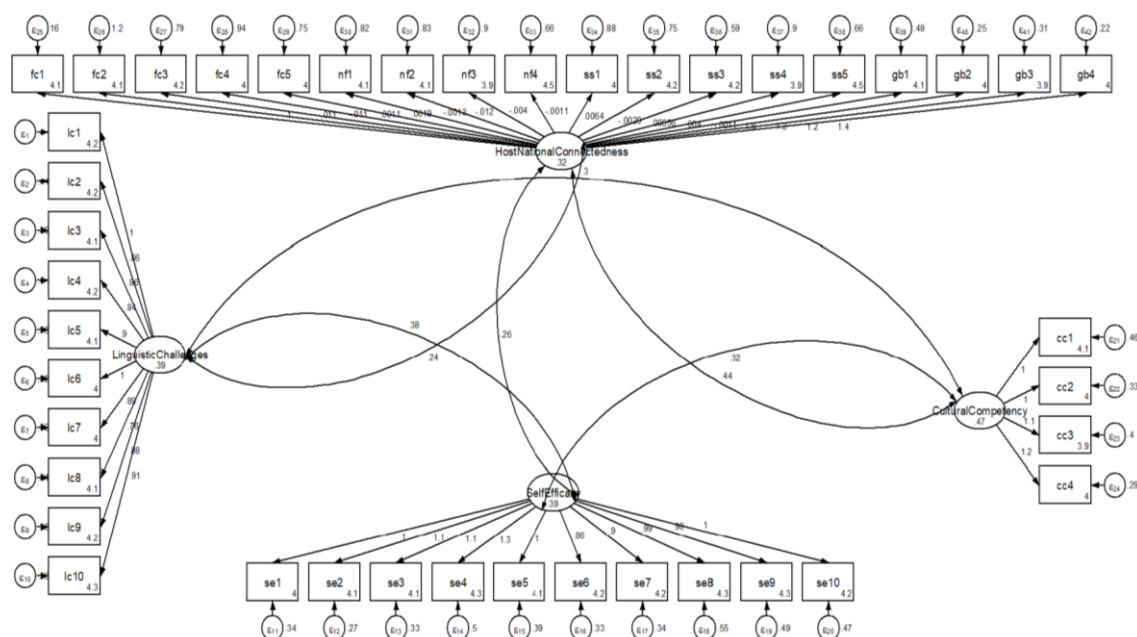

Figure 2: Estimated Model.

Composite reliability for cultural competency was 0.818 and AVE was 0.551, revealing strong reliability with good convergent validity (See figure 2). Host national connectedness had a slightly higher composite reliability of 0.879 and an AVE of 0.532, which further confirms that the construct is robust.

The self-efficacy scale had composite reliability of 0.868 and AVE of 0.477. Although the AVE for self-efficacy just falls short of 0.5, it is still acceptable considering its high reliability. In general, these findings indicate that the scales used in this study are reliable and valid for measuring amounts of cultural competence among expatriates (see table 4).

Table 4: Validity and Reliability Confirmation

Variable	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Linguistic Challenges	0.878	0.505
Cultural Competency	0.818	0.551
Host National Connectedness	0.879	0.532
Self-Efficacy	0.868	0.477

The loadings of the various indicators on their respective constructs are addressed in Table 5, which presents the results from a confirmatory factor analysis. Furthermore, factors CC1, CC2, and CC3 all have loadings exceeding the 0.6 factor-loading threshold which is commonly accepted among psychometricians. For the case of linguistic crises, a variety of loadings was seen across indicators LC1 through LC 10. A score of 0.917 in the highest loading (LC1) suggests an extremely strong correlation with the construct, and a score of 0.545 (LC10), marginally annoying but nevertheless acceptable.

For example, LC3 and LC9 had lower but adequate loadings of 0.517 and 0.598 respectively. As for self-efficacy, indicators SE1 through SE10 had differing loadings. The highest loading, at 0.780, was SE10, which is strongly associated with the construct. On the low end, SE8 and SE7 had loadings of 0.502 and 0.513 respectively, which are just above what is considered acceptable.

Finally, host national connectedness had eighteen indicators (HCN1 to HCN18) with loadings from 0.503 to 0.758. In particular, a particularly high loading of 0.758 was found for HCN10; at the other end of the spectrum. In general, most of the indicators within each construct loaded quite highly on their respective factors in confirmatory factor analysis, so that the constructs could be considered well embodied by their own components.

Table 5: Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Variable	Indicator	Original Sample
Cultural Competency	CC1	0.681
	CC2	0.733
	CC3	0.755
	CC4	0.778
Linguistic Challenges	LC1	0.917
	LC2	0.769
	LC3	0.517
	LC5	0.630
	LC4	0.814
	LC6	0.796
	LC7	0.753
	LC8	0.724
	LC9	0.598
	LC10	0.545
Self-Efficacy	SE1	0.650
	SE2	0.699
	SE3	0.736
	SE4	0.684
	SE5	0.585
	SE6	0.578
	SE7	0.513
	SE8	0.502
	SE9	0.532
	SE10	0.780
Host National Connectedness	HCN1	0.682
	HCN2	0.710
	HCN3	0.726
	HCN4	0.574
	HCN5	0.567
	HCN6	0.703
	HCN7	0.693
	HCN8	0.527
	HCN9	0.668
	HCN10	0.758
	HCN11	0.685
	HCN12	0.712
	HCN13	0.623
	HCN14	0.649
	HCN15	0.662
	HCN16	0.524
	HCN17	0.567
	HCN18	0.503

Table 6 presents the measurement items 'fitness statistics, which indicate each item's effectiveness in representing the construct it is measuring. Original sample coefficient (OIM Coef.), standard error (Std. z-value, p-value, and 95 % efficacy interval for each measurement) item is shown in detail. Researchers can use this information to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument and make informed decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of specific items in their analysis

In terms of cultural competence, items CC1 through CC4 had OIM coefficients ranging from 4.087 to 0.787, thus representing the construct well. In particular, CC1 had a coefficient of 4.087 with a z-value of 61.840 that was very significant, tending to affirm its relevance quite strongly.

In the case of linguistic problems, items LC1 to LC10 showed a wide variation in coefficients, with item $(LC1)$ coming in the highest at 4.173 illustrating a very strong relationship with the construct. For example, the lowest coefficient (LC10= 1.022) was still relevant enough to have a z-value of 9.100 which is quite big enough in itself. In terms of self-efficacy, the coefficients for items SE1 through SE10 differed considerably.

The coefficient in item SE1 was as high as 4.118--a strong indicator of construct validity. Of particular interest, SE8 had a much lower coefficient (0.29), but it still maintained statistical significance. Items HCN1 to HCN18 (host national connectedness) also had a range of coefficients. For example, the coefficient for HCN 15 was as high as 4.149, reflecting the strong presence of this construct in these items. Even the lower coefficients, such as HCN18 at 4.266, were statistically significant and thus relevant as a result.

Together these statistics show good construct validity to the measurement items. Every item is significantly related and plays an effective role in the representation of cultural competency, linguistic challenges, self-efficacy and host national connectedness. Chi-square fit statistics for the model are shown in Table 5.

Moreover, the likelihood ratio chi-square>2056.05 far exceeds its p-value (p >chi2 = 0.000), indicating a good fit between the proposed model and a saturated model. Not only the chi2 but also the baseline chi-square (chi2_bs) at 794.89 for 2728 degrees of freedom is better than its saturated model with a p-value of 0.000, strongly suggesting that it fits well. The combination of these statistics suggests that the model fits the results rather well. Therefore, we can say that our hypothesized constructs and their relationships are verified.

Table 6: Measurement Items Fitness Statistics.

Measurement	OIM Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
CC1	4.087	0.066	61.840	0.000	3.957	4.216
CC2	0.675	0.052	13.040	0.000	0.573	0.776
CC3	0.706	0.056	12.640	0.000	0.597	0.816
CC4	0.787	0.057	13.690	0.000	0.674	0.899
LC1	4.173	0.047	89.220	0.000	4.082	4.265
LC2	1.071	0.101	10.630	0.000	0.874	1.269
LC3	0.984	0.097	10.140	0.000	0.794	1.174
LC5	1.026	0.097	10.580	0.000	0.836	1.216
LC4	0.972	0.097	10.050	0.000	0.782	1.161
LC6	1.161	0.104	11.120	0.000	0.957	1.366
LC7	1.003	0.096	10.440	0.000	0.815	1.192
LC8	0.848	0.088	9.600	0.000	0.675	1.021
LC9	0.985	0.098	10.050	0.000	0.793	1.177
LC10	1.022	0.112	9.100	0.000	0.802	1.242
SE1	4.118	0.049	83.200	0.000	4.021	4.215
SE2	0.753	0.085	8.830	0.000	0.586	0.920
SE3	1.024	0.104	9.890	0.000	0.822	1.227
SE4	1.070	0.099	10.780	0.000	0.876	1.265
SE5	1.119	0.089	12.530	0.000	0.944	1.295
SE6	1.109	0.091	12.150	0.000	0.930	1.288
SE7	1.104	0.093	11.810	0.000	0.920	1.287
SE8	0.292	0.079	3.680	0.000	0.136	0.447
SE9	1.072	0.077	13.950	0.000	0.922	1.223
SE10	1.057	0.081	13.100	0.000	0.899	1.215
HCN1	1.261	0.098	12.910	0.000	1.070	1.452
HCN2	0.990	0.082	12.140	0.000	0.830	1.150
HCN3	0.844	0.072	11.690	0.000	0.702	0.985
HCN4	0.889	0.075	11.850	0.000	0.742	1.036
HCN5	0.974	0.087	11.130	0.000	0.803	1.145
HCN6	4.022	0.049	82.350	0.000	3.926	4.117
HCN7	3.898	0.052	74.760	0.000	3.796	4.000
HCN8	3.975	0.054	73.670	0.000	3.869	4.081
HCN9	4.235	0.047	90.970	0.000	4.144	4.327
HCN10	4.127	0.045	91.590	0.000	4.039	4.215
HCN11	4.105	0.044	93.200	0.000	4.019	4.192
HCN12	4.241	0.045	94.280	0.000	4.153	4.330
HCN13	4.028	0.047	86.400	0.000	3.936	4.119
HCN14	4.025	0.043	92.900	0.000	3.940	4.110
HCN15	4.149	0.040	103.120	0.000	4.070	4.227
HCN16	4.155	0.044	93.900	0.000	4.068	4.242
HCN17	4.322	0.052	83.650	0.000	4.221	4.423
HCN18	4.266	0.058	73.540	0.000	4.153	4.380

Table 7: Chi-square Fit statistics.

Fit statistic	Value	Description
Likelihood Ratio	2056.05	model vs. saturated
P > Chi2	0.000	
Chi2_Bs (2728)	794.89	baseline vs. saturated
P > Chi2	0.000	

The model goodness of fit statistics is shown in Table 8, and concern the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) for both the saturated and estimated models. For the saturated model, SRMR value is reported as 0.059, acceptable because values less than 0.08 are usually considered passable. For the estimated model, the SRMR is 0.081, slightly above the usual cutoff for a well-fitting model. This implies that the estimated model provides a fairly good fit to the data, but there is probably scope for improvement in its specification or handling of measurement errors. In general, the SRMR values provide helpful information about how well the model works at describing the data structure below it.

Table 8: Model Goodness of Fit Statistics.

|	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.059	0.081

Table 9 presents the R-square statistics for two key variables in the study: and host national connectedness, as well as linguistic challenges. These statistics are very important because they show the proportion of variance in each dependent variable that can be explained from the independent variables. For linguistic difficulties, the R-square value is 0.467. This seems to indicate that about 46.7 % of the variance in language difficulties faced by expatriates can be accounted for by inclusion of the independent variables considered herein within the model. That's quite a big proportion, demonstrating that the factors considered in this study are indeed important predictors of the linguistic difficulties faced by expatriates. This illustrates the complexity and multi-layered nature of linguistic problems. While an important part of these difficulties can be grasped or explained by reference to model, there is a great deal more that it does not consider.

Table 9: R-Square Statistics.

Variable	R Square
Linguistic Challenges	0.467
Host National Connectedness	0.523

As for host national connectedness, the R-square is 0.523. That is to say, the variables in the model explain 52.3 % of the variation in host national connectedness of expatriates. The higher proportion implies a great

association between the chosen predictors and how connected expatriates feel toward their host country. This reveals the power of this model in identifying those factors which are crucial to how expatriates come into contact with their host countries. It is noteworthy that a large portion of host national connectedness can be explained through the variables that were identified and measured in this study (see figure 3).
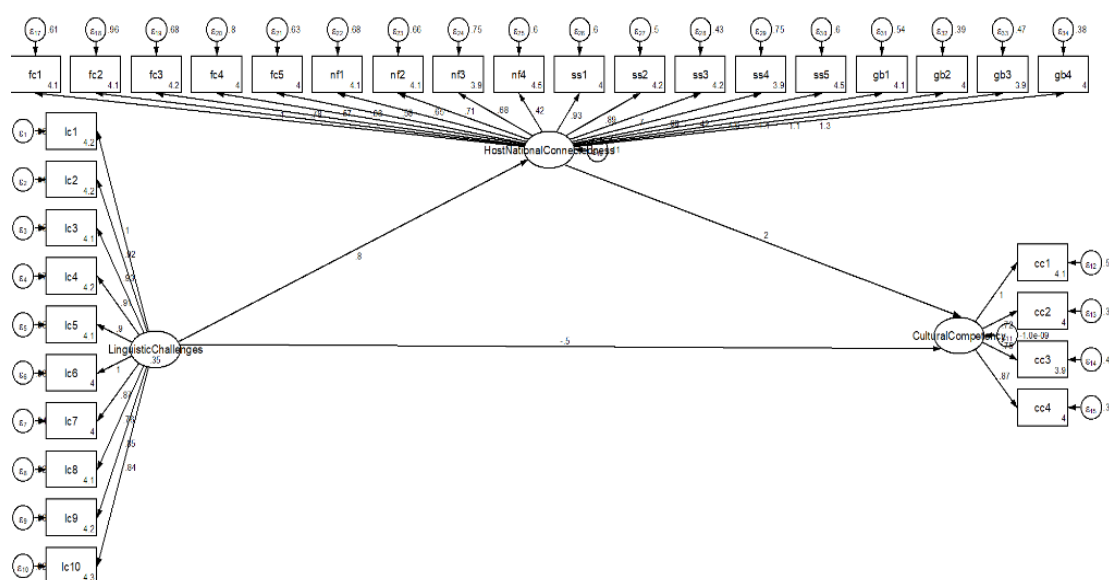

Figure 3: Structural Model for Direct and Mediated Path Analysis.

The results of the direct path analysis are given in table 10, which explores the structural relationships between the constructs of linguistic problems (LC), cultural competency (CC), and host national connectedness (HNC). This analysis shows that language problems have large direct effects on both cultural competence and host national closeness. The path from linguistic challenges to cultural competency (CC <- LC) has an Original Sample Coefficient (OIM Coef.) of 0.595; its standard error is 0.146. This path is statistically significant (with a z-value of 4.066 and p < 0.00). The 95% efficacy interval for this path runs from 0.308 to 0.882, indicating that the influence of linguistic ability upon cultural competency is strong and positive.

Table 10: Direct Path Analysis.

Structural		OIM Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
CC <-							
	LC	0.595	0.146	4.066	0.000	0.308	0.882
HNC <-							
	LC	0.613	0.151	4.188	0.000	0.318	0.908

The second path, from linguistic challenges (LC) to host national

connectedness (HNC), has an OIM Coefficient of 0.613 with a standard error of 0.151 and significantly large z-value of 4. This path also has a efficacy interval from 0.318 to 0.908, which further emphasizes the strength and solidity of this relationship. These findings showcase the critical role played by linguistic difficulties in shaping both expatriates 'cultural competency and the extent to which they are connected to their host nation. In other words, proficiency in the local language is at least one important factor for an expat's successful cultural integration.
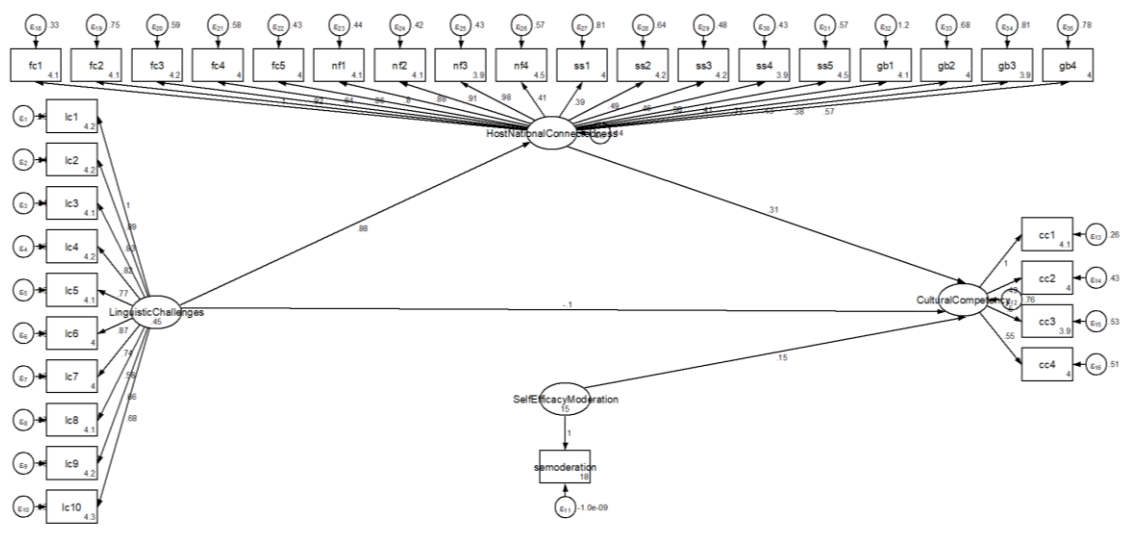
Figure 4: Structural Model for Moderating Path Analysis

In the mediating path analysis, Table 11 shows that host national connectedness (HNC) plays a significant role in the relationship between linguistic challenges (LC) and cultural competency (CC). The study finds a major mediating path, expressed is the fact that host national connectedness can mediate the effect of linguistic difficulties on cultural competency. For the path from linguistic challenges to cultural competency, mediated by host national connectedness (CC <- HNC <- LC), the Original Sample Coefficient is 0.712 with a standard error of 0.252. This path shows a considerable degree of statistical significance, with z = 4.847 and p <0.000 This mediated path has a 95 %efficacy interval ranging from 0.422 to 0.564, which further reveals the strength and reliability of the mediation effect. This finding indicates that the key factor linking linguistic obstacles and cultural competence is host national connectedness. What this indicates is that the degree of connectedness one feels with their host country has a profound impact on expatriates 'ability to overcome linguistic barriers and enhance cultural competency. This mediation effect emphasizes the importance in promoting thick connections to the host culture and a feeling of belonging for this helps

conquer language problems and achieve further cultural integration (see figure 3).

Table 11: Mediating Path Analysis

Structural		OIM Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
CC <-							
HNC <-	LC	0.712	0.252	4.847	0.000	0.422	0.564

The moderating path analysis results are reported in Table 12, focusing on the role of self-efficacy (SE) as a moderator for the relationship between linguistic challenges (LC) and cultural competency (CC). Interaction term: SE * LC. The analysis shows a big moderating effect. The Original Sample Coefficient (OIM Coef.) for the interaction term SE*LC is 0.208 with a standard error of 0.065. This positive coefficient indicates that as self-efficacy rises, it strengthens the expatriates' ability to deal with linguistic obstacles in terms of cultural competence. For this path, the z-value is 2.900; p-value = < 0.00). This moderating effect is further affirmed by the 95 % efficacy interval, which spans from to 0.080 to 0.336.

Table 12: Moderating Path Analysis

Structural		OIM Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
MWSP <-							
	SE*LC	0.208	0.065	2.900	0.000	0.080	0.336

These observations are evidence that self-efficacy is a key moderating variable. It means that expatriates with greater self-efficacy are better able to counterbalance the impact of language difficulties on their cultural competency. Thus, increasing self-efficacy may be a way to help expatriates make linguistic barriers less of an obstacle and ultimately better adapted culturally.

6. DISCUSSION

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, expatriates' study dealt with exploring the ways that linguistic hindrances, cultural competency, host national closeness, and self-efficacy interact. Linguistic problems have a major impact on cultural competence, an important finding. This is just what Lou and Noels (2019) mean when they say that good language ability is a necessary prerequisite for cross-cultural communication. The qualitative findings went to support this, expatriates themselves pointing out that the relationship between better language and increased adaptability was a direct one. Direct path analysis indicated that cultural competency is highly influenced by linguistic proficiency. It shows that language is an important

weapon of both communication and cultural absorption. The second significant result is the role of host national connectedness in tempering this correlation between language difficulties and cultural competence. This is in keeping with the views put forth by Xu et al. (2019), that social integration is important for cultural adaptation. Thus, demonstrating how host-community ties could compensate for language problems. This relationship was shown in the mediating path analysis (Table 10) to be quantitatively effective. Host national connectedness could offset the negative effect of linguistic difficulties on cultural competency. Hence, developing a relationship with and sense of belonging to the host nation becomes for expatriates one factor in surmounting jurisdictional barriers and integrating into its culture. Further, the study discovered that self-efficacy mediates between linguistic barriers and cultural competence. This is in keeping with Wilczewski and Alon (2023) idea that self-efficacy plays an important role in how one manages cross-cultural interactions. In qualitative responses, expatriates with high self-efficacy were found to be more resilient and adaptive when encountering linguistic challenges. A moderating path analysis yielded a significant interaction effect, indicating that there is indeed a buffering function of self-efficacy against the negative impacts of linguistic difficulties on cultural adaptation. Also it revealed the intricate interplay of these variables in Saudi Arabia's unique situation. For expatriates, the Kingdom's cultural, social and linguistic environment offers special challenges and opportunities. For instance, the qualitative results indicated certain cultural standards and behavior in Saudi Arabia that affected expatriates 'sense of connectedness and competence. This kind of balance in cultural competence that is relevant to and characteristic of Saudi Arabia needs serious consideration for when designing expatriate training and support programs, but these observations provide a sense. Furthermore, the study joins in a larger dialogue on expatriate management and cultural training. These findings suggest that organizations and policy makers should develop programs of systemic language training, cultural immersion and how to build self-efficacy in expatriates. Such programs could help produce more effective cultural integration, to the benefit of both expatriates and the host communities. This corresponds to the findings of Shaules (2019) who have called attention to the organization's role in assisting with expatriate adjustment as well as cultural competency. This research finally provides worthwhile information into the factors that affect culture competency among expatriates, focusing particularly on language proficiency, host national associations and self-efficacy. Training expatriates It points up the need for comprehensive outlook training and

support, in terms of linguistic, social and psychological aspects. Beyond an academic aspect, the results also provide practical guidance for improving cultural adaptation and productivity of foreign personnel on the international stage.

7. CONCLUSION

Finally, this study provides valuable information on the intricate relationship between linguistic obstacles, cultural understanding, compatibility with host nations and ideas of self-efficacy among expatriates in Saudi Arabia. In other words, language proficiency is clearly a measure of cultural adaptation and assimilation. In addition, the study reveals that host national connectedness is a mediating factor and that self-efficacy moderates these forces for cultural competence. This would seem to indicate also how complicated cultural competence really is. These findings serve not only to enrich the academic dialogue about expatriate management and cross-cultural studies, but also have a practical side as well in helping organizations and policymakers learn how to design effective support and training programs for those sent abroad. By understanding and dealing with these major issues, expatriates are better equipped to adapt to living and working in a foreign cultural environment, thus helping them make their international experience more successful and rewarding.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The practical and theoretical applications of this research in the area of expatriate cultural competence are two-fold, extending into academe as well as expatriate administration. Theoretically speaking, the first big conclusion arising from this study is that it fills out existing notions of cultural adaptation and competence. Our research lends empirical support to the central place held by language proficiency in linguistic relativity and adaptation theories (Akhimien & Adekunle, 2023). Language by no means a medium of communication-restricted to words, but a very important factor--even if minimal in degree--in cultural integration. The study thereby enriches these theoretical frameworks. It thus promotes a more in-depth theoretical understanding of the causes behind cultural adaptation and competence, especially on the part of expatriates. The second theoretical implication involves the study's examination of host national

connectedness as a mediating factor. This is consistent with Social Integration Theory (Zhang et al., 2022), which holds that strong social ties and belonging are important in the process of cultural adaptation. This theory is expanded by the research, which illustrates that connectedness can help minimize the negative impact of linguistic difficulties on cultural competence. It gives us a more nuanced understanding of the social aspects of adaptation to culture, for expatriate success cannot solely be determined by his ability with languages. In practical terms, the first major implication is that expatriate training programs need to be redesigned and redone. The strong connection between linguistic capability and cultural competency indicated in this research indicates that language training should be a basic part of the pre-departure and on-site training programs provided to expatriates. Also, groups and HR managers should make sure to include in these programs' aspects of social integration by way of community participation activities or local networks which afford host nationals with a sense of belonging. The second practical implication is that self-efficacy can mitigate the impact of linguistic difficulties. These results suggest that interventions to increase self-efficacy would probably be very useful for expatriates. Organizations may run coaching and mentoring programs and resilience training, while providing a place for expatriates to exchange experiences in overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers. This kind of thing could help expatriates, allowing them to fight against culture shock a little better. The research also has implications for policy-making, particularly in multicultural and multi-lingual countries like Saudi Arabia. These insights can help policymakers create more welcoming and friendly expatriate communities. It could include programs aimed at cultural exchange, foreign language study or local community integration that facilitate contact between expatriates and locals. In so doing, they can make for a smoother cultural integration for expatriates, which helps create a more tightly knit and effective multicultural work force. In effect, this research relates the theoretical to the practical, presenting information indispensable for both scholars and practitioners working in international HR management, cross-cultural training or expatriate care.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The first is the sample of the study. The data is mainly from the expatriates in Saudi Arabia, which may limit the generalization of research

results to other countries or regions. It goes without saying that cultural dynamics and linguistic problems can differ greatly from region to region, from culture to culture. In the future, further research could branch out to other countries and cultural backgrounds. A comparison of how the linguistic challenges and host national linkages work within different global settings can thus provide greater insight into just what it takes to achieve cultural competence. Another limitation of this cross-sectional study is. The research describes the relationship between linguistic problems, cultural competence, attachment to host nations and self-efficacy as it stood when they were measured. It does not reflect how these relationships develop over time. Longitudinal studies could be undertaken to track the evolution of cultural adaptation and competency among expatriates, providing a more nuanced conception of these phenomena. A third limitation is that the study relies on self-reported data, in particular during the quantitative part. A social desirability bias and variabilities in individual perception can apply to self-reported responses. In response to this, future studies might check the self-reported data with more objective measures such as observational data or third-party evaluations. Although the study describes the intervening effect of host national connectedness and the modifying role of self-efficacy, other variables may serve similar functions in interactions between linguistic issues and adaptability. Further study could focus on additional mediators and moderators like personality traits, organizational support or the expatriates 'cultural background. In fact, the focus of the research concentrated for the most part on linguistic aspects and did not go into much depth about other types of problems that expatriates might have like how to fit in or work-family double burden. More broadly, in future studies such problems can be approached from a more holistic perspective, by looking at all these challenges taken together and examining how they influence cultural competency and adaptation. Also, probing into the means by which expatriates deal with these obstacles would offer important lessons for academic study as well as practical application in foreign employee management. In summary, although this research has greatly advanced the study of cultural competence expatriates, these restrictions indicate that there is still much more work to be done. Filling these voids can enhance academic debate and provide a more solid basis for enterprises dealing with multicultural workforces.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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APPENDIX 1

Linguistic Challenges Scale (10 Items)
1. Every day I often do not understand the local language.
2. Language barriers have limited my ability to make friends with natives.
3. But speaking the local language makes me nervous.
4. In my experience, there are often misunderstandings due to language differences.
5. It is hard to say what I need in the local language.
6. In my work or professional life, language barriers have been a hindrance.
7. And with my limited ability in the language I avoid certain situations.
8. Learning the local language has been harder than I thought.
9. Lacking language skills, I fear being left out of conversation.
10. Language barriers make me unable to follow local news and media.

Cultural Competency Scale (4 Items)
I believe that I can understand and respect cultural differences.
2. I will be able to communicate well and interact with people of different cultural backgrounds.
3. I easily adjust to Saudi Arabian cultural norms and mores.
4. I regard myself as well versed in the cultural subtleties and customs of Saudi Arabia.

Self-Efficacy Scale (10 Items)
1. I can competently handle obstacles in a foreign environment.
2. I am able to manage stresses in a multicultural environment.
3. Confidently learning and adapting new cultural practices is something I can do.
4. I feel able to handle misunderstandings resulting from cultural differences.
5. I can cope with difficult social situations of a different culture.
6. I think I can interact with people of all backgrounds.
7. I can adjust my behavior to fit the cultural situation in different places
8. But I can make cross-cultural relationships myself.
9. I am able to quickly accumulate and use new cultural information.
10. When facing new experiences in culture I feel self-sufficient.

Host National Connectedness Scale (18 Items)
1. I strongly identify with the local community in Saudi Arabia.

2. I take an active part in local cultural activities and events.
3. I have a net of local friends and acquaintances.
4. The local community accepts and values me.
5. I have constant social contacts with local residents.
6. My knowledge of local customs and traditions goes deep.
7. I often feel apart from the local community.
8. I have things in common with natives and hobbies.
9. In Saudi Arabia I participate in community groups or organizations.
10. I personally have an emotional affinity for local culture.
11. So I always try to find an opportunity to chat with the local people.
12. I respect the local culture and ways.
13. I don't have feelings for the local community.
14. I like to research the history of Saudi Arabia.
15. Expats make up most of my social circle.
16. I like to attend local festivals and cultural events.