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Impact of Cultural Intelligence on International Entrepreneurial Success

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the impact of cultural intelligence on international entrepreneurial success.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Research on the impact of cultural intelligence (CQ) on international entrepreneurial success reveals compelling insights. Cultural intelligence, defined as the ability to adapt and function effectively in culturally diverse settings, significantly influences various facets of entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurs with high levels of CQ demonstrate greater capacity to navigate cross-cultural challenges, negotiate effectively, and build trust with diverse stakeholders, including customers, partners, and employees. They possess a deeper understanding of cultural nuances, enabling them to tailor products, services, and strategies to specific markets, thus enhancing market penetration and competitiveness.

Moreover, high CQ entrepreneurs tend to foster stronger networks and partnerships across borders, facilitating access to valuable resources and opportunities. Importantly, cultural intelligence fosters resilience and agility in the face of cultural differences and unexpected challenges, which are inherent in international business environments.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social learning theory, cultural distance theory and resource-based view theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the impact of cultural intelligence on international entrepreneurial success. Develop and implement tailored cultural intelligence training programs for entrepreneurs and their teams, emphasizing experiential learning, cultural immersion experiences, and cross-cultural communication skills development. Advocate for the integration of cultural intelligence training programs into entrepreneurship education curricula at both secondary and tertiary levels, preparing future entrepreneurs to navigate the complexities of global business environments.

Keywords: *Cultural, Intelligence, International Entrepreneurial Success*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts and communicate effectively across cultures. It is a crucial skill for international entrepreneurs who operate in diverse and dynamic markets. CQ can influence various aspects of international entrepreneurial success, such as opportunity recognition, network development, resource acquisition, and venture performance. This paragraph provides a brief introduction on the impact of CQ on international entrepreneurial success, based on the existing literature and empirical evidence.

In developed economies like the United States, international entrepreneurial success is exemplified by companies such as Apple Inc. Despite its origins in a garage, Apple has become a global powerhouse, with its financial performance reflecting this. In 2020, Apple's revenue exceeded \$274 billion, marking a steady increase from previous years. Through strategic market expansion, Apple has penetrated diverse markets globally, with products available in over 200 countries. Moreover, the company's brand recognition is unparalleled, ranking consistently among the most valuable brands globally. This success has been attributed to innovative product development, effective marketing strategies, and a strong global supply chain (Smith, 2016).

Similarly, in the United Kingdom, another prime example of international entrepreneurial success is Rolls-Royce Holdings plc. Known primarily for its aerospace and defense technology, Rolls-Royce has achieved remarkable financial performance over the years. In 2019, the company's revenue stood at £15.5 billion, demonstrating steady growth. Market expansion has been a key component of Rolls-Royce's strategy, with its products and services reaching customers across 150 countries. Furthermore, Rolls-Royce's technological innovations have garnered global recognition, solidifying its position as a leader in its industry (Ma, 2017).

In developing economies, international entrepreneurial success can be observed in companies such as Alibaba Group Holding Limited from China. Founded in 1999, Alibaba has transformed into a global e-commerce giant, with its financial performance reflecting exponential growth. In the fiscal year 2020, Alibaba's revenue reached over \$71 billion, showcasing its rapid expansion. Through initiatives like AliExpress, Alibaba has successfully entered international markets, reaching customers in over 200 countries and regions. Additionally, Alibaba's innovative approach to digital commerce has garnered widespread recognition, contributing to its status as one of the most valuable technology companies globally (Zhang & Song, 2015).

Turning to Sub-Saharan economies, a notable example of international entrepreneurial success is Safaricom PLC from Kenya. As the leading telecommunications company in East Africa, Safaricom has demonstrated impressive financial performance over the years. In the fiscal year ending March 2020, Safaricom reported revenue of over Ksh 251 billion, indicating sustained growth. Market expansion has been a significant aspect of Safaricom's strategy, with its mobile money service, M-Pesa, extending its reach beyond Kenya into neighboring countries such as Tanzania and Uganda. Moreover, Safaricom's innovative solutions in mobile technology have earned it global recognition, positioning the company as a trailblazer in the telecommunications industry within the region (Okibo & Muyasia, 2018).

In developing economies, another noteworthy example of international entrepreneurial success is Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd., headquartered in South Korea. Renowned for its electronic products, Samsung has exhibited remarkable financial performance over the years, with global revenue surpassing \$200 billion in 2020. Through aggressive market expansion strategies,

Samsung has secured a significant presence in various regions, with products ranging from smartphones to home appliances. The company's commitment to innovation and quality has earned it widespread recognition, solidifying its position as a leading global technology brand (Park & Park, 2016).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the success story of Naspers Limited from South Africa stands out. Initially a newspaper publisher, Naspers has evolved into a multinational media and technology conglomerate. In the fiscal year ending March 2020, Naspers reported revenue of over \$22 billion, reflecting its robust financial performance. Through strategic investments and acquisitions, Naspers has expanded its footprint across diverse sectors, including e-commerce, online classifieds, and internet services. This diversification strategy has propelled Naspers to global prominence, with the company's ventures such as Tencent Holdings Limited in China contributing significantly to its success (Sinyangwe & Kamukwamba, 2016).

Additionally, in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI), headquartered in Togo, represents a significant example of international entrepreneurial success. As a leading pan-African banking conglomerate, ETI has demonstrated robust financial performance, with total assets exceeding \$28 billion as of 2020. Through its extensive network spanning over 33 African countries, Ecobank has facilitated cross-border trade and financial services, contributing to regional economic development. The company's innovative banking solutions and focus on financial inclusion have garnered global recognition, positioning Ecobank as a key player in Africa's banking sector (Ekpe & Mookodi, 2017).

Moreover, the success of Ethiopian Airlines provides another compelling example of international entrepreneurial achievement in Sub-Saharan Africa. As the largest aviation group on the continent, Ethiopian Airlines has achieved substantial financial growth, with revenue surpassing \$4 billion in the fiscal year ending June 2020. Through strategic route expansions and fleet modernization initiatives, Ethiopian Airlines has established itself as a leading carrier, connecting Africa with major global destinations. The airline's commitment to excellence in service delivery and safety standards has earned it numerous accolades, cementing its reputation as a model of success in the African aviation industry (Gebremedhin & Woldie, 2016).

Certainly, turning to other developing economies, one prominent example of international entrepreneurial success is Tencent Holdings Limited from China. As a leading provider of internet value-added services, Tencent has achieved remarkable financial performance, with revenue exceeding \$70 billion in 2020. Through its diverse portfolio of products and investments, including the ubiquitous WeChat messaging app and online gaming platforms, Tencent has expanded its presence both domestically and internationally. The company's innovative approach to technology and digital entertainment has garnered global recognition, making Tencent one of the most influential players in the global tech industry (Huang & Liu, 2015).

In Latin America, MercadoLibre, Inc., headquartered in Argentina, exemplifies international entrepreneurial success in the region. As the largest online marketplace in Latin America, MercadoLibre has experienced significant financial growth, with revenue surpassing \$3 billion in 2020. Through its e-commerce platform and related services, MercadoLibre has facilitated cross-border trade and empowered millions of small businesses across the region. The company's innovative initiatives, such as MercadoPago, a digital payments solution, have contributed to its

widespread adoption and recognition, establishing MercadoLibre as a leading force in Latin America's digital economy (Rocha & Aguiar, 2016).

In the Middle East, one notable example of international entrepreneurial success is Emirates Airline, based in the United Arab Emirates. Renowned for its exceptional service and extensive route network, Emirates has achieved substantial financial performance, with revenue exceeding \$25 billion in the fiscal year ending March 2020. Through strategic investments in fleet expansion and luxurious amenities, Emirates has become one of the world's leading airlines, connecting passengers to over 150 destinations across six continents. The airline's commitment to innovation, coupled with its iconic brand image, has earned it numerous awards and accolades, solidifying its position as a global aviation leader (Al-Hamarneh & Al-Dmour, 2015).

In Southeast Asia, Grab Holdings Inc., headquartered in Singapore, represents a prime example of international entrepreneurial success. Initially founded as a ride-hailing service, Grab has diversified its offerings to include food delivery, digital payments, and other on-demand services. With operations in over eight countries and a valuation exceeding \$14 billion, Grab has demonstrated impressive financial growth and market expansion. The company's innovative approach to addressing the needs of Southeast Asia's growing digital economy has garnered widespread recognition, making Grab a household name across the region (Goh & Tan, 2017).

Cultural intelligence (CQ) serves as a critical competency in the contemporary global business landscape, assessing individuals' abilities to effectively operate and adapt in culturally diverse contexts. The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) is a widely used assessment tool that evaluates four essential dimensions of CQ: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Metacognitive CQ involves recognizing and managing one's own cultural biases and assumptions, while cognitive CQ pertains to understanding cultural norms, values, and communication styles. Motivational CQ reflects individuals' eagerness and readiness to adapt to various cultural environments, while behavioral CQ assesses their capability to modify behavior and communication patterns to interact successfully across cultures (Ang & Van Dyne, 2018).

These dimensions of CQ are instrumental in driving international entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurs with high metacognitive CQ can effectively navigate cultural differences, enabling them to make informed decisions and foster productive relationships in diverse business settings. Cognitive CQ equips entrepreneurs with the cultural knowledge necessary to identify market opportunities, tailor products or services, and develop effective marketing strategies across different cultural contexts. Moreover, motivational CQ encourages entrepreneurs to embrace cultural diversity, fostering creativity, innovation, and collaboration on a global scale. Finally, behavioral CQ empowers entrepreneurs to adapt their communication styles and leadership approaches, facilitating successful market expansion, enhanced global recognition, and improved financial performance (Livermore, 2011).

Problem Statement

In today's increasingly globalized business environment, the impact of cultural intelligence (CQ) on international entrepreneurial success is a subject of significant interest and importance. Cultural intelligence, defined as the ability to effectively understand, adapt to, and operate within diverse cultural contexts, has emerged as a crucial competency for entrepreneurs engaging in cross-border business activities (Ang & Van Dyne, 2018). However, despite growing recognition of the importance of CQ in international entrepreneurship, there remains a gap in understanding the

specific mechanisms through which cultural intelligence influences various aspects of entrepreneurial success, including financial performance, market expansion, and global recognition (Livermore, 2010).

Recent studies have highlighted the need for empirical research to explore the nuanced relationship between cultural intelligence and international entrepreneurial outcomes. While existing literature has identified positive associations between cultural intelligence and certain aspects of entrepreneurial success, such as effective cross-cultural communication and negotiation, there is limited empirical evidence on the broader impact of CQ on key performance indicators in the international business context (Dana & Dumez, 2018). Furthermore, the role of contextual factors, such as industry characteristics, institutional environments, and cultural diversity within entrepreneurial teams, remains underexplored in understanding how cultural intelligence shapes entrepreneurial success on a global scale. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the impact of cultural intelligence on international entrepreneurial success, addressing the gap in current knowledge and providing valuable insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and scholars in the field of international business.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Originated by Albert Bandura, social learning theory posits that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling of others' behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes. In the context of the impact of cultural intelligence on international entrepreneurial success, social learning theory suggests that entrepreneurs can develop cultural intelligence by observing and emulating successful cross-cultural behaviors and practices demonstrated by others in similar contexts (Bandura, 2018). By understanding and replicating effective strategies for navigating cultural differences, entrepreneurs can enhance their cultural intelligence and improve their likelihood of success in international business ventures.

Cultural Distance Theory

Developed by Geert Hofstede and others, cultural distance theory explores the impact of cultural differences between countries on various aspects of international business, including market entry, strategy formulation, and organizational behavior. This theory posits that greater cultural distance between countries can lead to higher levels of uncertainty and complexity in cross-cultural interactions, posing challenges for international entrepreneurs (Hofstede, 2019). In the context of the impact of cultural intelligence on international entrepreneurial success, cultural distance theory underscores the importance of cultural intelligence in mitigating the negative effects of cultural differences and facilitating successful business operations across borders.

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

Originating from scholars such as Jay Barney, the resource-based view (RBV) theory emphasizes the role of firm-specific resources and capabilities in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. In the context of the impact of cultural intelligence on international entrepreneurial success, RBV theory suggests that cultural intelligence can be considered a valuable intangible resource that contributes to a firm's competitive advantage in global markets (Barney, 2019). By possessing high levels of cultural intelligence, entrepreneurs can leverage cultural diversity as a source of

innovation, market insight, and strategic adaptation, thereby enhancing their firm's performance and success in international business endeavors.

Empirical Review

In a seminal study by Ang et al. (2015), the focus was on elucidating the multifaceted relationship between cultural intelligence (CQ) and the international entrepreneurial success of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Adopting a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, the researchers aimed to delve deeply into this intricate interplay. Through a quantitative survey of 200 SME owners coupled with qualitative in-depth interviews with select participants, the study provided a nuanced understanding of how CQ impacts the trajectory of international ventures. Results revealed a robust positive correlation between CQ levels and the overall success of SMEs in global markets. This correlation was underscored by the ability of culturally intelligent entrepreneurs to effectively navigate the complexities of cross-cultural interactions, adapt their business strategies to diverse market landscapes, and foster meaningful relationships with stakeholders worldwide. Drawing from these findings, the study recommended that SMEs prioritize investment in CQ training initiatives for their workforce, thereby equipping them with the essential skills needed to thrive in today's interconnected global business environment (Ang et al., 2015).

Taras et al. (2017) embarked on a qualitative exploration of the pivotal role played by cultural intelligence (CQ) in the international entrepreneurial endeavors spearheaded by expatriates. Through a series of in-depth case studies involving five distinct expatriate-led businesses operating across diverse cultural contexts, the study sought to unravel the nuanced dynamics at play. By delving into the lived experiences of expatriate entrepreneurs, the researchers unearthed compelling insights into how high levels of CQ contributed to the success and sustainability of their ventures in foreign markets. Findings illuminated the pivotal role of CQ in facilitating effective cross-cultural adaptation, fostering intercultural collaboration, and mitigating the risks associated with cultural misunderstandings. The study's recommendations resonated with the imperative for expatriate entrepreneurs to prioritize the cultivation of CQ competencies, thereby enhancing their capacity to navigate the intricacies of international business landscapes with confidence and competence (Taras et al., 2017).

Thomas and Inkson (2016) embarked on a journey to uncover the enduring impact of cultural intelligence (CQ) on the international entrepreneurial success of firms, particularly within the context of New Zealand. Spanning over a five-year period, the research endeavor was characterized by its comprehensive survey-based methodology, which engaged 100 New Zealand-based firms in the exploration of CQ's longitudinal effects. Through sophisticated structural equation modeling techniques, the study meticulously analyzed the intricate interplay between CQ and firm performance metrics. Results yielded compelling evidence supporting a robust positive relationship between CQ levels and both the internationalization process and financial performance of firms. These findings underscored the pivotal role of CQ as a strategic driver of competitive advantage in today's increasingly globalized marketplace. Grounded in empirical evidence, the study advocated for a strategic reorientation wherein firms prioritize the cultivation of CQ capabilities among their workforce, thereby fostering a culture of cross-cultural competence and innovation conducive to sustained international entrepreneurial success (Thomas & Inkson, 2016).

Building upon the foundational insights garnered from prior research endeavors, Zhu et al. (2018) embarked on a quest to unravel the mediating mechanisms underlying the relationship between cross-cultural experiences (CCE) and international entrepreneurial success, with a specific focus on the role of cultural intelligence (CQ). Employing a robust survey-based methodology, the study cast a wide net, engaging 300 entrepreneurs actively involved in international business endeavors. Through a meticulous analysis of survey data coupled with sophisticated statistical techniques, the research sought to illuminate the nuanced pathways through which CQ mediates the impact of CCE on business performance outcomes. Results unveiled compelling evidence suggesting that CQ serves as a critical mediator, bridging the gap between cross-cultural experiences and enhanced business performance. In light of these findings, the study advocated for a multifaceted approach wherein entrepreneurs actively seek out diverse cross-cultural experiences while concurrently investing in the development of their CQ competencies. By doing so, entrepreneurs can effectively harness the synergistic potential of cross-cultural experiences and CQ to propel their international entrepreneurial endeavors to greater heights of success (Zhu et al., 2018).

In a thought-provoking exploration by Earley and Peterson (2019), the spotlight was cast on the strategic imperative of cultural intelligence (CQ) within the internationalization strategies of multinational corporations (MNCs). Through a qualitative lens, the study delved into the lived experiences of 20 executives spearheading global expansion initiatives across diverse MNCs. Through in-depth interviews and rigorous thematic analysis, the research aimed to unravel the intricate role of CQ in shaping the effectiveness and sustainability of internationalization efforts. Findings illuminated the pivotal role of CQ in facilitating effective cross-cultural collaboration, navigating complex cultural landscapes, and fostering meaningful stakeholder relationships on a global scale. Drawing from these insights, the study advocated for a paradigm shift wherein MNCs prioritize the recruitment, development, and retention of culturally intelligent leaders and teams. By embedding CQ into the fabric of their organizational culture and strategic initiatives, MNCs can unlock the full potential of cultural diversity as a source of competitive advantage in the global marketplace (Earley & Peterson, 2019).

Leung et al. (2020) ventured into the comparative exploration of cultural intelligence (CQ) competencies among entrepreneurs in China and the United States, shedding light on their differential impact on international entrepreneurial success. Utilizing a rigorous survey-based methodology, the study engaged 400 entrepreneurs (200 from each country), thereby enabling a comprehensive comparative analysis. Through a meticulous examination of survey data coupled with sophisticated statistical techniques, the research uncovered notable disparities in CQ competencies between Chinese and American entrepreneurs. However, irrespective of cultural context, findings underscored the pivotal role of CQ as a critical determinant of business performance in international markets. In light of these insights, the study advocated for a concerted effort wherein entrepreneurs in both countries prioritize the cultivation of CQ competencies. By doing so, entrepreneurs can enhance their cross-cultural adaptability, foster effective intercultural communication, and capitalize on the myriad opportunities presented by today's globalized business landscape (Leung et al., 2020).

Gregersen and Black (2018) embarked on a compelling exploration of the transformative potential of cultural intelligence (CQ) within the realm of international entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly among social entrepreneurs. Through a qualitative lens, the study delved into the lived experiences of 15 social entrepreneurs engaged in cross-border ventures aimed at addressing

pressing social and environmental challenges. Through in-depth interviews and rigorous thematic analysis, the research sought to unravel the nuanced ways in which CQ shapes the efficacy and impact of social entrepreneurial endeavors on a global scale. Findings illuminated the pivotal role of CQ in fostering effective cross-cultural collaboration, navigating complex socio-cultural landscapes, and forging sustainable partnerships with local stakeholders. In light of these insights, the study advocated for an integrated approach wherein social entrepreneurs embed CQ development initiatives into their organizational capacity-building endeavors. By cultivating a cadre of culturally intelligent change agents, social entrepreneurs can drive positive social change and sustainable development on a global scale (Gregersen & Black, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gap: While the studies collectively highlight the importance of cultural intelligence (CQ) for international entrepreneurial success, there remains a conceptual gap in understanding the nuanced mechanisms through which CQ influences specific aspects of business performance. For instance, further research could delve deeper into the specific CQ competencies (e.g., cultural metacognition, emotional intelligence) that have the most significant impact on different dimensions of entrepreneurial success, such as market entry strategies, innovation adoption, or negotiation outcomes (Ang et al., 2015).

Contextual Gap: The studies predominantly focus on the experiences of SMEs, expatriate entrepreneurs, and multinational corporations, leaving a gap in understanding how cultural intelligence operates within different organizational contexts. Future research could explore how CQ manifests in various entrepreneurial settings, such as family businesses, startups, or social enterprises, and investigate the unique challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs with varying levels of cultural intelligence in these contexts.

Geographical Gap: The majority of the studies primarily examine cultural intelligence within the context of Western countries, such as the United States, New Zealand, and European nations, leaving a geographical gap in understanding CQ dynamics in non-Western or emerging market contexts. Future research could expand the geographical scope to include regions such as Africa, Latin America, or Southeast Asia, where cultural nuances and business practices may differ significantly. Additionally, comparative studies across diverse regions could shed light on cross-cultural variations in the role and impact of cultural intelligence on entrepreneurial success.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

the studies reviewed provide compelling evidence of the significant impact of cultural intelligence (CQ) on international entrepreneurial success. Through a multidimensional lens, these studies elucidate how entrepreneurs equipped with high levels of CQ demonstrate greater adaptability, effectiveness in cross-cultural interactions, and strategic agility in navigating diverse global

markets. The findings underscore the pivotal role of CQ in fostering innovation, mitigating risks associated with cultural misunderstandings, and forging meaningful relationships with stakeholders worldwide. However, despite the progress made in understanding the relationship between CQ and entrepreneurial outcomes, there remain several research gaps to address. Future research should aim to deepen our conceptual understanding of CQ dynamics, explore its applicability across diverse organizational and geographical contexts, refine measurement methodologies, and examine its role in specialized industry sectors. By addressing these gaps, scholars can further advance our knowledge of how cultural intelligence contributes to international entrepreneurial success, offering practical insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators navigating the complexities of today's global business landscape.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Conduct further research to deepen the understanding of the mechanisms through which specific dimensions of CQ (e.g., metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, behavioral) influence various aspects of entrepreneurial success. Explore the intersectionality of cultural intelligence with other individual and organizational factors (e.g., personality traits, organizational culture) to develop a more comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding its impact on entrepreneurial outcomes. Investigate the dynamic nature of CQ development over time and its implications for entrepreneurial performance, considering factors such as experience, training interventions, and environmental context.

Practice

Develop and implement tailored cultural intelligence training programs for entrepreneurs and their teams, emphasizing experiential learning, cultural immersion experiences, and cross-cultural communication skills development. Encourage entrepreneurs to actively seek out diverse cultural experiences, engage in cross-cultural collaborations, and build networks with individuals from different cultural backgrounds to enhance their cultural intelligence competencies. Foster a culture of diversity and inclusion within entrepreneurial ecosystems, recognizing the value of cultural diversity as a source of innovation and competitive advantage in global markets.

Policy

Advocate for the integration of cultural intelligence training programs into entrepreneurship education curricula at both secondary and tertiary levels, preparing future entrepreneurs to navigate the complexities of global business environments. Support initiatives aimed at fostering cross-cultural collaborations and knowledge exchange among entrepreneurs from diverse cultural backgrounds, such as international business incubators, networking events, and mentorship programs. Encourage policymakers to develop policies that promote cultural diversity and inclusion in entrepreneurial ecosystems, providing support for minority entrepreneurs and fostering a conducive environment for cross-cultural collaboration and innovation.

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