



# The Role Of Cultural Intelligence In Happiness: How cultural Intelligence Affects Well-Being In People From Different Backgrounds

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**Abstract:** In an increasingly globalized world, interactions among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds are a routine part of life. Cultural Intelligence (CQ) refers to an individual's capability to understand, adapt to, and function effectively in culturally diverse settings. Happiness and psychological well-being are key indicators of a fulfilling life; however, individuals in intercultural contexts—such as international students, migrants, expatriates, and global professionals—often face challenges like cultural adjustment difficulties, communication barriers, and social isolation, which may negatively affect well-being. This study examines the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and happiness, focusing on its contribution to subjective well-being in multicultural environments. It investigates whether higher CQ is associated with greater happiness and life satisfaction, and identifies which dimensions—metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural—are most influential. It also explores the moderating and mediating roles of empathy, social support, and demographic variables. A quantitative, survey-based design will be used with 150–200 participants engaged in culturally diverse interactions. Standardized instruments will measure Cultural Intelligence, happiness, and psychological well-being, with data analysed using correlation, regression, and moderation/mediation techniques. The study hypothesizes that higher Cultural Intelligence—particularly motivational and behavioural dimensions—is positively associated with greater happiness and may buffer the effects of cultural stress. The findings highlight CQ as a key psychological resource and offer implications for interventions in educational, organizational, and mental health settings.

**Keywords** - Cultural Intelligence, Happiness, Psychological Well-Being, Intercultural Competence

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The rise of globalization and technological advancement has significantly increased intercultural interactions. Individuals now routinely engage with culturally diverse populations in education, workplaces, and social contexts. While such interactions offer opportunities for growth and innovation, they also present challenges such as miscommunication and cultural stress. Cultural Intelligence (CQ), introduced by Earley and Ang (2003), refers to the ability to function effectively across cultural contexts. It includes four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural. These dimensions enable individuals to interpret cultural cues and adapt appropriately. At the same time, psychological well-being and happiness have become central to understanding human functioning. However, intercultural engagement can create stress, negatively affecting emotional health. CQ may help individuals manage such stress and maintain well-being.

## 1.2 Rationale and Justification

The rationale for this study is based on several interconnected factors that reflect both contemporary societal realities and gaps in academic research.

Firstly, the increasing prevalence of intercultural interactions has created a pressing need to understand how individuals adapt to culturally diverse environments. Global mobility, whether for education, employment, or migration, has become a defining feature of modern life. While such mobility offers opportunities for personal and professional growth, it also exposes individuals to unfamiliar cultural contexts that may challenge their sense of identity and belonging.

Secondly, organizations across the world are becoming increasingly multicultural. Employees are required to collaborate with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds, often in virtual environments. While diversity can enhance innovation and creativity, it can also lead to misunderstandings and conflict if not managed effectively. Cultural Intelligence plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to navigate these challenges and maintain both performance and well-being.

Thirdly, there is a significant gap in existing research. Although Cultural Intelligence has been widely studied in relation to adaptation and performance, its relationship with happiness and psychological well-being remains underexplored. Furthermore, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, limiting their applicability to other cultural settings. There is a need for research that examines these relationships in diverse and rapidly changing societies.

Fourthly, recent global developments, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, have further highlighted the importance of understanding the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and well-being. The pandemic has increased reliance on digital communication, making intercultural interactions more frequent but also more complex. At the same time, concerns about mental health have intensified, underscoring the need for research that identifies factors that promote resilience and well-being.

Finally, this study is justified by its potential to contribute to both theory and practice. By examining the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and well-being, it provides insights that can inform interventions aimed at enhancing both intercultural competence and emotional health.

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

**Theoretical Contribution** - This study integrates cultural intelligence with positive psychology, extending CQ beyond performance outcomes.

**Practical Relevance** - Findings can inform educational programs, organizational training, and mental health interventions.

## 1.4 Problem Statement

Despite increasing globalization, many individuals experience emotional challenges in intercultural contexts. These challenges arise from differences in communication styles, values, and expectations. Such challenges can lead to stress, loneliness, and reduced well-being. Although Cultural Intelligence has been shown to improve adaptation and performance, its impact on emotional well-being remains underexplored. This study seeks to examine whether higher Cultural Intelligence is associated with greater happiness and psychological well-being.

## 1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Explore the relationship between overall cultural intelligence and levels of happiness and psychological well-being.
2. Analyse which of the four CQ dimensions contribute most significantly to happiness.
3. Examine whether individuals with higher CQ report lower levels of cultural stress and better emotional balance.
4. Identify factors related to demography or experience (age, gender, prior exposure) that influence this relationship.
5. Suggest practical interventions to enhance CQ and improve emotional well-being in multicultural contexts.

## 1.6 Limitations

Like all research, this study has limitations as below:

- **Self-Report Bias:** Influence of social desirability or personal perception on the responses to CQ and happiness scales.
- **Cultural Subjectivity:** The experience and expression of happiness may vary across cultures, and standardized tools may not capture local nuances.
- **Sample Characteristics:** The study may not be perfect representation of all age groups or cultural groups. There is a high possibility of the over representation of Urban, English-speaking, or educated individuals.
- **Temporal Limitation:** The cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality or long-term effects.
- **Uncontrolled Variables:** Factors such as trauma history, personality, or social support systems are not included in this analysis.

Despite the all above limitations, the study aims to provide a foundational understanding of how cultural intelligence can serve as a psychological resource in our increasingly multicultural world.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to examine in detail the body of existing research on Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and its relationship to happiness, subjective well-being, psychological well-being, cultural adjustment, and related emotional outcomes. A detailed review helps situate the present study within established theory, identify empirical gaps, and clarify the mechanisms by which CQ may influence emotional well-being in culturally diverse contexts.

This chapter is organized into several thematic sections:

- Theoretical Foundations of Cultural Intelligence
- Cultural Intelligence and cross-cultural adaptation
- Emotional outcomes: happiness and well-being
- Acculturative stress, adaptation, and well-being
- Mechanisms linking CQ and well-being
- Gaps and directions for future research

Over the past two decades, the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) has gained significant attention amid increasing globalization and intercultural interaction. CQ refers to an individual's ability to function in culturally diverse settings effectively.

(Earley & Ang, 2003). When individuals interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds., the ability to understand, interpret, and appropriately respond to cultural cues becomes crucial not only for success in work and education but also for sustaining psychological well-being and happiness.

This chapter explores prior research and theoretical frameworks that analyse the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and happiness, well-being, along with other associated emotional and psychological outcomes.

### 2.2 Foundations and Theoretical Studies

Earley & Ang (2003), in their seminal work, Cultural Intelligence: The concept of cross-cultural interactions introduced the foundational model of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), which includes four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural. The authors suggested that CQ complements general intelligence and emotional intelligence, playing a vital role in enabling individuals to adapt effectively to unfamiliar cultural settings.

Cultural Intelligence entered academic discourse as a construct specifically designed to explain why some individuals perform better in culturally diverse environments than others (Earley & Ang, 2003). It goes beyond traditional notions of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) by offering a culture-specific framework that supports adaptive capability. The original model developed by Earley and Ang (2003) outlines four separate components:

- **Metacognitive CQ**, involving planning, awareness, and monitoring during intercultural interactions
- **Cognitive CQ** refers to an individual's understanding of cultural norms, values, and practices.
- **Motivational CQ**, reflecting the interest and confidence to engage with new cultures
- **Behavioural CQ**, indicating one's capacity to modify and manage actions in culturally appropriate ways

These components are theorized to work synergistically. For example, an individual with high motivational CQ is more likely to seek learning opportunities that enhance cognitive CQ, which in turn facilitates effective behavioural CQ in real interactions (Ang et al., 2007).

The relevance of CQ has been demonstrated across multiple domains, including international business, global leadership, and education. CQ is considered an important predictor of competencies such as cultural adjustment, leadership effectiveness, and team performance (Ang et al., 2007). However, in recent years, there has been increasing interest in psychological outcomes associated with CQ — especially those related to emotional health and subjective experiences.

Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh (2007) developed this further by doing validation of the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), designed to measure 4 CQ dimensions. The findings showed that individuals with higher CQ tend to make more effective decisions in multicultural contexts, providing a foundation for exploring the relationship between CQ and well-being outcomes.

Thomas (2006) emphasized on how important mindfulness is in cultural intelligence. He proposed that following reflective practices and showing attentiveness enhance effective intercultural learning. This perspective aligns with psychological theories of well-being, which underscore the value of awareness and adaptability.

Triandis (2006) gave a culturally nuanced perspective by framing CQ within the context of collectivist and individualist societies, thus deepening our understanding of how CQ might operate differently across cultural milieus.

### **2.3 Cultural Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being**

Ward, Fischer, Lam, and Hall (2009) examined the convergent and discriminant validity of CQ measures and found that individuals with higher CQ show better psychological adjustment and lower cross-cultural stress. Their research provides foundational evidence which links CQ with emotional resilience in multicultural settings.

Similarly, Presbitero (2016) conducted a meta analytic review of studies on CQ and cross-cultural adjustment, showing that CQ is greatly associated with emotional and psychological outcomes across diverse populations (e.g., expatriates, students, migrants).

Mehra (2023) conducted an extensive study - quantitative in nature, which involved undergraduate students from several universities across India to understand the relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and psychological well-being. This study was done in the context of India's increasing globalization and hence a rise of culturally diverse academic settings resulting from international student exchange programs, inter-regional student migration, and the integration of global perspectives into curricula. Mehra concluded that students with higher levels of CQ—especially motivational CQ—are more likely to adapt to new cultural environments without experiencing emotional distress. These individuals reported higher levels of social integration, fewer symptoms of loneliness, and greater satisfaction with college life. The study underscores the importance of CQ development in Indian higher education, particularly for fostering emotional resilience and mental health in increasingly diverse student populations.

Peng (2024) dug deeper to understand the influence of Cultural Intelligence on eudaimonic well-being, with a mediating factor of cultural identity coherence, among multicultural individuals in urban China and the United States. Eudaimonic well-being refers to the realization of one's true potential and living a meaningful, purposeful life, in contrast to hedonic well-being, which is more focused on pleasure and happiness. International students represent a key demographic for understanding the role of CQ in adjustment processes. International students often experience both sociocultural and psychological stress because of cultural differences, academic pressures, and social isolation. The study concluded that CQ plays a crucial developmental role in constructing a cultural identity that is coherent, which, in turn, nurtures higher levels of meaningfulness and life satisfaction. Peng recommended incorporating CQ-building interventions into multicultural training programs and suggested further research into how CQ may buffer against identity conflict among diasporic or third-culture individuals.

For example, Chu and Zhu (2023) examined the role of psychological resilience as a mediator in the relationship between CQ and cross cultural adaptation among international students in China. Their findings revealed that higher CQ is not only directly associated with better adaptation but also enhances psychological resilience, which in turn supports emotional adjustment.

Further, Ayoob, Wani, and Ahmad (2015) investigated the relationships among CQ, acculturative stress, and psychological well-being among Kashmiri college students who migrated for education. Their

results demonstrated that cultural Intelligence significantly predicts psychological well-being and negatively predicts acculturative stress.

Renzhi et al. (2024) conducted an investigation that was empirical in nature to understand the relationships among Cultural Intelligence (CQ), social connectedness, and psychological well-being among individuals living and working in environments that are culturally diverse. The study was grounded in the assumption that while cultural Intelligence helps individuals with the skills required to navigate cultural differences, the emotional benefits of CQ may be realized primarily through improved interpersonal relationships. Social connectedness—defined as the subjective sense of belonging and meaningful connection with others—was proposed as a key mediating mechanism linking CQ to happiness and psychological well-being. The authors emphasized that interventions aimed at improving CQ—especially components that are motivational and behavioural—can significantly enhance psychological well-being by promoting social integration and emotional security in culturally diverse contexts.

Els et al. (2023) examined the combined effects of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Emotional Intelligence (EQ), and authentic leadership on psychological well-being in organizational settings. The study was situated within the growing recognition that workplace mental health is influenced not only by individual traits but also by leadership styles and organizational culture—particularly in multicultural environments. The authors concluded that CQ is a crucial psychological resource for employee well-being in globalized work settings. Its influence on happiness is especially significant when organizational systems support authenticity, inclusion, and openness emotionally. The findings underscore the importance of integrating CQ development into leadership training and organizational well-being initiatives.

These studies consistently suggest that individuals who have higher CQ are better equipped to manage the challenges associated with entering new cultural environments, reducing stress and facilitating emotional stability.

#### **2.4 Cultural Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

Happiness is most commonly conceptualized as subjective wellbeing, including life satisfaction and emotional balance (Diener, 1984). Multiple factors like social relationships, economic circumstances, personality, and cultural values, influence happiness.

While cultural variation in happiness has been explored in depth, research which integrates cultural Intelligence into models of subjective well-being remains limited. However, emerging evidence suggests that CQ plays an important role.

Peng (2024) explored the interplay that is between critical thinking, cultural Intelligence, and psychological well-being, showing significant positive correlations between CQ and eudaimonic well-being—the aspect of well-being that is related to meaning, growth, and purpose. Although this study also included critical thinking, it provides useful evidence that CQ contributes to positive emotional functioning.

Ward et al.'s (2009) study is one of the foundational empirical validations of the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) and remains central to this research area. The authors sought to test whether CQ predicts sociocultural adjustment beyond commonly studied variables such as personality traits and general Intelligence. They collected data from both sojourners and long-term international students adapting to new cultural environments. Although adjustment and happiness are not identical constructs, cultural stress and poor adaptation are strongly tied to emotional distress, anxiety, and a sense of alienation. By showing that CQ reduces cultural stress and promotes smoother adaptation, Ward et al. provide important evidence suggesting that CQ could also contribute to higher psychological well-being and lower negative affect, prerequisites for happiness in culturally diverse settings.

Presbitero (2016) Presbitero's (2016) metanalytic review is one of the most comprehensive evaluations of the CQ literature to date, aggregating findings from 42 empirical studies that examined CQ's relationship with cross-cultural outcomes, including adjustment, performance, stress, and psychological functioning. Presbitero's findings shows that cultural intelligence functions as a general psychological resource in intercultural contexts. Because cross-cultural adaptation is linked closely to emotional regulation, identity stability, and social integration, this study lays the base work for understanding CQ as a predictor not only of adjustment but also of affective well-being and life satisfaction.

Lei's (2025) research focuses on expatriate populations — individuals employed in a country other than their home culture who must negotiate on workplace norms, expectations that are social by nature, and broader cultural dynamics. Expatriate assignments are emotionally demanding particularly because they

involve prolonged exposure to unfamiliarity and high performance pressures. Expatriate adjustment is closely linked to psychological outcomes, including stress, job satisfaction, social integration, and life satisfaction. By showing that CQ — especially when combined with targeted cultural training — supports expatriate well-being, Lei's study highlights CQ's potential role in supporting the affective and cognitive aspects of happiness in long-term multicultural experiences.

Setti, Argentero, & Maass (2020) investigated how cultural Intelligence influences individuals' ability to understand emotional display rules — culturally shaped norms that govern how emotions should be expressed or suppressed in social interactions. Acculturative stress has significant psychological consequences, including anxiety, depressive symptoms, identity confusion, and social withdrawal. Setti et al.'s findings indicate that CQ facilitates emotional understanding and adjustment, reducing stress and promoting interpersonal ease — factors directly tied to emotional well-being and subjective happiness. Studies consistently find that cultural intelligence moderates or reduces the negative effects of acculturative stress.

Ayoob et al. (2015) found that CQ was significantly negatively related to acculturative stress and significantly positively related to psychological well-being.

Moreover, research on international students in Europe has shown that CQ can buffer perceived cultural distance—the extent to which individuals feel different from the host culture—thereby supporting both sociocultural and psychological adaptation.

Cultural Intelligence also plays a role in emotional regulation across cultures. While more research has focused on emotional Intelligence, findings suggest that CQ contributes indirectly by influencing cognitive appraisals of cultural situations and reducing threat perceptions. For example, studies on emotional display rules (how emotions are expressed appropriately across cultures) indicate that higher CQ is associated with better emotional adaptation and lower negative emotional displays such as anger or shame during intercultural adjustment.

These findings suggest that CQ may support effective emotional regulation, done not by altering emotions directly, but by shaping cognitive and interpretive processes that influence emotional outcomes.

### **2.5 Cultural Intelligence, Burnout and Stress**

Puzzo (2024) conducted a timely investigation into the burnout levels among social workers working in multicultural environments — one of the most emotionally demanding occupational settings due to chronic exposure to human suffering, resource limitations, and cultural complexity. Burnout is a well-established predictor of reduced life satisfaction, depression, and disengagement. Puzzo's findings therefore reinforce the notion that CQ acts as a protective factor, guarding individuals in high-stress, multicultural roles against mental health deterioration. This supports the broader hypothesis that CQ promotes long-term psychological resilience and happiness.

Bal (2022) examined how CQ moderates the relationship between emotional Intelligence and job satisfaction. CQ strengthened this relationship, implying that emotionally intelligent individuals benefit more from their abilities in multicultural workplaces when they possess high CQ. Job satisfaction is one of the most robust workplace predictors of overall life satisfaction and well-being. By showing that CQ strengthens the emotional foundations of job satisfaction, Bal's study positions CQ as a meta-competence that not only supports functional outcomes but also enhances emotional fulfilment and workplace happiness.

Alifuddin (2022) examined how CQ predicts psychological capital (PsyCap) and organizational citizenship behaviour. The study showed that CQ is positively associated with optimism, hope, and self-efficacy—all of which correlate with well-being. Alifuddin (2022) explored the relationship between CQ and Psychological Capital (PsyCap) — a construct encompassing hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience — and its downstream effects on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

Kokubun (2025) presented evidence linking CQ with a healthy lifestyle such as doing exercise, following diet, and good sleep. These behaviours are predictive of long-term happiness, showing an indirect pathway through which CQ contributes to well-being.

### **2.6 Measurement and Construct Validity**

Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh (2008) were instrumental in developing and validating the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS). This widely used instrument measures individuals' ability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings. Their research involved large cross-national samples across countries such as Singapore, the United States, and Malaysia. The study empirically confirmed the four-factor structure

of CQ—namely, metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions—and provided psychometric support for the scale's reliability and cross-cultural generalizability.

Sternberg (2022), one of the foremost scholars in human Intelligence, extended the understanding of CQ by positioning it as a "standalone construct" that significantly predicts adaptive behaviour in real-world scenarios. His comparative study evaluated the relative contributions of CQ, EQ, and IQ to individual success in multicultural environments, including international business, diplomacy, and education.

Wawrosz (2021) explored the relationship between CQ and self-construal (independent vs interdependent selves), indicating that individuals with high CQ are more likely to show flexible self-perceptions and adaptive behaviours. Self-construal flexibility is very important for identity coherence, especially for individuals operating in multicultural environments (e.g., expatriates, global workers, or third-culture kids). When individuals can fluidly adapt their self-views without psychological conflict, they report higher levels of self-esteem, purpose, and happiness. This positions CQ not only as a social skill but also as a core psychological resource supporting mental health.

## 2.7 Synthesis and Implication

The reviewed literature consistently supports the assertion that cultural Intelligence is a valuable psychological resource for navigating intercultural settings. High CQ individuals tend to experience better emotional regulation, social integration, and lower levels of stress and burnout. They also exhibit greater adaptability, which leads to enhanced well-being and happiness.

Moreover, the research highlights that motivational and metacognitive CQ are especially influential in promoting psychological resilience. Social connectedness and identity coherence emerged as key mediators in this relationship.

The implications are clear: educational institutions, workplaces, and policy-makers should consider interventions to build CQ as a pathway to enhance well-being in increasingly multicultural societies.

## 2.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed foundational, theoretical, and empirical studies which links cultural Intelligence to psychological well-being, happiness, and intercultural adjustment. The studies span diverse populations, including students, expatriates, professionals, and general multicultural samples. Each contributing to a richer understanding of how cultural Intelligence can serve as a key determinant of emotional and psychological outcomes in diverse settings. The next chapter outlines the research methodology for empirically examining these constructs in the current study.

# III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter there is an outline of the research methodology used to make an analysis on the relationship there is between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and happiness and psychological well-being among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This study seeks to make an empirical investigation whether higher levels of cultural intelligence are associated with greater subjective happiness and psychological well-being.

## 3.2 Research Design

The present study employs a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational research design. A correlational design was chosen because the objective of the study is to examine the relationship between naturally occurring variables, rather than manipulate or experimentally control them. Cultural intelligence is treated as a predictor variable, while happiness and psychological well-being are treated as outcome variables. The design is cross-sectional in nature, as data were collected from participants at a single point in time.

## 3.3 Variables of the Study

### Independent Variable

- Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

### Dependent Variables

- Subjective Happiness
- Psychological Well-Being

### **Sub-Dimensions of Cultural Intelligence**

- Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence
- Cognitive Cultural Intelligence
- Motivational Cultural Intelligence
- Behavioural Cultural Intelligence

### **3.4 Research Questions**

1. Is there a significant relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Happiness?
2. Is there a significant relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being?
3. Which dimensions of Cultural Intelligence significantly predict Happiness?
4. Which dimensions of Cultural Intelligence significantly predict Psychological Well-Being?

### **3.5 Research Hypothesis**

#### **Null Hypotheses**

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Happiness.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being.
- H<sub>03</sub>: The dimensions of Cultural Intelligence do not significantly predict Happiness.
- H<sub>04</sub>: The dimensions of Cultural Intelligence do not significantly predict Psychological Well-Being.

#### **Alternative Hypotheses**

- H<sub>11</sub>: Cultural Intelligence is positively correlated with Happiness.
- H<sub>12</sub>: Cultural Intelligence is positively correlated with Psychological Well-Being.
- H<sub>13</sub>: The dimensions of Cultural Intelligence significantly predict Happiness.
- H<sub>14</sub>: The dimensions of Cultural Intelligence significantly predict Psychological Well-Being.

### **3.6 Population of Sample**

#### **Target Population**

The target population consists of individuals aged between 18 and 40 years who have had exposure to culturally diverse environments through education, work, or social interactions.

#### **Sample Size**

The present study included a total of 100 participants. The sample size of 100 was considered adequate based on statistical guidelines for correlational and regression analyses. According to Cohen's (1992) recommendations, a minimum sample of 85–90 participants is required to detect medium effect sizes with a power of .80. Thus, a sample of 100 ensures sufficient statistical power.

#### **Sampling Technique**

A convenience sampling method was used. Participants were taken from university networks, social media platforms, and workplace contacts.

#### **Inclusion Criteria was as follows –**

- Age between 18–40 years
- Exposure to culturally diverse settings
- Willingness to participate voluntarily

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Individuals below 18 years
- Individuals with no exposure to culturally diverse environments

### **3.7 Sample Characteristics**

The sample consisted of:

- Undergraduate students
- Postgraduate students
- Working professionals

Demographic variables collected included:

- Age
- Gender
- Educational qualification
- Cultural exposure (domestic/international/both)

### 3.8 Tools for Data Collection

1. Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) - Developed by Ang et al. (2007)

The Scale for Cultural Intelligence consists of 20 items divided into four subscales:

1. Metacognitive CQ (4 items)
2. Cognitive CQ (6 items)
3. Motivational CQ (5 items)
4. Behavioural CQ (5 items)

Every item in the scale is rated on a Likert Scale of 7 points which ranges from 1 - Strongly Disagree to 7 - Strongly Agree.

The CQS has demonstrated good reliability across studies, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging between .70 and .90.

2. Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) - Developed by Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999)

The SHS consists of 4 items measured on a 7-point Likert scale. It assesses global subjective happiness rather than momentary mood.

Reported internal consistency ranges from .79 to .94.

One item is reverse scored.

3. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (18-Item Version) - Developed by Ryff (1989)

This scale measures six dimensions:

1. Autonomy
2. Environmental Mastery
3. Personal Growth
4. Positive Relations
5. Purpose in Life
6. Self-Acceptance

Rating is done on a Likert Scale of 6 points from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Several items are reverse scored before computing the total score.

### 3.9 Procedure

1. Participants were approached through online platforms and institutional networks.
2. They were provided with an informed consent form.
3. Upon agreement, participants completed the questionnaire via Google Forms.
4. The questionnaire took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete.
5. Data were exported to SPSS for analysis.

Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was maintained.

### 3.10 Scoring Procedure

#### Cultural Intelligence

Total CQ score was calculated by computing the mean of 20 items.

Subscale means were calculated separately.

#### Happiness

The mean score of the four SHS items was computed after reverse coding the negatively worded item.

#### Psychological Well-Being

Reverse-scored items were recoded, and the overall mean score was calculated.

Higher scores mean that there are higher levels of the respective construct.

### 3.11 Statistical Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS.

#### Step 1: Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was computed for:

- Cultural Intelligence Scale
- Subjective Happiness Scale
- Psychological Well-Being Scale

#### Step 2: Descriptive Statistics

For this the Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values were calculated.

#### Step 3: Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine:

- CQ and Happiness
- CQ and Psychological Well-Being
- CQ dimensions and dependent variables

#### Step 4: Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was conducted to find out whether the four CQ dimensions significantly predict:

- Happiness
- Psychological Well-Being

Significance level was set at  $p < .05$ .

### 3.12 Ethical Consideration

- Informed consent was obtained.
- Participation was voluntary.
- Participants could withdraw at any time.
- No identifying information was collected.
- Data were used strictly for academic purposes.
- Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter shows the statistical findings of the study examining the relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Happiness, and Psychological Well-Being among 100 participants. Data were analysed using SPSS. The analyses conducted included:

- Descriptive statistics
- Pearson's correlation analysis
- Multiple regression analysis

All hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the central tendency and variability of the study variables.

Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables (N = 100)

Table 4.1 – Descriptive Statistics

| Variable                      | Mean | SD   | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|
| Cultural Intelligence (Total) | 4.01 | 0.57 | 2.6     | 5.2     |
| Metacognitive CQ              | 3.96 | 0.63 | 2.45    | 5.81    |
| Cognitive CQ                  | 4.02 | 0.71 | 2.09    | 5.94    |
| Motivational CQ               | 4.06 | 0.76 | 2.03    | 5.6     |
| Behavioural CQ                | 4.03 | 0.68 | 2.29    | 5.55    |
| Happiness                     | 4.4  | 0.67 | 2.54    | 5.88    |
| Psychological Well-Being      | 3.47 | 0.47 | 2.44    | 4.95    |

The mean scores show moderate-to-high levels of Cultural Intelligence and Happiness within the sample. Psychological Well-Being scores reflect moderate functioning across participants.

### 4.3 Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability was checked using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 4.2 - Reliability Coefficients

| Scale                    | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Cultural Intelligence    | 20           | 0.89             |
| Metacognitive CQ         | 4            | 0.83             |
| Cognitive CQ             | 6            | 0.85             |
| Motivational CQ          | 5            | 0.87             |
| Behavioural CQ           | 5            | 0.84             |
| Happiness                | 4            | 0.82             |
| Psychological Well-Being | 18           | 0.88             |

All scales showcased good internal consistency ( $\alpha > .80$ ), indicating that the measurement is reliable.

### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to check on the relationships between Cultural Intelligence and outcome variables.

#### 4.4.1 Cultural Intelligence and Happiness

The correlation between total Cultural Intelligence and Happiness was:

Table 4.3 - Correlation Between CQ and Happiness

| Variables            | R    | P      |
|----------------------|------|--------|
| CQ Total – Happiness | 0.49 | < .001 |

95% Confidence Interval for r: [.324, .630]

Effect size interpretation (Cohen, 1988):

$r = .49$  indicates a moderate-to-strong positive relationship.

This indicates that individuals with higher Cultural Intelligence tend to report higher Happiness levels.

$H_{01}$  was rejected.

#### 4.4.2 Cultural Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being

The correlation between total Cultural Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being was:

Table 4.4 - Correlation Between CQ and Psychological Well-Being

| Variables      | R     | P      |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| CQ Total – PWB | 0.556 | < .001 |

95% Confidence Interval for r: [.401, .678]

Effect size: Moderate-to-strong positive correlation.

H<sub>02</sub> was rejected.

#### 4.4.3 Correlation between CQ dimensions and Outcomes

Table 4.5 - Correlation Matrix

| V. Variable      | Happiness | PWB    |
|------------------|-----------|--------|
| Metacognitive CQ | .451**    | .546** |
| Cognitive CQ     | .315**    | .499** |
| Motivational CQ  | .419**    | .487** |
| Behavioural CQ   | .312**    | .567** |

\*\*p < .01

All four dimensions were positively correlated with both dependent variables, suggesting that different facets of Cultural Intelligence contribute to psychological outcomes

### 4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

#### 4.5.1 Regression Predicting Happiness

A multiple regression analysis was conducted with the four CQ dimensions as predictors.

Table 4.6 - Regression Predicting Happiness

| Model Summary                  |
|--------------------------------|
| R = .484                       |
| R <sup>2</sup> = .234          |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .202 |
| F(4,95) = 7.267                |
| p < .001                       |

| Predictor        | B      | SE    | Beta   | T      | P     |
|------------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
| Metacognitive CQ | 0.419  | 0.157 | 0.267  | 2.67   | 0.009 |
| Cognitive CQ     | -0.062 | 0.139 | -0.044 | -0.444 | 0.658 |
| Motivational CQ  | 0.25   | 0.128 | 0.197  | 1.949  | 0.054 |
| Behavioural CQ   | -0.132 | 0.151 | -0.087 | -0.874 | 0.384 |

The model explained 23.4% of the variance in Happiness.

Metacognitive CQ emerged as a significant predictor of Happiness.

H<sub>03</sub> was rejected for Happiness.

#### 4.5.2 Regression Predicting Psychological Well-Being

Table 4.7 - Regression Predicting Psychological Well-Being

| Model Summary                  |
|--------------------------------|
| R = .603                       |
| R <sup>2</sup> = .364          |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .337 |
| F(4,95) = 13.57                |
| p < .001                       |

| Predictor        | B     | SE    | Beta  | t     | P     |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Metacognitive CQ | 0.177 | 0.1   | 0.178 | 1.771 | 0.08  |
| Cognitive CQ     | 0.049 | 0.088 | 0.056 | 0.559 | 0.578 |
| Motivational CQ  | 0.025 | 0.082 | 0.031 | 0.311 | 0.756 |
| Behavioural CQ   | 0.213 | 0.096 | 0.221 | 2.212 | 0.029 |

The model explained 36.4% of the variance in Psychological Well-Being. Behavioural CQ predicted significantly Psychological Well-Being. H<sub>04</sub> was rejected.

#### 4.6 Effect Size Interpretation

R<sup>2</sup> = .234 indicates a medium effect size for Happiness.

R<sup>2</sup> = .364 indicates a large effect size for Psychological Well-Being.

The correlations (r = .49 and r = .56) indicate meaningful significance.

#### 4.7 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 4.8 – Hypothesis summary

| Hypothesis      | Result   |
|-----------------|----------|
| H <sub>01</sub> | Rejected |
| H <sub>02</sub> | Rejected |
| H <sub>03</sub> | Rejected |
| H <sub>04</sub> | Rejected |

### V. DATA ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to examine the role of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in predicting Happiness and Psychological Well-Being among individuals exposed to culturally diverse environments. The findings showed significant positive relationships between Cultural Intelligence and both outcome variables. Additionally, specific dimensions of CQ—particularly Metacognitive CQ and Behavioural CQ—emerged as significant predictors of psychological outcomes.

#### 5.2 Discussion of Key Finding

##### 5.2.1 Cultural Intelligence and Happiness

The results indicated a moderate positive correlation between Cultural Intelligence and Happiness (r = .490, p < .001). This shows that individuals who have greater cultural awareness, knowledge, motivation, and behavioural adaptability tend to experience higher levels of subjective happiness.

This finding aligns with:

- Mehra (2023), who found that higher CQ predicted greater psychological well-being among Indian college students.
- Renzhi et al. (2024), who demonstrated that CQ enhances happiness through improved social connectedness.
- Sternberg (2022), who argued that CQ uniquely contributes to real-world adaptive success.

From a theoretical perspective, this relationship can be understood through Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Individuals high in CQ may experience:

- Greater autonomy (confidence navigating diverse contexts)
- Greater competence (ability to adapt)
- Greater relatedness (forming meaningful cross-cultural relationships)

These three psychological needs are foundational to happiness.

Thus, Cultural Intelligence appears to function as a psychological resource that enhances life satisfaction in culturally complex environments

### 5.2.2 Cultural Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being

A stronger correlation was observed between Cultural Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being ( $r = .556, p < .001$ ). This indicates that CQ contributes not only to emotional happiness but also to deeper aspects of psychological functioning.

This supports:

- Ward et al. (2009), who linked CQ to sociocultural adjustment.
- Presbitero (2016), who demonstrated CQ's strong predictive value in cross-cultural adaptation.
- Alifuddin (2022), who linked CQ to Psychological Capital (hope, resilience, optimism).

Ryff's model of well-being emphasizes:

- Purpose in life
- Environmental mastery
- Positive relations
- Personal growth

Individuals high in CQ are better equipped to navigate multicultural challenges, which likely strengthens environmental mastery and positive relations, contributing to overall well-being.

### 5.2.3 Role of Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence

Metacognitive CQ significantly predicted Happiness ( $p = .009$ ). This dimension reflects awareness and regulation of cultural assumptions during interactions.

Individuals high in metacognitive CQ:

- Reflect on their cultural biases
- Adjust cognitive frameworks
- Engage in conscious intercultural processing

This may reduce social misunderstandings and interpersonal stress, leading to enhanced emotional well-being.

This finding aligns with:

- Lei (2025), who found metacognitive CQ predicts expatriate adjustment.
- Wawrosz (2021), who linked CQ with self-construal flexibility.

Metacognitive awareness appears to facilitate emotional clarity and social confidence, thereby contributing to subjective happiness.

### 5.2.4 Role of Behavioural Cultural Intelligence

Behavioural CQ significantly predicted Psychological Well-Being ( $p = .029$ ). This dimension reflects the ability to modify verbal and non-verbal behaviour according to cultural context.

Individuals high in behavioural CQ:

- Communicate effectively across cultures
- Demonstrate socially appropriate behaviour
- Reduce cross-cultural friction

This enhances social acceptance and relational harmony, contributing to positive relations and environmental mastery — key components of Ryff's well-being model.

This supports:

- Setti et al. (2020), who found high CQ reduces acculturative stress.
- Puzzo (2024), who found motivational and behavioural CQ protect against burnout.

Behavioural adaptability thus appears to play a direct role in sustained psychological well-being.

### 5.3 Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to the literature in several ways:

- **Extending CQ Beyond Performance Outcomes** - Much of the CQ literature focuses on job performance and adaptation. This study strengthens evidence that CQ also predicts internal psychological states such as happiness and well-being.
- **Integration with Positive Psychology** - The study integrates Cultural Intelligence with Positive Psychology frameworks, suggesting that CQ functions as a character strength or psychological asset.
- **Multidimensional Impact** - Different dimensions of CQ influence different aspects of well-being, highlighting the multidimensional nature of cultural adaptation.

### 5.4 Practical Implications

The findings have important applied implications:

**Educational Institutions** - Universities can incorporate CQ development programs to enhance student well-being in multicultural campuses.

**Corporate Organizations** - Organizations operating globally can invest in CQ training to:

- Reduce workplace stress
- Improve employee satisfaction
- Enhance psychological resilience

**Expatriate Training Programs** - Pre-departure CQ training may improve emotional adjustment and reduce mental health risks.

**Mental Health Interventions** - Psychologists working with culturally diverse populations can integrate CQ-building strategies into therapy

### 5.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite significant findings, the study has certain limitations:

- Cross-sectional design prevents causal inference.
- Self-report measures may introduce social desirability bias.
- Sample size limited to 100 participants.
- Convenience sampling limits generalizability.
- Cultural background diversity was not deeply stratified.

### 5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies may:

- Use longitudinal designs to assess causal relationships.
- Include cross-national samples.
- Examine mediators such as social connectedness.
- Explore moderating variables such as personality or emotional intelligence.
- Use experimental CQ training interventions.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the role of Cultural Intelligence in predicting Happiness and Psychological Well-Being among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Using a quantitative correlational design (N = 100), the study found that Cultural Intelligence is significantly and positively associated with both Happiness and Psychological Well-Being.

Metacognitive CQ significantly predicted Happiness, while Behavioural CQ significantly predicted Psychological Well-Being.

The findings suggest that Cultural Intelligence is not merely a professional competency but a psychological asset that enhances emotional and existential well-being. In an increasingly globalized world, the ability to navigate cultural diversity appears to contribute meaningfully to human flourishing. Cultural Intelligence may therefore be conceptualized as:

- A resilience factor
- A social competence skill
- A psychological resource
- A contributor to happiness

As societies become more culturally interconnected, the psychological ability to understand, adapt, and engage across cultural boundaries becomes increasingly important. The present study provides empirical support for the argument that Cultural Intelligence plays a significant role in shaping happiness and well-being in diverse environments.

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