



Academic Staff Cultural Intelligence and Job Performance in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract: This study is focused on the effect of cultural intelligence (CQ) on job performance of academic staff in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Cultural intelligence dimensions studied were metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions. Data were collected from a convenient sample size of 837 academic staff of four public universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria using an adapted questionnaire that was earlier developed and applied by different scholars. Descriptive and inferential statistics provided the basis for the analysis. This result agrees with earlier studies and reinforces that cultural intelligence significantly affects job performance.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence; Metacognitive; Cognitive; Motivational; Behavioral; Job performance

1. Introduction

Nigeria, as a nation, is an amalgam of different ethnic nationalities, each of which presents a different cultural setting. Given her multi-ethnic and multicultural nature, her tertiary institutions, which invariably draw their human elements, both employees and students, from the country and beyond, are bound to be culturally diverse. According to Akpan and Inyang (2018), a culturally diverse organization should give room for a level of inclusiveness to enhance job performance by employees. They explained that this inclusiveness, which calls for cultural intelligence, should cover everything from language, cultural norms, religion, ancestry, social class, among other things.

Here, cultural intelligence refers to individuals' capability to successfully adapt to new and unfamiliar cultural settings and their ability to function effectively and effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity (Ang, Van Dyne, and Rockstuhl, 2015). Specifically, it is a non-academic intelligence that portrays a person's competence in functioning seamlessly in those environments representative of cultural variety. It incorporates a collection of mental, motivational, and behavioral abilities distinct from other non-academic intelligence like emotional intelligence in that such intelligence are culture constrained as they do not transfer across the cultural spectrum in today's multicultural organizations (Presbitero, 2016). Cultural intelligence, according to Presbitero (2016), can be a source of enhanced job performance, particularly when applied to the understanding and management of cultural differences within the organization.

Recent research on cultural intelligence has generally focused on two areas. First, several have discussed the changing nature of the workplace, the general decline in mono-cultural organizations, and the multicultural nature of today's organizations (e.g., Guðmundsdóttir, 2015; Desmond and Desmond, 2016; Adekunle and Ibitayo, 2014). These articles have typically provided anecdotal evidence of the role of cultural intelligence in helping employees in such organizations cope with the challenges brought about by cultural diversity. Second, another line of research has investigated the effect of expatriates' cultural intelligence on employee performance (e.g., Livermore, 2011; Adam and Friend, 2014; Sanders, 2019; David and Rowe, 2017). This literature suggests that cultural intelligence on the part of expatriates leads to higher performance by the expatriates. However, both sets of studies have ignored the multi-dimensional nature of cultural intelligence and have instead examined global assessments of cultural intelligence. Therefore, based on prior conceptualizations which suggest that cultural intelligence is divided into four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral (Ng, Van Dyne and Ang, 2008), this research focuses on the effect of the different dimensions on job performance of academic staff in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature and Hypothesis Formulation

2.1 Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) originated from theories and research on emotional and social intelligences, but previous research on these types of intelligence did not adequately address the complexities of working in cross-cultural contexts (Van Dyne et al., 2008). Earley Ang, and Van Dyne (2008) introduced the construct of CQ based upon the gap in the literature that interpreted and explained culturally-based decision-making and behavioral differences in types of intelligence. They defined cultural intelligence (CQ) as the ability to learn new patterns in cultural interactions and provide correct behavioral responses to these patterns. According to Ang et al. (2007), cultural intelligence is a specific form of intelligence focused on the ability to learn, evaluate and behave effectively in different situations characterized by cultural diversity. It is a multi-dimensional construct that enables the individual to learn continuously and have a better coexistence with people of other cultures. It consists of four bases of intelligence: metacognitive, which refers to the awareness that individuals have for interactions with individuals of different cultures; cognitive, which refers to the specific knowledge one has about the rules, habits and conventions in new cultural backgrounds; motivational, that captures the motivation that an individual has to learn and act effectively in various situations; and behavioral, conceptualized as the flexibility of an individual to demonstrate appropriate actions with individuals from other cultural contexts (Livermore, 2011). All of metacognition, cognition, and motivation are situated within the head in that they are mental capabilities, while behaviors manifest as explicit actions

a. Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence (MetCQ)

Metacognitive CQ encompasses the capacity to both procure and comprehend cultural knowledge (Ang et al., 2015). As such, metacognitive CQ mirrors the ability to think about prevailing cross-cultural assumptions and to modify them as appropriate, thereby assisting persons in having an improved awareness of their cultural predilections both before and in the course of cross-cultural exchanges (Eisenberg et al., 2013). According to Triandis (2006), persons with high metacognitive CQ have increased awareness of how their own culture determines their behavior and their understanding of intercultural situations. This awareness includes self-awareness, other-awareness, and situational awareness (Triandis, 2006).

To understand the nature of metacognitive CQ, specific metacognitive self-regulated mental processes are mentioned. These are planning, awareness, and checking. Planning has a strategic basis and it is launched before encountering another culture. It is thinking about culture and reflecting on what is to be done before the actual action. Awareness is knowing about cultural thinking and knowledge of self and others in real-time. (Chen, Wu, and Bian, 2014). While planning is about accepting consciousness, awareness depicts the degree to which people have a real-time understanding of how culture influences: their mental processes and behaviors; the mental processes and behaviors of others in intercultural interactions; and intercultural situations. Checking includes reviewing assumptions and adjusting mental maps when experience is not the same as expectations. It uses the method of comparing between the expected outcome and the actual outcome of intercultural communication. All three sub-dimensions of the metacognitive CQ prompt a person with high metacognitive CQ to plan, reflect upon the situation during the actual contact and adjust the behavior accordingly.

b. Cognitive Cultural Intelligence (CogCQ)

Cognitive CQ accumulates the general knowledge about cultures and cultural differences. Perception of elements that build up the cultural environment brings an understanding of how the system arranges the patterns of behavior and interactions within a culture and why behaviors and interactions differ across different cultural settings (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008). This general knowledge can be divided culture-general knowledge and context-specific knowledge.

Culture-general knowledge is explained as knowledge of the universal elements that constitute a cultural environment (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008). It gives an essential organizational framework for thinking about possible ways of comparing different cultures and understanding the similarities and differences. Context-specific knowledge deals with the field of informative knowledge about the manifestation of cultural characteristics in a specific environment and the procedural knowledge on how to be effective in that environment. An environment, or domain could be related to particular subcultures such as business environment, diplomatic environment, peacekeeping forces, educators or demographic

subgroups based on gender, age, and education. The individuals working in multicultural tertiary institutional environments should possess detailed cultural knowledge about the norms and expectations of these subcultures to perform effectively. Context-specific knowledge is directed to the specific insider understanding of how to operate within a particular environment, whereas culture-general knowledge refers to a broader comparison across cultures based on outsider understanding and comparisons (Morris, Kwok, Ames, and Lickel, 1999).

c. Motivational Cultural Intelligence (MotCQ)

Motivational CQ reflects the ability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in culturally diverse situations. Stanley and Davis (2019) argued that such motivational capacities provide control cognition and behavior that facilitate goal accomplishment. According to the expectancy-value theory of motivation, the direction and magnitude of energy channeled toward a particular task are decided by two elements: the expectation that the task will be accomplished and the value associated with achieving the task (Du Plessis, 2011). Those with high motivational CQ direct attention and energy toward cross-cultural situations based on intrinsic interest and confidence in cross-cultural effectiveness (Guðmundsdóttir, 2015).

d. Behavioral Cultural Intelligence (BehCQ)

Behavioral CQ reflects an individual's capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions while interacting with people from different cultures. Behavioral CQ includes sub-dimensions of verbal, non-verbal behavior, and speech acts (Van Dyne et al., 2012). Verbal behavior refers to flexibility in vocalization. A person can adjust their behavior by changing the pace of the speech, the amount of warmth or enthusiasm, the use of pauses or silence. Nonverbal behavior is defined as flexibility in communication using gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Some cultures are more expressive in non-verbal means of communication than the others. The task for a non-local outsider is to learn through the metacognitive CQ the appropriate ways of nonverbal communication and adjust his or her behavior accordingly.

2.2 Job Performance

Job performance is defined as the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period (Du Plessis, 2011). The nature of job performance in an organization depends on the demands of the job, the goals and mission of the organization, and beliefs in the organization about which behaviors are most valued (Adam and Friend, 2013). Job performance can be categorized into task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance (Sonnentag et al., 2008).

Task performance (TaskPerf) refers to actions that are part of the formal reward system (i.e., technical core) and addresses the requirements as specified in job descriptions (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). It covers the fulfillment of the conditions that are part of the contract between the employer and employee. Task performance is a multi-dimensional construct that is important to both the organization and the employee. On the one hand, employees feel pride and attend higher job satisfaction by achieving the prescribed tasks (Edwards, Bell, Arthur and Decuir, 2008). Also, variance in positive work-related outcomes for the employee, such as career advancement, is explained by task performance (Adebayo, 2019). On the other hand, managers rated task performance as most important in overall work performance, thus indicating that task performance contributes to the overall performance of the organization (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). Past studies have identified general mental ability as a good predictor of task performance (Schmidt and Hunter, 2004). Also, conscientiousness, a non-cognitive variable, was found to predict differences in employees' task performance levels (Kamdar and VanDyne, (2007).

Often it is not sufficient to comply with the formal job requirements. One needs to go beyond what is formally required (Henderson, 2020). Contextual performance consists of behaviors that are not directly prescribed in the job specification or schedule but supports the organizational, social, and psychological environment (Akpan, Okwudu and Imagha, 2021). Contextual performance is different from task performance in that it includes activities that are not formally part of the job description. It contributes to organizational performance by facilitating task performance. Past studies have conceptualized and measured contextual performance in two ways: stabilizing contextual performance and proactive contextual performance (Sonnentag et al., 2010).

The stabilizing contextual performance (ConPerf) comprises organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and some aspects of pro-social organizational behavior (Organ, 1988; Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). It consists of five components: altruism; conscientiousness; civic virtue; courtesy; and sportsmanship (Akpan, Okwudu and Imagha, 2021). The proactive contextual performance includes personal initiative, taking charge, and proactive behavior. Proactive behavior refers to showing self-initiated and future-oriented action that aims to challenge the status quo and improve the current situation (Van Dyne et al., 2012). In sum, contextual performance is not a single set of uniform behaviors, but is multi-dimensional (Van Dyne et al., 2012).

Adaptive performance (AdPerf) refers to the extent of adaptation to changes in the workplace (Jyoti and Kour, 2015). The Present domain includes eight-dimensional taxonomy as proposed by Van Dyne et al. (2012) (handling emergencies or crisis; handling work stress; solving problems creatively; dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations; learning work tasks, technologies and procedures; explaining interpersonal adaptability; demonstrating cultural adaptability, and demonstrating physically oriented adaptability).

2.3 Cultural Intelligence and Job Performance

Cultural Intelligence is a multi-dimensional construct comprising metacognitive cultural intelligence, cognitive cultural intelligence, motivational cultural intelligence, and behavioral cultural intelligence. A culturally intelligent individual enjoys the opportunity of being exposed to the different behaviors of people from other cultures and maintains personal identity when exposed to different cultural values.

Researchers have found a relationship between cultural intelligence (CQ) and job performance (Jyoti and Kour, 2015). Jyoti and Kour (2015) asserted that individuals who often perform poorly when exposed to different cultural settings do so because of their inability to understand cultural differences in role expectations. This position is held by many other authors. Specifically, Ang et al. (2007); Lee and Sukoco (2010); Assam and Emele (2020) believe that CQ significantly influences job performance. These studies demonstrated that individuals who are more aware of their environment (meta-cognitive CQ) and who can adapt their behavior accordingly (behavioral CQ) are better at understanding and enacting culturally appropriate role expectations. They have a more accurate understanding of expected role behavior in situations characterized by cultural diversity (Dennis and Fred. 2019). Similarly, motivational and behavioral CQ is positively related to job performance (Assam and Emele, 2020). A culturally intelligent person will be able to understand and interact with people of other cultures and as a result, this will increase their performance. Also, intercultural competencies should reduce the misunderstandings in role expectations and eventually enhance performance. Based on the above, it is expected that metacognitive cultural intelligence, cognitive cultural intelligence, motivational cultural intelligence and behavioral cultural intelligence will influence employee task and contextual performance. Specifically, it is expected that cultural intelligence will be positively related to job performance.

Hypothesis: Cultural intelligence (CQ) is positively and significantly related to job performance.

The above hypothesis implies that $JP = f(\text{MetCQ}, \text{CogCQ}, \text{MotCQ}, \text{BehCQ})$

where:

JP = job performance

MetCQ = metacognitive cultural intelligence

CogCQ = cognitive cultural intelligence

MotCQ = motivational cultural intelligence

BehCQ = behavioral cultural intelligence

3. Methods

3.1 Sample

The study was conducted in four (4) public universities located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. These universities were chosen because they are public universities with a large capacity to admit people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The target population for the study comprised all the academic staff of the universities, from which a sample size of 900 was drawn using the convenience sampling technique.

3.2 Measures

Cultural Intelligence: Four dimensions of cultural intelligence; metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions of cultural intelligence were examined in this study. The items contained in these scales were adapted from (Ang et al., 2007). There were 20 items in all. These items were subjected to face and content validity, and Cronbach Alpha reliability statistics was adopted to test the reliability of the items. An overall reliability coefficient of 0.71 was achieved. All items were designed using the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. A high rating for any person on this scale indicates their abilities to better understand a new cultural environment, and behave and respond appropriately according to that environment. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to examine all the items of cultural intelligence. A four-factor model ($\chi^2 = 258.10$) fit the data significantly better than a one, two or three-factor model, and all items loaded significantly onto their specified factor. The key fit indices were as follows: GFI = .93; RMSEA = .076; CFI = .99; TLI = .96). The four-factor model fit the data.

Job Performance: Job performance was sub-divided into three dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance. The items to measure job performance were adapted from Bhari and Beri (2016). While Bhari and Beri (2016) identified 41 items from job performance, only 24 items were adapted for this study. Cronbach alpha for this set of items was 0.79. All items were designed using the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. All the job performance items were examined using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). A three-factor model ($\chi^2 = 276.22$) fit the data reasonably well, and all items loaded significantly onto their specified factor. The key fit indices were as follows: GFI .87, RMSEA .079, CFI .97, and TLI .90. Moreover, this three-factor solution fit the data significantly better than a one or two-factor model. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents during official hours at their places of work.

4. Results and Interpretation

Of the 900 copies of the questionnaire administered, 837 copies were properly completed and returned. Data these copies were used for the analysis. Demographic data showed that 62.2% were male and 37.8% were female.

Table 1: Pearson product correlation matrix

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	MetCQ	1						
2	CogCQ	0.23	1					
3	MotCQ	0.26	0.29	1				
4	BehCQ	0.24	0.28	0.27	1			
5	TaskPerf	0.16	0.17	0.15	0.23	1		
6	ContextPerf	0.38	0.33	0.41	0.31	0.17	1	
7	AdaptivePerf	0.42	0.39	0.49	0.44	0.07	0.10	1

*Correlation coefficients >.19 were considered significant at $p < .05$. MetCQ = Metacognitive cultural intelligence; CogCQ = Cognitive cultural intelligence; MotCQ = Motivational cultural intelligence; BehCQ = Behavioral cultural intelligence; TaskPerf = Task performance; ContextPerf = Contextual performance; and AdaptivePerf = Adaptive performance.

Source: Data Analysis, 2021

Table 1 displays the bivariate correlation for the variables of cultural intelligence and job performance. The results show that all variables of cultural intelligence have positive and significant relationship with both contextual performance and adaptive performance. However, none of the cultural intelligence variables showed significant relationship with task performance except behavioral cultural intelligence. These results indicate that cultural intelligence has a significant influence on both contextual performance and adaptive performance but not task performance except for the behavioral cultural intelligence dimension and that individuals with high cultural intelligence are likely to contribute more to both contextual performance and adaptive performance than task performance.

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression analysis of cultural intelligence on measures of job performance

Independent variables	Dependent Variables			
	Overall Job Performance	Task Performance	Contextual Performance	Adaptive performance
Metacognitive CQ	0.182** (2.220) [0.082]	-0.006 (0.649) [0.010]	0.167** (0.516) [0.047]	0.231** (3.305) [0.065]
Cognitive CQ	0.223** (2.624) [0.085]	-0.071 (-0.247) [0.331]	0.263** (3.887) [0.062]	0.187** (2.561) [0.090]
Motivational CQ	0.214** (2.301) [0.093]	-0.050 (-1.049) [0.041]	0.171** (3.791) [0.043]	0.281** (3.230) [0.087]
Behavioral CQ	0.212** (2.120) [0.100]	0.142** (4.071) [0.029]	0.234** (3.386) [0.061]	0.210** (2.099) [0.100]
Constant(α)	14.992	0.341	13.111	10.017
F-value	61.780**	0.774	47.281**	47.281**
R²	0.635	0.024	0.391	0.457
Adjusted R²	0.631	0.011	0.384	0.452
N	837	837	837	837

Note: ** value is significant as $p < 0.05$

Source: Data analysis, 2021.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis, as shown in Table 2, was used to investigate the predictors of job performance and to evaluate the amount of variance in job performance that could be explained by the independent variables. To facilitate data analysis, the dependent variable- job performance was further decomposed into the three key measures (task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance). The entire job performance model has a strong coefficient of determination (R^2) = 0.635. This value denotes a strong link between the predictors (variables of cultural intelligence) and job performance. The corrected coefficient of determination (adjusted R^2) = 0.631 is also shown in the results. This means that the fitted model and its predictor variables explain approximately 63.1 per cent of the variance in job performance. The remaining 36.9 percent could be ascribed to chance or exogenous variables.

Also, the overall fit of the regression model appears to be good, with F-statistics =61.780 and a matching p-value ($p=0.001$) that was significant at 0.05 level. As a result, the regression model fits the data at the 0.05 level of significance. In other words, this model accurately depicts the relationships between the dependent and predictor variables. This shows that the cultural intelligence dimensions under consideration have a positive and significant effect on the job performance of academic staff in Nigerian universities.

Table 2 also provides valuable evidence that collectively the amount of variance explained by the four dimensions of cultural intelligence was 1.1% in the equation predicting task performance, 38.4% in the equation predicting contextual performance, and 45.2% in the equation predicting adaptive performance. However, only the behavioral cultural intelligence dimension had a significant relationship with the various aspects of job performance. In contrast, the other three dimensions of cultural intelligence (i.e., metacognitive cultural intelligence, cognitive cultural intelligence, and motivational cultural intelligence) did not relate significantly to task performance rather, they related significantly to only contextual performance and adaptive performance.

5. Discussion of findings and Managerial Implication

This study hypothesized that cultural intelligence (CQ) is positively and significantly related to job performance. Remarkably, consistent patterns have emerged from the empirical result of the various independent variables from the

two statistical methods employed. Perhaps the most critical insight obtained from the analysis is that only the behavioral cultural intelligence dimension related significantly and positively to all three dimensions of job performance. The other three dimensions of cultural intelligence (i.e., metacognitive cultural intelligence, cognitive cultural intelligence, and motivational cultural intelligence) related significantly and positively to contextual performance and adaptive performance dimensions but not to task performance. This suggests that metacognitive cultural intelligence, cognitive cultural intelligence, and motivational cultural intelligence do not significantly predict task performance. Rather, these dimensions of cultural intelligence only predict significantly contextual performance and adaptive performance. Thus, consistent with the premises Van Dyne et al. (2012), Guðmundsdóttir (2015), Assam and Emele (2020), it appears that exhibiting appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions while interacting with people from different cultures tend to more directly influence overall job performance than the ability to think about prevailing cross-cultural assumptions, accumulate the general knowledge about cultures and cultural differences, and the ability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in culturally diverse situations. Assam and Emele (2020) opined that cultural intelligence dimensions might not necessarily influence the outcome of task performance because task performance addresses the requirements as specified in job descriptions. As such, employees, irrespective of their level of cultural intelligence, are bound by contract and therefore strive to do their duties right to earn the accompanying rewards. They further opined that the behavioral cultural intelligence dimension could only influence all three dimensions of employee work behavior because of the four dimensions of cultural intelligence; it is the only dimension that involves outward action, both verbal and non-verbal.

The empirical findings show all dimensions of cultural intelligence under study are vital for managers of multicultural academic institutions. As a result, managers of these institutions should examine prospective employees' levels of cultural intelligence during the hiring and selection process. These dimensions of cultural intelligence, in addition to academic qualifications and employment experience, should be considered throughout the interview process. Also, employers should take into account employee orientation after employment, as well as subsequent training and development. Job performance in academic institutions will be improved due to these cultural intelligence actions.

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