TRAINING AS A FACTOR OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT – CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *Training for the purpose of cultural intelligence (CQ) development is essential in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. It fosters cultural empathy, respect, and understanding of the values of different cultures, reduces stereotypes, and promotes harmony in a culturally diverse world, preparing people to work effectively in a multicultural context. Hence, the aim of the paper is to investigate whether different types of training influence the CQ level of students whose career goal is to live and work abroad. Study results show that the influence is positive and that training can be essential to CQ development.*

Keywords*: Cultural Intelligence; Students; Training.*

JEL code: *I23; M53; O15.*

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to create opportunities for more dynamic growth and development, companies increasingly decide to enter the international business scene. This often requires a certain number of employees to be delegated tasks that need to be performed in a different institutional and socio-cultural environment. Employees who are delegated such tasks are expected to accept diversity in the fields of culture, politics, business practices, different styles of verbal and non-verbal communication, etc. One of the most important factors that influences their success in meeting these demands is possessing a specific form of intelligence known as *cultural intelligence (CQ)*.

CQ represents an individual's ability to successfully adapt to a different cultural context (Earley, 2002). It is a complex category consisting of four components: cognitive, metacognitive, behavioral, and motivational (Earley & Ang, 2003). These components, and CQ as a whole, are influenced by numerous factors, such as the cultural exposure of the person, the depth of cultural exposure, multicultural training etc. (Crowne, 2008).

When it comes to multicultural training, many empirical research showed that it has positive influence on CQ development (Chenyang, 2022; Azevedeo & Shane, 2019; Rehg et al., 2012). In addition, it was found that multicultural training facilitates all three aspects of expatriates' adjustment, such as work adjustment, interaction adjustment and general adjustment (Waxin & Panaccio, 2004). Further, it was found that CQ has positive influence on expatriates' performance as well (Chenyang, 2022). Since it appears that multicultural training is one of the most important factors that influence CQ development (which has many positive consequences), the subject of this paper is investigating the influence of different training methods on the CQ of the students who are studying the course International Management at the Faculty of

Economics at the University of Niš and whose career aim is to live and work abroad. For the purpose of this paper, empirical research was done. The sample consisted of 98 respondents. The aim of the paper is to find out whether training observed through the form of foreign language learning, the level of foreign language knowledge, and watching foreign films and series for the purpose of introducing different cultures influence the level of CQ of the students.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Firstly, literature review on CQ and hypothesis development are presented. Secondly, research methodology and results are presented. Lastly, concluding remarks are given.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Literature review. CQ is a relatively new concept, discussed more intensively in the literature since 2003, when Earley and Ang published the book „Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures". Since then, this category has become the subject of interest for many authors, resulting in numerous definitions of it, finding out different factors that influence it, and in identifying different consequences that it produces.

According to Earley (2002), CQ represents an individual's ability to successfully adapt to a different cultural context. Similarly, Dyne et al. (2015) state that CQ represents a person's ability to function effectively in different cultural environments.

CQ is also described as an individual's desire to understand the diversity of interpersonal relationships in the work environment and private life from a political, cultural, and ethical perspective (Mendenhall et al., 2013). K.-Y. Ng et al. (2009) also state that CQ is a set of learning abilities that influence the extent to which individuals engage in learning through experience acquisition, transformation, observation, and action.

Regarding the nature of CQ, in the literature there is almost consensus that it represents a framework made up of four dimensions. These dimensions are as follows: motivational, cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral CQ (Livermore, 2010).

The motivational dimension of CQ represents the ability to focus attention and energy on understanding and coping in situations characterized by cultural diversity (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). In other words, it encourages effort and energy directed towards functioning in a new cultural environment (Ang et al., 2011).

The cognitive dimension of CQ refers to the knowledge of cultural norms, customs, and practices of other cultures (Ang et al., 2011). More precisely, it refers to a person's level of cultural knowledge, as well as his knowledge of himself as a member of his own cultural environment (Ang et al., 2011).

Metacognitive CQ reflects the degree of cultural self-awareness that a person exhibits during cross-cultural interactions (Ang et al., 2011). People who have a high level of this dimension of CQ think actively during conversations, challenge their own cultural assumptions, and modify their cultural knowledge when collaborating and communicating with people from different cultures.

Finally, the ability to interact with people from different cultures using appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues is reflected in the behavioral dimension of CQ.

Because verbal and nonverbal behavior are the most observable aspects of social encounters, behavioral CQ is the most visible part of CQ (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015).

Theory and practice know numerous advantages that the CQ of a person brings to him or her or to the companies that have internationalized their operations. Research has shown that CQ contributes to increased employee performance, easier decision-making, better adaptability to the foreign environment, employer's brand, as well as reduce burnout at work and increase personal satisfaction (Chenyang, 2022; Livermore, 2010; Waxin & Panaccio, 2004).

However, CQ is not a static category. In fact, each component of it could be enhanced and developed by different methods. As it was earlier said, the level of a person's CQ could be influenced by cultural exposure (for example, employment abroad, education abroad, vacation abroad, etc.), the depth of cultural exposure (such as time spent abroad, number of countries visited, degree of cultural similarity or difference comparing country of origin and host country), multicultural training (Crowne, 2008), etc.

When it comes to training programs, they are usually based on implementing different methods. They are usually classified as methods based on learning the facts about different cultures, analytical methods, and methods for experimental learning (Thomas & Inkson, 2017). *Learning the facts* of different cultures can be done through learning a foreign language, by reading books and other written materials, by attending lectures, briefings, etc. The most frequent *analytical methods* for developing CQ are watching and analyzing films and short clips, analyzing examples from practice (case studies), cognitive behavior modification, etc. When it comes to the training methods for *experimental learning* of different cultures, the most well-known are: training based on experience, attributional training, simulations, field work, role playing, etc. and other written materials, by attending lectures, briefings, etc.

Regarding the factors of CQ, Shaffer and Miller (2015) believe that they could be divided into several groups, such as: predictive factors (prior experience and language ability), individual factors (self-efficacy and relationship skills), job factors (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict), organizational factors (coworker support and logistical support), and extra-work factors (spouse adjustment and cultural novelty).

Dealing with factors in the development of CQ, Robledo-Ardila and colleagues (2016) came to the conclusion that when it comes to the student population, factors related to education can significantly affect their CQ. First of all, they proved that knowledge of a second language, membership in a multicultural team, and participation in curricular and extracurricular activities promote the development of CQ in undergraduate students.

Hypotheses development. In the previous period, in order to investigate the influence of training programs on CQ development, many empirical studies have been done. In the research conducted by Rehg et al. (2012), it was found that cultural training had a positive and very significant effect on the cognitive dimension of CQ and a moderately significant effect on the behavioural dimension.

A positive relationship between learning a foreign language, as a type of training for international interactions, and cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of CQ was also found in the research made up by Huff (2013).

Further, in the research made by Zhang et al. (2021) it was found that intensive training programs before going abroad were essential for expatriates to successfully adapt to a foreign environment.

Based on the above, the following hypotheses that are going to be tested in the paper are as follows:

H0: The multicultural training has a positive effect on students' CQ.

H1: The number of foreign languages the students know has a statistically significant and positive influence on their CQ.

H2: The level of foreign language knowledge has a statistically significant and positive influence on the student's CQ.

H3: Watching foreign films/series for the purpose of introducing the different cultures has a statistically significant and positive influence on the student's CQ.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research method and context. The sample in this research consisted of students of the Faculty of Economics in Niš majoring in International Management (98 in total). In this research, a questionnaire consisting of three parts was used. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions aimed at assessing the demographic structure of the respondents. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions concerning training as a way of preparing for going abroad (for example, knowing the foreign languages, level of foreign level knowledge, etc.). The third part of the questionnaire referred to the assessment of the CQ of the respondents. The level of CQ, as well as the representation of some of its dimensions (four in total), were measured by the Culture Intelligence Scale (Dyne et al., 2015). The validity of this scale was checked in some research (Bücker et al., 2016), and it was chosen as reliable for this research.

The questionnaire that was used to measure CQ contained twenty statements with which respondents expressed their degree of agreement by giving ratings. Each of the statements was evaluated on a Likert scale from 1 (I completely disagree) to 7 (I completely agree). It measured the metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions of CQ. One of the statements used to measure CQ and its dimensions is as follows: „I am aware of the cultural knowledge that I use when interacting with people of different cultural backgrounds."

Data collection. The questionnaire was filled out by students during regular lecture hours who form a group of potential candidates for going abroad to find their work engagement there. Respondents filled out a completely anonymous questionnaire that was of a structured type with the largest share of closed-ended questions.

Sample information. The dataset was made up of responses from 84.7% of females and 15.3% of males. Except for three respondents who declared that they do not know a foreign language, most of the respondents know at least one (42 or 42.9%) or two foreign languages (43 or 43.9%). A significantly smaller number of respondents know three foreign languages (6 respondents, or 6.1%) or four foreign languages (4 respondents, or 4.1%). 23 respondents have a basic level of knowledge of the English language (23.5%), 49 have an intermediate level of knowledge of the language (50%), and 26 of them stated that their knowledge of the English language is at the highest level (26.5%). When it comes to watching foreign movies and series, only two respondents

indicated that they do not watch such content (2.1%), and they, together with respondents who sometimes watch foreign films and series, make up 12.8% of respondents, or a total of 12 respondents. On the other hand, 82 respondents answered „yes," which is 87.2% of the sample.

Methodology of analysis. In practice, in order to examine relationships and connections between researched variables statistical data processing program such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is often used. As so, this program is also applied in this research. Besides the frequency analysis of the sample, a regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of hypotheses testing. To test the aforementioned hypotheses, a regression analysis was conducted. Table 1 presents the obtained data through analysis.

Table 1.

Regression analysis results

Independent variable	Dependent variable – CQ		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Constant)	4.087	4.327	3.177
Number of foreign languages	**.261**		
Level of foreign language knowledge		.190	
Watching foreign films/series			**.728**
Sig.	**.041**	.109	**.004**
R	.211	.165	.289
R^2	.044	.027	.084
Adjusted R^2	.034	.017	.074
ΔR^2	.044*	.027	.084***
F	4.313*	2.612	8.591***
Number of observations	98	98	98

*Note: * p < .05 *** p < .001*
Source: Authors

The regression analysis results presented in Table 1 lead to the conclusion that there is a positive relationship between the number of foreign languages and CQ in general (r =.211, p <.05). Table 1 also shows the results of a regression analysis in which the number of foreign languages is the independent variable, and the level of CQ of the respondents is the dependent variable. By analyzing the value of the coefficient of determination, we conclude that 4.4% of the variation in the variable „CQ" is explained

by the knowledge of foreign languages. This coefficient is statistically significant at the level of p <.05. We also conclude that the regression model is statistically significant at the level of p <.05, and it is possible to analyze the value of the unstandardized coefficient, which is 0.261 (standard error =.126, p <.05). The sign of the coefficient indicates the positive influence of knowledge of several foreign languages on the CQ of an individual. However, the magnitude of this coefficient is very modest, which means that an increase in foreign language knowledge by 0.261 times will increase an individual's CQ.

Having in mind the previous results, it can be concluded that hypothesis H1 is confirmed, i.e., the number of foreign languages a person knows has a statistically significant and positive influence on an individual's CQ (β = 0.261, st. error =.126, p <.05).

To test hypothesis H2, regression analysis has been conducted. By analyzing the value of the coefficient of determination, which is 2.7%, we conclude that 2.7% of the variation in the variable „CQ" is explained by the knowledge of foreign languages. This coefficient is statistically significant at the level of p >.05, but within the limits of 10%, which is the conditional significance of the coefficient of determination and also of the regression model as a whole. Also, the analysis indicates that the value of the unstandardized coefficient is 0.190 (st. error =.118, p >.05). The sign of the coefficient indicates a positive influence of the level of knowledge of the foreign language on the CQ of the individual. However, the rank of the size of this coefficient is very modest, but in terms of statistical significance, it is conditionally significant. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is partly confirmed. Specifically, the sign of the regression coefficient indicates a positive influence of the level of knowledge of the foreign language on the CQ of the individual (β = 0.190, st. error =.118, p >.05). However, the rank of the size of this coefficient is very modest, but in terms of statistical significance, it is conditionally significant.

To test the third model and hypothesis H3, regression analysis results were obtained. The interpretation of the results of the regression analysis indicates that the coefficient of determination is 8.4%, that is, that 8.4% of the variation in the variable „CQ" is explained by the variation in the variable „watching foreign films and series." This coefficient is statistically significant at the level of p <.001. Also, the analysis of the value of the unstandardized coefficient, which is 0.728 (st. error =.248, p <.001), shows the positive influence of this variable on the CQ of an individual, and with a unit change in the predictor, there is a change of even 0.728 in the dependent variable.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that hypothesis H3 is also confirmed. Therefore, having in mind the previously stated results, it can be concluded that the general hypothesis H0 is also confirmed. Three types of training, observed through the number of foreign languages that a person knows, the level of knowledge of the foreign language, and by practicing watching foreign films and series in order to learn about the different culture, have a positive influence on the CQ.

Discussion. The aforementioned results of the empirical research conducted for the paper are not without support in the literature. Namely, the positive impact of training on CQ has been confirmed in several studies (Livermore, 2010; Shaffer & Miller, 2015). Students can become more aware of cultural differences by participating in brief intercultural training interventions that are included as modules inside courses

or in everyday life (Fischer, 2011). The overall CQ capacities could be increased through training activities, but the students' improvements are most often greater since they could be exposed to the content for a longer period and have more time to put what they had learned into practice through individual and team assignments (Azevedo & Shane, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This paper dealt with the CQ, which is an essential form of employees' competencies in today's globalized world. It represents the capability of people to interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Further, it fosters respect, reduces stereotypes, and paves the way for effective cross-cultural collaboration. However, the level of CQ of people/employees is influenced by numerous factors, such as the frequency of culture exposure, the depth of culture exposure, i.e., the number of countries visited, time spent abroad, etc. One of the factors that has a significant influence on a person's CQ is multicultural training. It can be done in many different ways, among which learning foreign languages and watching foreign films are among the most simple and frequent. Therefore, this paper investigated how these simple forms of preparation (training) for interacting in multicultural contexts influence the level of CQ of students whose career aim is to live and work abroad. The study results show that multicultural training, observed through foreign language learning, the level of foreign language knowledge, and watching films and series for the purpose of getting knowledge of different cultures, have a positive influence on the CQ level of students.

The results of the study have some implications for international human resource management as well. Namely, if the companies are going to delegate international assignments to their employees, they should first implement appropriate training programs for enhancing their CQ. The simplest methods are learning foreign languages and watching films, video clips, or series in order to introduce different cultures. Having in mind the nature of assignments, more complex training methods could also be applied.

However, our paper is not without some disadvantages. The main drawbacks of the paper are the small sample size and the exploration of only one factor as a predictor of CQ. These drawbacks will be overcome in future research, resulting in more reliable results.

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