

The Study of the Effects of Cultural Intelligence on Service Staff's Professional Commitment

Ali Safari

University of Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran

Reza Radmehr

University of Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran

Abstract

Service organizations today are looking for employees who are highly committed to their profession and who are also able to continuously communicate with people from different cultures; therefore, service employees are required to have cultural intelligence. The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of Cultural Intelligence on service staff's professional commitment in general and Sepah Bank staff working in Isfahan, in particular. Therefore, the population of the study comprises the staff working at Isfahan Sepah Bank. Using finite population sampling (Cochran formula), the sample size is determined to be 94. A researcher-developed questionnaire with the reliability of 0.75 is used to collect data; the questionnaire also enjoys face validity. Results from testing hypotheses show that cultural intelligence affects staff's professional commitment. It is also concluded that cultural intelligence affects attractive and continuance professional commitment, while it doesn't affect normative professional commitment.

Keywords: Professional Commitment, Cultural Intelligence, Services, Sepah Bank.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, various aspects of commitment have attracted the attention of researchers. Professional commitment is considered as one of the most important determinants of individual's work behavior and it has taken the attention of lots of managers, too [1]. It should be kept in mind that conditions in today's complex and multi-cultural work environment is changing quickly and it should be expected that staff's commitment changes to professional commitment [2]. In some studies conducted, the researchers have concluded that some staff identifies themselves by their jobs [3]. On the other hand, cultural differences that exist between today's organizations have an important influence on how people look at their profession. Cultural differences also affect staff's attitudes towards values and norms. In today's organizations, thus, employees are required who can understand well cultural differences and who are potential enough for interacting properly with other cultures. Meanwhile, staff's cultural intelligence will be helpful for organizations. Cultural intelligence helps individuals to be sensitive to various cultures and to analyze all the new cultures they encounter [4]. Cultural

intelligence is a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses both cognitive and behavioral aspects. According to what has been said, the aim of this study is to investigate the effects of cultural intelligence on professional commitment of service staff in general and staff working at Isfahan Sepah Bank in particular. In the forthcoming parts of this study, some sections such as review of the literature, background, methodology, data analysis, conclusion and suggestion has been presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Intelligence

For the first time, the concept of cultural intelligence was introduced by Early and Ang, the researchers of London Business University. They both defined the cultural intelligence as so: "one's ability in the direction of successful adaptation with the new cultural environments which is usually different from one's cultural text" [5]. Human acts, intimations and patterns of one's speaking need more developed changes when he/she encounters with the global business regime. This subject increases the probability of incomprehension and makes cooperation impossible. But sometimes, a foreigner apparently has such a natural ability that can interpret the ambiguous and unclear implications like the culture's natives and colleagues and reflect them like an honest mirror. This talent is called cultural intelligence which is often shown by CQ [6]. Cultural intelligence confirms the transactional realities and concentrates on intercultural fields [7]. Cultural intelligence is the perception of individuals' appearance and essence intellectually and practically. Also it gives us a framework and language to perceive the differences in order to invest on them, not tolerate or ignore those [8]. A person, who has a high cultural intelligence, has learning ability in new cultural environment and enjoys encountering new cultures [9].

The necessity of establishing effective intercultural communications and solving oppositions is having cultural intelligence including the individuals' ability for personal growth through continuous learning of cultural background and different perceptions. Early and Align define cultural intelligence as an individual's ability for effective adjustment with modern cultural models. Researchers say that the cultural intelligence of the people who have healthy spirit and are powerful from job and profession aspect, is improvable and trainable. Cultural intelligence involves recognition talent, perception and management standards of life in society, social institutes, aesthetic values in society, formal and informal languages, cultural beliefs and worldview of the most people of a society. In other words, this intelligence indicates the ability and talent of ambiguous social and cultural conditions and denotes creating and adjusting common concepts in social environment.

Cultural intelligence is the individual ability to perceive, interpret, and effectively act in the conditions having cultural variety. Cultural intelligence is the key of success in Today's world. For the work group's effective operations, the group, itself, should develop cultural intelligence. Dissimilar groups have greater success and greater failure potential in comparison with single-cultural groups. The strategy they should use is maximizing the positive effects of cultural

variety and minimizing its negative effects. Cultural intelligence is a new dimension of intelligence that has a very close relationship with different work environments. Cultural intelligence lets individuals identify how others think and how they react to behavioral patterns. As a result, it reduces the intercultural communication barriers and gives individuals the authority to manage cultural variety.

Cultural intelligence is the individual ability for effective activity and management in various cultural fields including behavior, stimulation, cognitive and metacognitive components applying in cultural judgment and decision-making, cultural accordance and operation [10]. Cultural intelligence focusing on the special abilities which are necessary for qualitative individual relationships and effectiveness in different cultural conditions, is concentrating on another aspect of cognitive intelligence, and cultural intelligence includes personal views that is useful to conform to the cross-cultural interactions and conditions and successful attendance in multicultural work groups. For cultural environment, it's necessary for the cultural managers to reinforce their cultural intelligence components and activity stimulation in three cognitive physical an emotional dimensions. In Today's world where there are cultural varieties throughout it, good relationships have been changed into greater challenge. Recognition valuing and supporting these differences could maximize every individual's profit at his/her workplace [11]. Cultural intelligence helps people to be sensitive in front of various cultures and analyze the new cultures which they encounter [4].

Cultural intelligence is personal ability which causes people to act effectively in different cultural circumstances [12]. This intelligence causes individuals to remove the cultural barriers easier and solve the intercultural problems better. Cultural intelligence enables us to distinguish the cultural differences through knowledge and awareness and behave correctly in different cultures. Ang et al. (2007) investigated the effects and measurement of cultural intelligence on cultural judgment and decision-making, cultural correspondence and operation with two studies on the administrators from different nationalities and foreign employees. They found out two behavior and strategy components affect the operation [10]. In an experimental research entitled cultural variety and workgroup effectiveness, Thomas concluded that group's cultural variety, group members' social-cultural norms and relative cultural gap among cultural members affect workgroup efficiency, and similar cultural groups had higher operation comparing to dissimilar cultural groups. In most studies done on cultural intelligence, a four factor model has been used which includes: strategy, knowledge, behavior, and stimulation:

1. Metacognitive cultural intelligence: It means how an individual understands the cross-cultural experiences. This cognition is the representative of the processes which individuals apply to get and perceive cultural knowledge. This important event happens when individuals use for their and others' mental processes. Metacognitive cultural intelligence includes compiling strategy before cross-cultural encounter, studying the assumptions of encounter time and adjusting mental plans in the case of differing experiences with expectations.
2. Cognitive cultural intelligence: this intelligence shows the perceptions of individuals about cultural differences and similarities and also represents the general knowledge

and a person's cognitive and mental plans about other cultures [13]. The cognitive aspect of cultural intelligence includes recognizing legal and economic systems, social interaction norms, religion beliefs and language of other cultures.

3. Motivational cultural intelligence: It shows individuals' interest in testing other cultures and interacts with people having different cultures. This motivation includes individuals' internal value for self-confidence and multicultural interactions which let individuals act efficiently in different cultural conditions.
4. Behavioral cultural intelligence: This behavior includes individuals' ability to adapt verbal and non-verbal behaviors which are suitable to encounter different cultures. Cultural intelligence behaviors include a series of logic behavioral responses which are applied in different conditions and are improvable and adjustable fitting a special interaction.

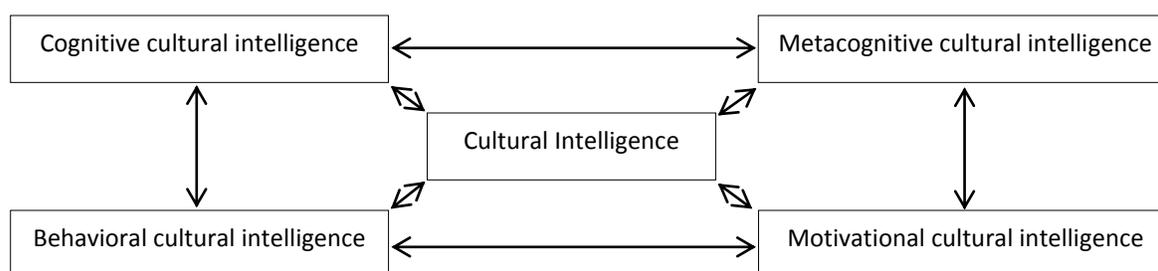


Figure 1: dimensions of Cultural intelligence

2.2 Professional commitment

Professional commitment is one of the key organizational variables that are of interest to researchers today [14]. Professional commitment has come into the attention as researchers discovered that individuals' commitment to their profession is of lots of advantages and positive effects [15]. The term "commitment" has been taken from psychology and has developed from "organizational commitment", a more common concept [15] and the path to its study is the same of organizational commitment [16]. Definitions corresponding to professional commitment are different, varying from the extent to which an individual involves in doing specific tasks in his workplace to the importance being attached to a person's job in his/her life [17]. Professional commitment is a sense of identity and affiliation to a specific profession [18]. Professional commitment is based on the responsibility and interest an individual has in his/her profession. Therefore, professional commitment involves the sense of commitment an individual has to the duties he is required to do as he takes a role in an organization. The more cultural similarity and congruity exist among employees, the more commitment they'll have to their profession [19]. Accordingly, the primary hypothesis of this study is formed as follows:

Ha: Cultural intelligence affects bank staff's professional commitment.

Professional commitment consists of three dimensions presented in Figure (2):

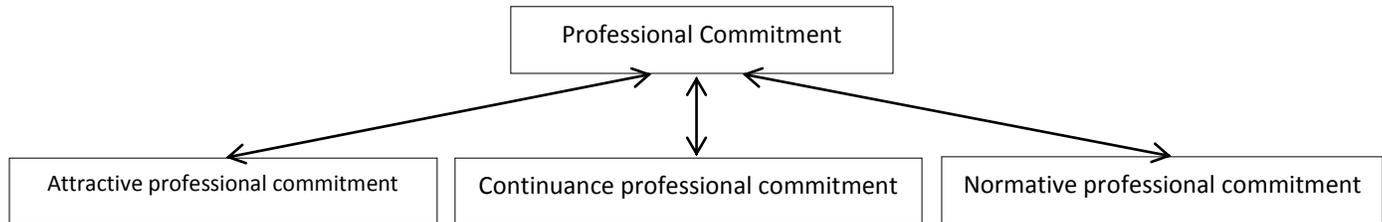


Figure 2: dimensions of Professional Commitment

1. Attractive professional commitment: this is based on a sense of being identified by profession goals and the desire to help profession to achieve its goals. Attractive professional commitment is also referred to the emotional attachment and belonging to doing a particular task and simulating himself to his profession [20]. High cultural intelligence reduces conflicts at work and creates an emotional attachment to the profession. Thus, in line with the primary hypothesis of this study, the secondary hypothesis I is suggested as follows:

Ha-a: Cultural intelligence affects bank staff's attractive professional commitment.

2. Continuance professional commitment: continuance professional commitment causes individuals to stay in their jobs due to the high costs of leaving them. This commitment is based on the benefits of taking a job and costs of leaving it. Inappropriate conditions of labor market, the existence of non-transferable skills and retraining costs limit the comparable choices and it, thus, leads to increased continuance professional commitment [15]. Cultural conflict is one of the issues that lead to making an undesirable environment in the workplace [16]. Therefore, in line with the primary hypothesis, the secondary hypothesis II is proposed as follows:

Ha-b: Cultural intelligence affects bank staff's continuance professional commitment.

3. Normative professional commitment: in this commitment, the person considers it his duty to continue his profession in order to satisfy himself that he has done what he could for his profession. The person also believes that everyone should stay in the profession he has been trained for; this way, he'll retain his profession even if he experiences some losses [15]. On-the-job training leads to better relationship between colleagues and consequently results in learning more about their ethnic and local cultures and reducing intercultural conflicts. Based on this, the secondary hypothesis III is stated as follows.

Ha-c: Cultural intelligence affects bank staff's normative professional commitment.

3. Related Research

Findler et al (2007) conducted their investigations about conflict between managers in global society and the pattern of relationship between variety, capacity, organizational culture, employee's goodness, job satisfaction and professional commitment. The study results indicated

that by increasing cultural homogeneity, employees' job satisfaction and consequently their professional commitment will increase.

In their two studies on executives of different nationalities and foreign staff, Ang et al. (2004) investigated the impacts of cultural intelligence on both cultural judgment and decision making, and also its impacts on cultural adaptation and performance. They concluded that cultural intelligence components affect decision-making and performance [21].

Gardner and Stough conducted a study in Swinburne University, USA, and indicated that cultural intelligence is a useful predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment; moreover cultural intelligence is related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment [22].

In a study by Abtahi and Moulayi (2006), professional commitment is viewed and defined from the perspective of social identity theory; this theory holds that individuals place themselves within different social classes, including profession, group, organization, culture, and the like; they identify themselves through their membership in one particular class. This means that individuals are interested in being classified under a group or class of society that they find it culturally the most similar to theirs [23].

4. Methodology

The present study is a descriptive-survey of field branch and it follows a practical application. To collect data, a researcher-developed questionnaire has been used. This questionnaire comprises 39 questions in two sections of cultural intelligence and professional commitment. The responses are based on a seven point Likert scale, ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. In order to confirm the validity of the questionnaire, face validity has been utilized in a way that it has been presented to some experts and distinguished professors and their opinions have been applied to reform the last design of the questionnaire.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, SPSS has been used to check the internal consistency; the obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficient for different factors of the questionnaire is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Factors Questionnaire	Professional commitment	Cultural intelligence	Total factor
Cronbach's alpha	0/73	0/81	0/75

The study population includes all employees of Isfahan Sepah Bank and it includes a total population size of 950 people. The appropriate sample size for the study was determined to be 94 persons by sample size formula for the finite population in an error level of 0.05.

5. Data analysis

Demographic characteristics and other items corresponding to the sample under study are shown in Table (2).

Table 2: Abundances and frequencies of participants

Demographic Variables	Categories	Abundance	Frequency
Sex	Female	29	%31
	Male	65	%69
Age	20-30	33	%35
	31-40	47	%50
	41-50	8	%8/75
	51-60	6	%6/25
Marriage	Single	8	%8/6
	Married	86	%91/4
Education Degree	Diploma	20	%21/2
	Associate degree	20	%21/2
	B.S.	47	%50
	M.S. or more	7	%7/6
Job Background	0-5	17	%18
	6-10	31	%32/9
	11-15	31	%32/9
	16-20	5	%5/4
	21-25	5	%5/4
	26-30	5	%5/4

Normality or abnormality of data distribution should be gone under investigation in order to test the hypothesis; then in the next phase, either parametric or non-parametric statistics can be selected accordingly. Thus, in the first stage, Kolmogorov - Smirnov test was used; results are represented in Table (3). According to the results, as obtained significant value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is confirmed; this means that variables are normally distributed. Thus, parametric test is used to test the hypothesis.

Table 3: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Z	Sig
Cultural intelligence	94	4/46	0/91	1/004	0/265
Professional commitment	94	4/45	0/50	0/545	0/928

Based on the normal distribution of data, regression test is utilized to test the proposed hypotheses;

Primary hypothesis: Cultural intelligence affects bank staff's professional commitment

Table 4: Regression test

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficients	t	Sig
	Std.error	B	Beta		
Constant	1/853	0/800	-	2/317	0/023
Professional commitment	0/588	0/179	0/324	3/287	0/001

It can be seen in this part that P-Value is smaller than 0.05, therefore Cultural intelligence is a significant positive effect on professional commitment and the hypothesis H₀ is rejected. On the other hand the investigated relationship between the two variables is linear.

To test secondary hypothesis I, as used in the primary hypothesis testing, regression test with the same statistical hypothesis has been utilized; corresponding results are shown in Table (5).

Table 5: Regression test

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficients	t	Sig
	Std.error	B	Beta		
Constant	1/945	0/525	-	3/705	0/000
attractive professional commitment	0/611	0/126	0/452	4/864	0/000

It can be seen in this part that P-Value is smaller than 0.05, therefore Cultural intelligence is a significant positive effect on attractive professional commitment and the hypothesis H₀ is rejected. On the other hand the investigated relationship between the two variables is linear.

To test secondary hypothesis II, as used regression test with the same statistical hypothesis has been utilized; corresponding results are shown in Table (6).

Table 6: Regression test

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficients	t	Sig
	Std.error	B	Beta		
Constant	2/004	0/795	-	2/522	0/013
continuance professional commitment	0/557	0/179	0/309	3/116	0/002

It can be seen in this part that P-Value is smaller than 0.05, therefore Cultural intelligence is a significant positive effect on continuance professional commitment and the hypothesis H0 is rejected. On the other hand the investigated relationship between the two variables is linear. To test secondary hypothesis III, as used regression test with the same statistical hypothesis has been utilized; corresponding results are shown in Table (7).

Table 7: Regression test

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficients	t	Sig
	Std.error	B	Beta		
Constant	4/334	0/487	-	8/904	0/000
normative professional commitment	0/027	0/100	0/029	0/274	0/784

It can be seen in this part that P-Value is greater than 0.05, therefore Cultural intelligence isn't a significant positive effect on normative professional commitment and the hypothesis H0 isn't rejected.

In addition to the results obtained from hypothesis testing, some other incidental findings of the research are represented as follows. Among these findings is the correlation between different dimensions of cultural intelligence variable which is shown in the Table (8).

Table 8: correlation coefficient between Dimensions of cultural intelligence

Dimensions of cultural intelligence	Metacognitive CI	cognitive CI	Motivational CI	Behavioral CI
Metacognitive CI	1	-	-	-
cognitive CI	0/802**	1	-	-
Motivational CI	0/648**	0/514**	1	-
Behavioral CI	0/365**	0/352**	0/449**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-sided).

According to Table (9), there is a significant correlation between different dimensions of professional commitment at the error level of 0.01 (99% confidence).

Table 9: correlation coefficient between Dimensions of professional commitment

Dimensions of professional commitment	Attractive PC	Continuance PC	Normative PC
Attractive PC	1	-	-
Continuance PC	0/489**	1	-
Normative PC	0/370**	0/446**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-sided).

One-way ANOVA is used to assess whether there is a significant difference in hypotheses between different demographic groups. Table (10) shows that, regarding professional commitment variable; there is only a significant difference between staff with different age groups. This means that as the staffs grow older, their commitment to the profession increases.

Table 10: ANOVA analysis

Demographic variables	F-Value & Significant	cultural intelligence	professional commitment
Age	F-Value	0/178	3/665
	Significant	0/838	0/038
Education Degree	F-Value	2/431	0/782
	Significant	0/086	0/514
Job Background	F-Value	0/771	2/140
	Significant	0/553	0/103

6. Conclusion and suggestions

In this study, the effect of cultural intelligence on service staff's professional commitment has been investigated. Findings of this study indicate that cultural intelligence is a key factor in staff's professional commitment; as the paper's primary hypothesis being the positive impact of cultural intelligence on professional commitment has been proved, the preceding claim is again confirmed. It should be noted that the results of the study is to a great extent in accordance with the findings of Fidler et al.'s. The results of this study also showed that being equipped with cultural intelligence can be effective in increasing staff's professional commitment, especially for organizations with high cultural diversity; as this diversity makes it more likely for the staff to come into conflicts with each other. In service organizations operating in multicultural environments, such as banks, cultural intelligence besides other operational skills can guarantee their success. Thus, selection, training and evaluation of staff in these

organizations should not be limited to technical capabilities and knowledge; the effective communication ability and specifically the cultural intelligence should be taken into account as important requirements for employing staff in these kinds of organizations.

The results of this study show that as the level of cultural intelligence among staff increases, their emotional attachment to do certain things also increases; consequently, individuals feel they owe their job and that they have to get their duties done. To increase the level of professional commitment, managers and program planners should ensure employees about their future raise opportunities and their maintenance in bank. The results of this study also show that cultural intelligence can solve many problems in various social and cultural contexts. Findings of the Ang et al. (2007) also suggest the same results. Paying attention to cultural intelligence, specifically in Iran which has large ethnic and culture diversity can be very helpful. According to the positive and significant effect of cultural intelligence on professional commitment, being also in accordance with the findings of Gardner and Stough (2003), and based on the cultural intelligence elements being teachable, it is suggested that some effort be made to enhance Sepah Bank staff's cultural intelligence which leads to their professional commitment improvement. Accordingly, some suggestions have been made to improve cultural intelligence; they are as follows: asking staff to have an overview of their own cultural knowledge, increasing accuracy and intelligence in cross-cultural interactions, knowing about other cultures, respecting other cultures, the gradual involvement with other cultures and also enabling cross-cultural interactions in real conditions for Sepah Bank staff.

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