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# Linking Cultural Intelligence to Ambidextrous Innovation: A Sequential Mediation and Moderated Mechanism among Expatriates in Multinational Companies

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines how cultural intelligence (CQ) promotes ambidextrous innovation (AIN) through a sequential mechanism involving cultural adaptation (CA), perceived insider status (PIS), and intrapreneurial behaviour (IBR). It also explores the moderating effects of perceived organizational support (POS) and antifragility (AF). Data were collected from 375 expatriate employees working in multinational companies in Pakistan and analysed using PROCESS Macro in SPSS. Results confirmed that CQ positively influences CA and CA influences PIS, which sequentially enhance IBR and ultimately lead to higher AIN. The mediating role of CA, PIS, and IBR was also significant in linking CQ to AIN. Furthermore, POS strengthened the effects of CQ on CA and PIS on IBR, while AF enhanced the IBR–AIN link. These findings provide theoretical and practical insights on how cross-cultural competence, workplace inclusion, and individual resilience can together foster innovation in global organizations.*

## Introduction

The increasing expansion of multinational corporations (MNCs) into emerging economies has intensified the demand for foreign professionals to operate in culturally unfamiliar territories (Setti et al., 2022). In countries like Pakistan, these expatriates often serve as key actors in aligning global corporate practices with local market realities. However, while they bring technical expertise and international experience, many struggle with cultural unfamiliarity, organizational alienation, and limited opportunities for meaningful participation in innovation processes (Lo & Nguyen, 2023). Empirical research confirms that expatriates frequently face barriers that restrict their ability to contribute to firm-level innovation, especially when they are unable to develop local understanding or feel disconnected from the organization's internal social fabric (Bücker et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2021). As a result, their full potential remains untapped, leading to missed

opportunities in both performance and innovation outcomes. Organizations that overlook the internal integration of foreign employees often encounter problems with retention, underperformance, and shallow local impact (Aliyu & Iwu, 2025; Turner & Merriman, 2022). These concerns raise the question of how expatriates can be supported not just to adapt but to thrive and innovate within unfamiliar organizational and cultural contexts.

Cultural intelligence (CQ) has emerged as a central concept in understanding how individuals navigate cross-cultural interactions and adjust to diverse environments. CQ refers to an individual's capacity to interpret unfamiliar settings and respond appropriately, encompassing motivational, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (Ang et al., 2007). High CQ enables expatriates to make sense of local practices, engage in effective communication, and manage cultural ambiguity with greater confidence. Recent studies emphasize that CQ significantly improves expatriate performance, psychological adjustment, and social inclusion (Chaurasia et al., 2020; Min et al., 2023). However, CQ alone is not sufficient to guarantee deeper organizational involvement or discretionary behavior. Many culturally competent individuals fail to act beyond their formal roles if they do not feel accepted by the host organization. This makes perceived insider status (PIS) an essential factor. PIS reflects the extent to which an employee feels like a legitimate, valued member of the organization (Xintian & Peng, 2023). Scholars have shown that individuals with strong PIS are more likely to take initiative, engage with local teams, and align with organizational goals (LI & LUO, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022b). Without this internal validation, even culturally skilled employees may refrain from expressing innovative ideas or participating actively in organizational change.

PIS also plays a critical role in facilitating cultural adaptation (CA), which involves psychological and behavioral adjustments to the host culture (Dayyani et al., 2025). CA is essential for effective interaction and long-term contribution in foreign work settings, particularly in complex environments like Pakistan where social norms and business customs differ substantially from those in Western headquarters (Sharif, 2019; Zhou, 2021). When expatriates feel accepted and respected by their colleagues and supervisors, they are more likely to invest in learning the local culture, building relationships, and adjusting their expectations (Bano & Liu, 2025). Adaptation, however, is not an end in itself. It creates the conditions for more active and creative engagement with the organization. Well-adjusted expatriates are better able to recognize unmet needs, suggest improvements, and develop context-sensitive solutions (Amari et al., 2024). These outcomes align with the concept of intrapreneurial behaviour (IBR), which involves proactive, opportunity-oriented actions within the organization that go beyond formal responsibilities (Sahibzada et al., 2025). IBR among expatriates, can be especially valuable because it combines global knowledge with local insight, helping MNCs adapt to complex host-country demands.

IBR often serves as a foundation for ambidextrous innovation (AIN), where organizations pursue both the refinement of existing practices and the exploration of new possibilities. Expatriates with strong CQ, high PIS, successful adaptation, and intrapreneurial drive are well positioned to support both exploitative and exploratory innovation (Wang & Fang, 2022). Research suggests that ambidextrous organizations are more competitive, resilient, and capable of navigating turbulent markets (Zeng et al., 2017). However, few studies have examined how expatriates contribute to AIN through a structured process involving multiple psychological and behavioral stages (Hussain & Zhang, 2023; Nayak et al., 2022). The fragmented nature of existing research, which often studies CQ, PIS, CA, or IBR in isolation, limits the ability to develop a comprehensive model for managing expatriate-driven innovation (Inam et al., 2021; Maan et al., 2020; Maqsood et al., 2022). There is a need to connect these constructs in a logically ordered sequence and test how they function together in real organizational settings.

Besides these internal factors, external support from the organization and personal resilience also shape expatriates' ability to innovate. Perceived organizational support (POS) captures the extent to which employees believe their organization values their input and supports their well-being (Uluturk et al., 2023). POS is a critical resource that promotes adjustment, reduces stress, and encourages risk-taking among expatriates (Lai et al., 2022). Employees who receive support are more willing to take on innovation-related challenges because they feel protected and encouraged by their employer (Giorgi et al., 2020). Another important condition is antifragility (AF), which refers to an individual's ability to grow stronger in response to stress and volatility (Taleb, 2012). Expatriates often operate in uncertain environments, and those with antifragile traits are more likely to sustain innovation efforts despite setbacks (Tanner, 2025). Although POS and AF are discussed in various organizational contexts, their role as moderators in the pathway from CQ to AIN through PIS, CA, and IBR remains underexplored, particularly among expatriates in developing countries.

This study addresses these gaps by proposing and testing a composite model in which CQ leads to AIN through a sequence of mediating variables: PIS, CA, and IBR. It also investigates how POS and AF shape this process as boundary conditions. The model is grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which argues that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and utilize valuable resources to succeed and reduce stress. Within this study, CQ, PIS, and POS are considered resource inputs; CA and IBR are resource investments; and AIN is a performance outcome. When these resources are supported and aligned, expatriates are more likely to adjust successfully and contribute meaningfully to innovation. This framework provides a coherent explanation for how organizations can convert expatriate capabilities into strategic innovation. The study is based on responses from foreign professionals working in MNCs in Pakistan, a context that remains underrepresented in global research but presents unique challenges for expatriate management and innovation.

## Literature Review

This section provides the literature review on the variables of the study. Also, this section highlights the underpinning theory used in this study. This section provides hypotheses development while presenting the conceptual framework (see figure 1).

### Underpinning Theory

This study is theoretically grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that firms achieve sustained competitive advantage through the strategic use of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). Cultural intelligence (CQ) is considered a critical intangible resource that enables expatriates in multinational companies to navigate complex cross-cultural settings (Ng et al., 2025). This capability, when effectively utilized, facilitates cultural adaptation (CA), enhances perceived insider status (PIS), and promotes intrapreneurial behaviour (IBR), ultimately leading to ambidextrous innovation (AIN).

Under RBV, these mediating constructs represent internal mechanisms through which the resource of CQ is transformed into innovation outcomes. The study also incorporates perceived organizational support (POS) and antifragility (AF) as reinforcing resources that strengthen the conversion process. POS reflects the organization's commitment to supporting its employees (Choi et al., 2021), while AF signifies a personal capacity to grow through stress and uncertainty—both critical in high-demand expatriate roles. These moderators enhance the impact of core resources like CQ and IBR on innovation performance. By focusing on how internal resources interact and

produce strategic outcomes in culturally diverse environments, RBV provides a strong theoretical basis for this model and justifies the inclusion and positioning of all variables.

**Direct Hypotheses Development**

In cross-cultural work environments, individuals are constantly challenged by differences in social norms, communication styles, and behavioral expectations. These challenges often create uncertainty and stress, particularly for foreign professionals working in unfamiliar cultural settings. CQ is defined as the capability to function effectively across various cultural contexts. It is widely recognized as a core resource that supports individuals in adjusting to new environments (Ng et al., 2025). According to COR theory, individuals strive to acquire and maintain valuable psychological and social resources to reduce stress and enhance adaptation (Finstad et al., 2024). CQ, in this context, serves as a personal resource that helps individuals interpret, respond to, and integrate into foreign cultural systems. When foreign professionals possess high CQ, they are better able to navigate host culture demands by learning appropriate behaviors, understanding unspoken norms, and avoiding culturally inappropriate actions. Several empirical studies support the idea that CQ plays a significant role in shaping an individual's ability to adjust in cross-border assignments (Kai Liao et al., 2021; Setti et al., 2022). Individuals with high CQ are more likely to develop trust-based relationships, experience fewer misunderstandings, and demonstrate higher levels of CA, including both psychological comfort and behavioral fit. In recent studies, CQ has also been shown to improve adjustment speed and social engagement in culturally diverse teams, particularly in high-context cultures like Pakistan (Faran et al., 2021; Kour & Jyoti, 2022).

While CA focuses on behavioral and emotional fit within a cultural context, it is often influenced by how accepted and valued individuals feel in their organizations. This introduces the relevance of PIS, which refers to the subjective sense of belongingness or being regarded as a part of the organizational core (Zhang et al., 2022a). COR theory helps to explain how CQ leads to enhanced PIS: individuals who can decode cultural cues and respond appropriately are more likely to be trusted by local employees and supervisors, thereby receiving more social validation and acceptance (Guo et al., 2022). CQ thus supports the acquisition of social resources, including acceptance, support, and recognition, which in turn strengthens PIS. Empirical research supports this view, showing that CQ enhances expatriates' ability to integrate into host-country organizations by reducing uncertainty, aligning behaviors with group norms, and enhancing mutual understanding (Li et al., 2024). Employees with higher CQ often exhibit less ethnocentrism and are more open to learning, traits that are positively associated with how insiders are perceived within organizations. Moreover, recent findings suggest that PIS plays a central role in determining whether cross-cultural employees choose to invest further in the organization beyond their core duties.

The feeling of being an insider does more than enhance emotional well-being—it has a strong influence on behavior. Individuals with high PIS are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors, take ownership of tasks, and offer creative input (Wang et al., 2017). These behaviors align with the construct of IBR, which refers to initiative-taking actions aimed at exploring opportunities, improving processes, or developing new services within the boundaries of an existing organization (Nasaj et al., 2022). PIS creates the psychological safety and motivation needed for such behavior. Employees who feel valued and included are more willing to take risks and present unconventional ideas, knowing that their input will be respected rather than dismissed. This is especially relevant in multicultural teams, where foreign professionals might otherwise hesitate to challenge established norms. Researchers have emphasized that PIS enhances work engagement (Liu et al., 2022), a critical antecedent of IBR, and that this relationship is even more pronounced in culturally

diverse settings where feelings of exclusion are more likely to emerge. When individuals view themselves as active contributors, they are more inclined to challenge inefficiencies, take calculated risks, and drive internal innovation. These findings suggest that PIS is not only a mediator of adjustment but also a driver of internal entrepreneurship.

Once employees begin to act intrapreneurially, the organization benefits from their dual focus: improving existing routines and identifying new possibilities. This dual orientation is captured in the concept of AIN, which includes both exploitative (incremental) and exploratory (radical) innovation (Zeng et al., 2017). IBR serves as a foundational process that drives AIN by connecting individual creativity and initiative with the broader innovation strategy of the organization. When foreign professionals engage in IBR, they often use their external perspective and intercultural experiences to identify inefficiencies, propose context-specific innovations, and lead internal projects. Empirical work highlights that organizations with high levels of IBR tend to be more agile and capable of responding to both immediate and long-term challenges. More recent studies further support the notion that IBR among expatriates can bridge cultural gaps, foster team collaboration, and enhance innovation performance across both product and process dimensions. Furthermore, IBR aligns with COR theory as it reflects a strategy of resource investment (Petzsche, 2021): employees who possess psychological and social resources such as PIS, CQ, and CA are more willing and able to invest those resources in innovation-related tasks. Taken together, this theoretical and empirical discussion provides a coherent foundation for the development of the following hypotheses:

***H1:*** *CQ has a positive effect on CA.*
***H2:*** *CA has a positive effect on PIS.*
***H3:*** *PIS has a positive effect on IBR.*
***H4:*** *IBR has a positive effect on AIN.*

**Indirect Hypotheses Development**

CQ equips individuals to understand and interpret unfamiliar cultural environments, but its real organizational value unfolds only when this intelligence translates into improved relationships and internal inclusion (Kromidha et al., 2022; Prabhakaran et al., 2022). CA acts as an initial conduit in this process. When expatriates possess strong CQ, they are better prepared to adjust both psychologically and behaviorally to the local environment. This adaptation makes them more accessible, relatable, and socially integrated, which then enhances their perceived insider status (Heim & Kohrt, 2019; Vázquez-Sánchez et al., 2023). PIS, being the perception of belonging and being accepted within an organization, is often not just the result of an employee's formal position but a reflection of their social embeddedness and relational comfort (Horng et al., 2016; Xintian & Peng, 2023). Thus, CQ supports CA, and CA becomes a bridge that allows expatriates to be perceived not as outsiders performing tasks, but as internal contributors whose presence is appreciated and whose perspectives are trusted. This mediating role of CA between CQ and PIS has been recognized in empirical studies, where adaptation improves interpersonal relationships and helps employees build trust and credibility within local teams. COR theory reinforces this logic by suggesting that adaptation strengthens the resource portfolio of employees, which in turn increases social validation and recognition as insiders (Ng et al., 2025).

Once an individual has adapted to the new environment and achieved insider status, the effect is not merely social, it becomes behavioral. Feeling like a valued member of the organization motivates employees to invest their energy in contributing beyond their core duties. This motivation underlies the emergence of IBR. In this chain, PIS operates as a psychological resource that encourages proactive behavior (Carmeli & Dothan, 2023; Sinha et al., 2022). However, its

strength is often determined by the degree of cultural adaptation. In other words, employees who have adapted well and consequently feel like insiders are more inclined to act as intrapreneurs. The role of PIS as a mediator between CA and IBR reflects a critical behavioral transition: moving from psychological adjustment to active contribution. Studies have found that employees who feel excluded or misunderstood, even if they have adapted to some extent, often hesitate to offer ideas or take initiatives (Liu et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022a). It is the presence of PIS that assures them their input will be received with respect and acted upon. Therefore, PIS mediates the influence of CA on IBR by translating cultural fit into behavioral initiative. From a COR lens, this represents a resource conversion process, where psychological safety and belonging are converted into innovation-related behavior.

The next link in this sequence explores how IBR mediates the relationship between PIS and AIN. AIN requires employees to think in both incremental and radical terms to refine current processes while exploring new approaches. This dual focus is demanding and risky, especially for expatriates who may still be uncertain about organizational politics or cultural expectations (Durst, 2023; Gieske et al., 2020). However, when they perceive themselves as insiders, they are more likely to take such risks. IBR is the behavioral expression of this confidence. It involves initiative, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition within the boundaries of the organization. This behavior is what eventually leads to both forms of innovation including explorative and exploitative (Buccieri et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2018). PIS thus serves as a background condition, but it is through IBR that innovation takes form. Research shows that IBR is closely associated with improved innovation outcomes, particularly in organizations that empower employees and recognize contributions from diverse sources. The mediating role of IBR in this relationship illustrates how perceptions of inclusion are translated into tangible outputs, supporting the argument that innovation is not only a strategic imperative but also a social process shaped by employee perceptions and behaviors (DeRoche, 2021; Szromek & Bugdol, 2024).

While these mediation paths are meaningful on their own, their value increases when viewed as a connected sequence. In globalized work environments, especially for expatriates, the pathway from capability (CQ) to innovation (AIN) is rarely linear. Instead, it involves a progression of adjustments, perceptions, and behaviors. CQ allows individuals to make sense of cultural complexities. This leads to CA, which facilitates smoother integration and improved social connections (Nunes et al., 2017; Setti et al., 2022). When employees feel they have adapted, they are more likely to be accepted as insiders. This PIS, in turn, motivates them to engage in IBR, through which they eventually contribute to AIN. This serial mediation model reflects the gradual unfolding of expatriate value in an organization. Each stage builds on the previous one, transforming individual capability into collective benefit. COR theory explains this as a resource investment process. High CQ enables employees to adapt; adaptation yields social acceptance; acceptance fosters confidence to act intrapreneurially; and this behavior drives innovation (Nasaj et al., 2022; Sehgal et al., 2022). Recent research increasingly supports such multi-stage mechanisms in understanding complex behavioral outcomes, especially in multicultural contexts where simple direct effects fail to capture the real challenges and transitions faced by foreign professionals. Thus, based on the above theoretical and empirical foundations, the following indirect hypotheses are proposed:

***H5a:*** *CA mediates the relationship between CQ and PIS.*

***H5b:*** *PIS mediates the relationship between CA and IBR.*

***H5c:*** *IBR mediates the relationship between PIS and AIN.*

***H5d:*** *CA, PIS, and IBR sequentially mediate the relationship between CQ and AIN.*

**Moderating Hypotheses Development**

The positive effects of CQ, PIS, and IBR are not guaranteed in all organizational contexts. Instead, these relationships are strengthened or weakened based on the organizational environment and individual-level traits. POS refers to the extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Sabir et al., 2022; Stephen, 2023). When foreign professionals feel supported by their organization, they are more confident in engaging with the host culture and less afraid of making social errors. This creates an environment where their CQ can more effectively translate into CA. CQ provides the ability to understand and manage culturally diverse situations, but without a sense of safety and support, individuals might hesitate to apply their skills (Lam et al., 2022; Morin & Talbot, 2023). Supportive organizations provide the encouragement and psychological safety needed to take initiative and adapt to new cultural norms. Research confirms that high POS enhances the willingness of employees to apply their competencies in difficult settings, making them more adaptable and motivated to engage with unfamiliar social norms (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Uluturk et al., 2023). In this regard, POS functions as a social resource that strengthens the impact of CQ on CA by reducing fear of failure and encouraging learning behavior.

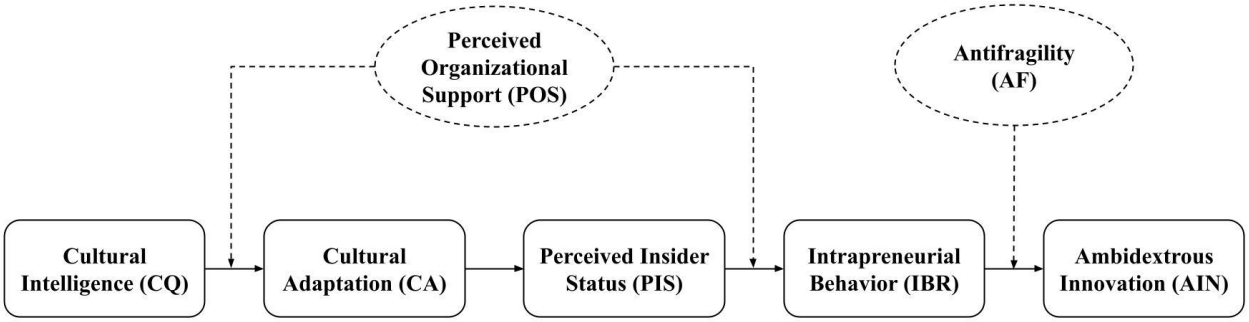


**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework | Source: Author**

The moderating role of POS is also critical in strengthening the link between PIS and IBR. Feeling like an insider may provide a sense of inclusion, but this feeling alone does not guarantee proactive behavior unless it is accompanied by organizational support (Qi et al., 2019; Stephen, 2023). Employees may believe they belong, but without the perception that their organization is backing them, they are unlikely to take the risks required for IBR. Innovation and change-oriented actions typically require stepping out of formal roles, proposing unconventional ideas, and challenging existing systems—all of which involve risk. POS ensures that these risks are tolerated and even encouraged by the organization. This sense of backing allows individuals to move from passively belonging to actively contributing. Empirical studies support the argument that POS enhances the effect of psychological constructs like self-efficacy and engagement on proactive behaviors, including IBR (Chouchane et al., 2023). When POS is high, the relationship between PIS and IBR becomes more robust because employees are not only integrated socially but also feel institutionally supported (Chouchane & St-Jean, 2023). In COR terms, POS represents an external resource that amplifies the impact of internal perceptions like PIS by reducing the resource loss associated with innovation-related risks.

The third moderator, AF, operates differently but plays an equally important role. Unlike POS, which is organizational, AF is a personal trait. It refers to an individual's ability to grow and benefit from stressors and adverse conditions (Larsson & Tacking, 2023; Tiwari & Bhatt, 2023). In the

context of IBR and AIN, AF allows employees to thrive in uncertainty and view challenges as opportunities. IBR involves exploring and exploiting simultaneously, which is inherently complex and often discouraged in rigid or uncertain environments (Dooley-Nealis, 2025). However, when individuals are antifragile, they perceive setbacks not as threats but as drivers of improvement. This outlook helps them persist in intrapreneurial activities even when outcomes are unclear or resistance is high. Consequently, the impact of IBR on AIN is stronger among individuals who possess high AF. Studies have shown that antifragile individuals are more resilient, adaptive, and innovative, especially in unpredictable environments (Sun et al., 2024). From the COR lens, AF represents a deeply rooted psychological resource that turns perceived threats into growth triggers, enhancing the effectiveness of behavior like IBR in producing innovation. These discussions provide the basis for the following moderation hypotheses:

***H6a:*** *POS positively moderates the relationship between CQ and CA, such that the relationship is stronger when POS is high.*

***H6b:*** *POS positively moderates the relationship between PIS and IBR, such that the relationship is stronger when POS is high.*

***H6c:*** *AF positively moderates the relationship between IBR and AIN, such that the relationship is stronger when AF is high.*

## Methods

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine how cultural intelligence influences ambidextrous innovation among expatriates working in multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Pakistan. A positivist research philosophy and a deductive approach guided the selection of this method, as it enables the testing of theory-driven hypotheses through empirical data. Given the study's focus on investigating mediated and moderated relationships using validated constructs, the use of a structured questionnaire was considered appropriate for ensuring standardization, objectivity, and efficiency in data collection. The research targeted foreign professionals working in different MNCs across various industries in Pakistan. This population was selected because expatriates, by the nature of their assignments, operate in culturally dissimilar environments and face both challenges and opportunities related to adaptation, innovation, and organizational support—elements central to this study.

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted, as it allowed the selection of participants based on their relevance to the research questions. The inclusion criteria focused on expatriate employees who had spent at least six months in Pakistan and were working in managerial or professional roles in MNCs. This approach ensured that the participants had adequate exposure to the host culture and organizational practices to respond meaningfully to the study variables (Robinson, 2024). While random sampling may enhance generalizability, purposive sampling provided greater relevance and validity in this context. Data was collected through an online self-administered questionnaire, a method considered both practical and reliable given the geographic dispersion of the target population and the preference for digital communication among international professionals. A total of 375 complete and valid responses were obtained, which exceeded the minimum sample size requirement for structural path analysis using PROCESS Macro in SPSS, ensuring sufficient statistical power.

All variables in this study were measured using previously validated scales, adapted slightly for contextual relevance. Cultural intelligence was measured with a 20-item scale developed by Ang et al. (2007), capturing four dimensions of CQ. Perceived insider status was assessed using a 6-item

scale from Stamper and Masterson (2002). To measure antifragility, a 7-item scale from Ghasemi and Alizadeh (2017) was employed. Cultural adaptation was measured using a 9-item scale developed by Black (1988), with slight adaptations for expatriate context. Intrapreneurial behaviour was assessed with an 8-item scale from Gawke et al. (2019), covering venture and renewal behaviours. Ambidextrous innovation was measured using a 14-item scale developed by Jansen et al. (2006), which included both explorative and exploitative innovation items. Finally, perceived organizational support was measured with an 8-item scale from Eisenberger et al. (1997). All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as this scale provides an optimal balance between simplicity and discriminatory power.

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 26, with the PROCESS Macro employed for testing direct effects, mediation, serial mediation, and moderation models. Model 4 and Model 6 were used for mediation and serial mediation analysis, while Model 1 and 7 were used for moderation analysis. These models were selected for their appropriateness in testing conditional process models in a regression-based framework.

## Results

### Data cleaning

Prior to conducting any advanced statistical analyses, the dataset underwent thorough cleaning to ensure the reliability and validity of results. The first step involved identifying missing values. Frequency distribution was used to check each item for absence of data. It was confirmed that there were no missing values in the dataset, which is crucial for maintaining the integrity of regression-based analyses (Hair et al., 2019). The absence of missing values suggests that respondents completed the questionnaire with full attention, and no imputation techniques were required. The next step addressed the presence of outliers, which are extreme values that can distort statistical estimates and impact regression coefficients. To detect multivariate outliers, the Mahalanobis Distance Test was employed, which is a commonly recommended technique in multivariate research (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The results showed that no response exceeded the critical value for the given degrees of freedom, confirming that the dataset was free of significant outliers. This affirms the homogeneity and representativeness of the data points.

To assess whether the responses may have been biased due to the method of data collection, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to check for common method bias (CMB). This test loads all variables into an unrotated factor analysis to determine whether a single factor accounts for most of the variance. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), a value below 50% is acceptable and suggests that CMB is not a threat. The test outcome indicated that the first factor accounted for only 21.5% of the variance, which is well below the threshold, confirming that CMB does not significantly affect the study. Lastly, data normality was tested using skewness and kurtosis values. According to Kline (2023), skewness values between -2 and +2, and kurtosis values between -7 and +7 indicate acceptable normality for structural equation modeling or regression. As shown in the results, all variables fell within these ranges (e.g., skewness values ranged between -0.035 and -0.121, kurtosis between -0.678 and -0.798), suggesting that the data distribution is approximately normal and suitable for analysis using the PROCESS Macro in SPSS.

### Demographic Analysis

The demographic profile of the sample highlights that the study involved a total of 375 respondents, of which a significant majority were male (90.7%), while only a small portion were

female (9.3%). This male-dominated sample reflects the common expatriate workforce trends in multinational corporations in Pakistan, where leadership and professional roles are predominantly filled by men. Age-wise, most participants fell between the age group of 26–35 years (41.6%) and 36–45 years (38.9%), indicating that the majority of the sample was composed of mid-career professionals. Regarding qualification, the majority of respondents held either a bachelor's degree (44.0%) or a master's degree (50.7%), confirming their educational suitability for managerial positions in MNCs. Lastly, the experience distribution reveals that a large number had 10 or more years of work experience, with 27.2% having 10–13 years and 32.3% having over 14 years, reinforcing the credibility and contextual awareness of the sample group in discussing the variables studied.

**Table 1: Demographic**

| | | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 340 | 90.7 |
| | Female | 35 | 9.3 |
| | Total | 375 | 100.0 |
| Age | ≤25 | 4 | 1.1 |
| | 26-35 | 156 | 41.6 |
| | 36-45 | 146 | 38.9 |
| | 46-55 | 63 | 16.8 |
| | 56 and above | 6 | 1.6 |
| | Total | 375 | 100.0 |
| Qualification | Intermediate | 8 | 2.1 |
| | Bachelor | 165 | 44.0 |
| | Master | 190 | 50.7 |
| | MPhil | 12 | 3.2 |
| | Total | 375 | 100.0 |
| Experience | ≤1 | 2 | .5 |
| | 2-5 | 80 | 21.3 |
| | 6-9 | 70 | 18.7 |
| | 10-13 | 102 | 27.2 |
| | 14 and above | 121 | 32.3 |
| | Total | 375 | 100.0 |

**Descriptive Statistics and Reliability**

Descriptive statistics provide insight into the central tendency and spread of the responses. The mean scores for all variables hovered around the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale, with values ranging from 2.933 to 2.966. This suggests that respondents on average provided neutral-to-slightly-agree responses to most of the scale items, indicating moderate levels of cultural intelligence, perceived insider status, antifragility, cultural adaptation, perceived organizational support, intrapreneurial behaviour, and ambidextrous innovation. The standard deviations were relatively consistent across variables (ranging between 0.812 and 0.840), showing no extreme variability in the participants' responses. These moderate means and low variability indicate a relatively balanced perception across the study dimensions, suitable for regression-based analysis.

Reliability refers to the internal consistency of a measurement scale and reflects how consistently the items measure the intended construct. In this study, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, a widely accepted method in social science research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

According to George and Mallery (2024), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 are acceptable, and those above 0.9 are considered excellent. All the variables in this study exhibited strong reliability, with alpha values ranging from 0.890 (Perceived Insider Status) to 0.965 (Cultural Intelligence). These high reliability scores confirm that the items in each scale are internally consistent and can be trusted to accurately reflect the latent constructs. The rigorous selection of previously validated scales and the high Cronbach's Alpha values reinforce the measurement accuracy and strength of this study's survey instrument.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics**

| | Cronbach's | | | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable Name** | **Alpha** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Statistic** | **SE** | **Statistic** | **SE** |
| Cultural Intelligence | .965 | 2.933 | .815 | -.051 | .126 | -.754 | .251 |
| Perceived Insider Status | .890 | 2.941 | .833 | -.048 | .126 | -.678 | .251 |
| Antifragility | .906 | 2.962 | .836 | -.035 | .126 | -.744 | .251 |
| Cultural Adaptation | .925 | 2.950 | .836 | -.049 | .126 | -.678 | .251 |
| Perceived Organizational Support | .915 | 2.939 | .840 | -.062 | .126 | -.798 | .251 |
| Intrapreneurial Behaviour | .919 | 2.934 | .834 | -.076 | .126 | -.729 | .251 |
| Ambidextrous Innovation | .948 | 2.966 | .812 | -.121 | .126 | -.792 | .251 |

## Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses testing in this study was conducted using PROCESS Macro in SPSS, which is a widely used tool for regression-based mediation and moderation analysis (Hayes & Rockwood, 2017). The output included results of direct relationships, indirect (mediation and serial mediation) effects, and moderation analysis. All interpretations are based on the values of standardized coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), t-statistics, significance levels (p-values), and bias-corrected confidence intervals (LLCI and ULCI).

The direct relationships were assessed first. The first hypothesis tested whether CQ predicts CA. The result shows a strong and statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.96$, SE = 0.02, $t = 51.18$, $p < .001$, LLCI = 0.92, ULCI = 1.00). This suggests that individuals with higher CQ are more likely to adapt effectively in a culturally different environment. The high coefficient indicates a strong predictive power, and the narrow confidence interval supports the precision of the estimate. The second hypothesis proposed that CA positively affects PIS. The result was significant ($\beta = 0.20$, SE = 0.05, $t = 3.67$, $p < .001$, LLCI = 0.09, ULCI = 0.30), indicating that when employees successfully adapt to the host culture, they feel more like insiders in their organization. The third hypothesis tested whether PIS positively predicts IBR, and the result was again statistically significant ($\beta = 0.28$, SE = 0.05, $t = 5.70$, $p < .001$, LLCI = 0.18, ULCI = 0.38). This shows that those who perceive themselves as insiders are more likely to engage in intrapreneurial initiatives. The fourth hypothesis examined the relationship between IBR and AIN. This was also found to be significant ($\beta = 0.21$, SE = 0.04, $t = 5.46$, $p < .001$, LLCI = 0.14, ULCI = 0.29), suggesting that employees with higher levels of IBR contribute more to both exploitative and exploratory innovation.

**Table 3. Direct Effects**

| Hypotheses | Coeff. | se | t | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CQ --> CA | .96 | .02 | 51.18 | .000 | .92 | 1.00 |
| CA --> PIS | .20 | .05 | 3.67 | .000 | .09 | .30 |
| PIS --> IBR | .28 | .05 | 5.70 | .000 | .18 | .38 |
| IBR --> AIN | .21 | .04 | 5.46 | .000 | .14 | .29 |

After establishing the direct effects, the mediation hypotheses were examined. Mediation refers to a situation where the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable occurs through one or more intervening variables (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013). Indirect effects were assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The first mediation path tested whether CA mediates the relationship between CQ and PIS. The result was significant (β = 0.189, SE = 0.047, p < .001, LLCI = 0.098, ULCI = 0.279), confirming that cultural adaptation partially explains how CQ enhances insider feelings.

**Table 4. Indirect Effects**

| Hypotheses | Coeff. | se | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CQ --> CA --> PIS | .189 | .047 | .000 | .098 | .279 |
| CA --> PIS --> IBR | .446 | .040 | .000 | .368 | .525 |
| PIS --> IBR --> AIN | .465 | .035 | .000 | .397 | .535 |
| CQ --> CA --> PIS --> IBR --> AIN | .010 | .001 | .002 | .001 | .020 |

The second mediation examined the role of PIS between CA and IBR. This path was also supported (β = 0.446, SE = 0.040, p < .001, LLCI = 0.368, ULCI = 0.525), meaning that cultural adaptation leads to higher IBR when individuals also feel like insiders. The third mediation tested the effect of IBR between PIS and AIN, and the result was significant as well (β = 0.465, SE = 0.035, p < .001, LLCI = 0.397, ULCI = 0.535), implying that perceived insider feelings result in innovation only when they trigger entrepreneurial behavior.

**Table 5. Moderating Effects**

| Hypotheses | Coeff. | se | t | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CQ x POS --> CA --> PIS | .061 | .020 | 3.051 | .000 | .34 | .93 |
| PIS x POS --> IBR --> AIN | .082 | .018 | 4.555 | .000 | .21 | .74 |
| IBR x POS --> AIN | .075 | .025 | 3.00 | .000 | .06 | .17 |

The final indirect path tested a serial mediation model in which CQ affects AIN through CA, PIS, and IBR in a sequential manner. This path was significant (β = 0.010, SE = 0.001, p = .002, LLCI = 0.001, ULCI = 0.020), showing that even though the effect size is small, the chain of mediators plays a meaningful role in explaining how CQ translates into innovative output. This supports a processual understanding of how cultural competencies ultimately foster innovation, rather than a simple linear causality.

In addition to mediation, the study also explored moderation effects. Moderation occurs when the strength or direction of the relationship between two variables is influenced by a third variable, called a moderator (Aiken & West, 1991). The moderation analysis in this study was also conducted using PROCESS Macro (Model 1). The first moderating effect tested whether POS strengthens the relationship between CQ and CA. The interaction term was significant (β = 0.061, SE = 0.020, t = 3.051, p < .001, LLCI = 0.034, ULCI = 0.093), indicating that when organizational support is perceived to be high, the effect of CQ on cultural adaptation becomes stronger. This suggests that organizational support creates a favorable context for individuals to use their cultural knowledge more effectively.

The second moderation examined whether POS moderates the relationship between PIS and IBR. The results confirmed this interaction (β = 0.082, SE = 0.018, t = 4.555, p < .001, LLCI = 0.021, ULCI = 0.074), indicating that when support from the organization is high, the impact of insider feelings on intrapreneurial actions becomes more prominent. The third moderation tested whether AF strengthens the relationship between IBR and AIN. This interaction was also found significant

(β = 0.075, SE = 0.025, t = 3.00, p < .001, LLCI = 0.060, ULCI = 0.170), showing that the ability to benefit from stressors amplifies the innovation output resulting from intrapreneurial behavior.

All moderating effects showed statistical significance and the confidence intervals did not include zero, which confirms that both POS and AF serve as meaningful boundary conditions. These findings provide additional layers to the overall model by indicating under what circumstances certain effects become stronger. It demonstrates that individual-level psychological attributes (like CQ or PIS) are more effective when contextual support and antifragile traits are present.

## Discussion and Conclusion

### Discussion

The findings of this study offer strong support for the theorized relationships among cultural intelligence (CQ), cultural adaptation (CA), perceived insider status (PIS), intrapreneurial behaviour (IBR), and ambidextrous innovation (AIN), with further insights gained through the analysis of mediating and moderating variables. The direct effect between CQ and CA confirms that individuals with higher levels of CQ are better equipped to adjust within foreign work settings. This aligns with the understanding that cognitive and motivational elements of CQ enable effective engagement in culturally diverse contexts (Ang et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2019; Lee & Sukoco, 2010). The strong and significant link between CA and PIS further indicates that successful cultural adaptation nurtures an employee's perception of being a valued insider in the host organization, which is well documented in expatriate adjustment literature (Chen & Shaffer, 2017; Farh et al., 2007).

The positive influence of PIS on IBR demonstrates that when employees feel psychologically included, they are more likely to initiate novel and change-oriented behaviours within their roles (Stamper & Masterson, 2002; Gawke et al., 2019). This result is consistent with studies showing that organizational belonging supports proactive work behaviours (Sluss et al., 2011; Li et al., 2020). Likewise, the significant association between IBR and AIN indicates that intrapreneurial efforts not only drive new business initiatives but also stimulate both exploratory and exploitative forms of innovation (Binnui & Cowling, 2016; Jansen et al., 2006). This confirms prior evidence that intrapreneurs act as internal catalysts of innovation by navigating organizational constraints while addressing emerging needs (Rigtering et al., 2019).

The mediation results reveal that CA significantly mediates the relationship between CQ and PIS, which supports the idea that CQ influences how smoothly individuals adapt, which in turn shapes their sense of inclusion (Ng et al., 2017). PIS was also found to mediate the CA–IBR link, reinforcing that perceived belonging plays a key role in enabling proactive behaviours among adapted employees (Zhang et al., 2022). Moreover, the mediating role of IBR between PIS and AIN illustrates that inclusive environments foster employee-driven entrepreneurial actions, which subsequently stimulate organizational innovation (de Jong et al., 2015; Gawke et al., 2019). Importantly, the full serial mediation path—from CQ to AIN through CA, PIS, and IBR—was statistically significant, demonstrating the critical sequential role of psychological and behavioural enablers in converting intercultural competencies into innovation outputs.

On the moderating front, perceived organizational support (POS) significantly strengthened both the CQ–CA and PIS–IBR relationships. These findings are consistent with prior research indicating that when employees feel supported, they are more confident and willing to adapt or act proactively (Eisenberger et al., 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The moderating effect of antifragility (AF) on the IBR–AIN link further highlights that individuals who thrive under

pressure and uncertainty are more capable of transforming intrapreneurial intentions into effective innovations (Ghasemi & Alizadeh, 2017; Taleb, 2012). This finding reveals that a resilient mindset enhances the value creation potential of internal change agents. These findings collectively confirm the critical importance of intercultural and psychological resources in facilitating innovation through internal entrepreneurship. They also demonstrate that organizational enablers such as support and antifragility can amplify the positive effects of employee behaviours, providing useful insights for multinational corporations aiming to leverage their diverse workforce.

## Research Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of intrapreneurship and innovation research by demonstrating how a combination of intercultural competence, perceived inclusion, and psychological adaptability can lead to ambidextrous innovation. It introduces a sequential model linking CQ to innovation through CA, PIS, and IBR, filling a clear void in past studies that examined these constructs either in isolation or in limited combinations (Ang et al., 2007; Jansen et al., 2006). Moreover, it highlights the dual roles of POS and AF as key contextual enhancers, providing deeper insight into how individual and organizational resources interact to enable innovation. This aligns well with the resource-based view and expands its relevance into multicultural organizational settings.

Practically, the findings suggest that multinational companies operating in culturally diverse environments—such as those in Pakistan—should prioritize the development of CQ through training programs. Emphasizing CA as a transitional outcome, organizations should create inclusive environments to strengthen insider feelings and encourage intrapreneurial activity. Furthermore, HR leaders should promote supportive work climates and cultivate antifragile thinking by designing stress management interventions and resilience-building workshops. This strategic focus on both human capital and organizational climate can result in sustained innovation and competitiveness, especially when dealing with cross-cultural teams and uncertain business conditions.

## Limitations and Future Indications

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. It used a cross-sectional design, which restricts causal inference. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to track the evolution of these relationships over time. Moreover, data were collected only from expatriate employees in MNCs in Pakistan, limiting generalizability. Future studies should expand to include local employees and explore cultural comparisons across multiple countries. Additionally, other potential moderators, such as psychological safety or digital competence, could further enhance the proposed model.

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