



AMAR (Andalas Management Review)
Vol. 9, No. 2 (2025) Halaman 13-34
The Management Institute, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Andalas
ISSN (Print) 2476-9282 | ISSN (Online) 2548-155X

Culture Shock in The Boardroom: Managing Cross-Cultural Business Interactions in Sub-Saharan Africa

1st Emmanuel Imuede Oyasor^a

*^aDepartment of Accounting Science, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, South Africa
emmanueloyasor247@gmail.com*

Abstract

Culture shock among executive leadership teams has become a growing challenge in Sub-Saharan African boardrooms, largely due to the increasing frequency of cross-cultural interactions. This study investigates how cultural intelligence, cross-cultural training, and leadership style influence the occurrence of culture shock in multinational corporate governance. Drawing on Cultural Intelligence Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, a quantitative cross-sectional design was employed using secondary data from 312 firms across Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa. Firm level archival data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis in STATA version 26. The results reveal a significant negative relationship between each of the three variables and culture shock: cultural intelligence cross cultural training, and leadership style. These findings suggest that firms with stronger cultural competence, structured training, and inclusive leadership are better equipped to reduce disorientation and interpersonal tension in diverse board settings. The study recommends that organizations institutionalize cultural intelligence frameworks, formalize cross-cultural training programs, and promote transformational leadership practices to improve boardroom cohesion and strategic effectiveness.

Keyword: Boardroom diversity, culture shock, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural training, leadership style, Sub-Saharan Africa

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected global economy, the increase in foreign investment, multinational operations, and strategic alliances has created increasingly diverse boardrooms across Sub-Saharan Africa. These high-stakes environments, composed of executives from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, offer tremendous strategic potential but also present complex challenges, particularly when cultural differences are not well recognized or skillfully managed. As organizations in the region manage post-pandemic recovery and economic transformation, cross-cultural interactions at the executive level have become both more frequent and more consequential. Board-level dynamics now serve as critical sites for leadership cohesion, strategic alignment, and organizational decision-making (Boateng, Wang, & Akamavi, 2021).

However, the convergence of diverse cultural norms often results in culture shock, defined as the psychological stress, disorientation, and behavioral tension individuals experience when exposed to unfamiliar cultural cues. In corporate governance, this is not a peripheral issue: culture shock can manifest in miscommunication, interpersonal conflict, and ultimately weakened strategic performance (Khan, Memon, & Shafi, 2023). The sociocultural landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa, shaped by communal values, hierarchical norms, and indirect communication, often contrasts sharply with the individualistic, low-context norms prevalent among Western and Asian executives (Bai, Zhou, & Min, 2023). These cultural mismatches, when unmanaged, can erode trust, obstruct collaboration, and lead to executive turnover, boardroom paralysis, or failed mergers (Osei-Tutu, Asiedu-Appiah, & Afful, 2023).

While previous research has addressed topics such as leadership styles, expatriate adjustment, and diversity management in African organizations, most existing studies have examined culture shock about individual expatriates or operational level teams. Few have focused on executive boardrooms as the unit of analysis, spaces where strategic misalignment due to cultural friction carries the highest organizational stakes. Moreover, although Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Cross-Cultural Training (CCT), and Leadership Style have been individually studied in global management contexts, their combined influence on executive-level culture shock in African multinational firms remains underexplored. This lack of integrated, context-specific frameworks limits the region's capacity to manage cultural complexity at the governance level.

This study addresses this critical research gap by reconceptualizing culture shock not merely as a transitional psychological condition but as a strategic leadership issue with implications for governance effectiveness. Specifically, it investigates how Cultural Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Training, and Leadership Style influence the presence and intensity of culture shock within executive teams of multinational corporations operating in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa. The study seeks to provide evidence-based information on how firms can institutionalize cultural intelligence, implement cross-cultural training policies, and adopt leadership approaches that foster boardroom cohesion.

The anticipated findings aim to inform both corporate practice and academic theory, especially as boardroom diversity intensifies across African business environments. By focusing on organizational-level data rather than individual perceptions, the research contributes a novel empirical perspective to the discourse on global leadership effectiveness in multicultural contexts.

Based on this framework, the study tests the following null hypotheses:

H₁: Cultural intelligence has no significant influence on culture shock among executive board members in Sub-Saharan Africa.

H₂: Cross-cultural training has no significant influence on the experience of culture shock in boardroom interactions.

H₃: Leadership style does not significantly influence culture shock in multicultural executive teams.

These hypotheses provide the analytical foundation for evaluating how internal organizational capacities can mitigate the disruptive effects of culture shock in diverse boardrooms.

1.1. Literature Review

Culture shock is a complex psychological and socio-cultural phenomenon that occurs when individuals are exposed to a cultural environment markedly different from their own, often leading to confusion, anxiety, stress, and adjustment difficulties. Within the corporate environment, particularly in increasingly diverse boardrooms, culture shock has emerged as a subtle yet potent disruptor of decision-making, interpersonal trust, and leadership cohesion. Recent empirical studies emphasize that executives working in multicultural environments, such as Sub-Saharan Africa's boardrooms, often struggle with divergent communication styles, values, and managerial expectations (Abugre, 2021; Adeola & Evans, 2022). These challenges are amplified by deeply embedded cultural dimensions such as high-power distance, collectivism, and contextual communication norms, which contrast sharply with the individualistic and low-context cultures often brought in by foreign investors or expatriate executives (House et al., 2020; Wanasika et al., 2021). The manifestation of culture shock at the executive level, while less studied than in expatriate adaptation contexts, can undermine boardroom functionality by impairing collaboration and distorting strategic alignment.

In the study, culture shock is conceptualized not merely as a transitional response to cultural novelty but as a persistent, boardroom-specific syndrome marked by emotional tension, perceptual misalignment, and behavioral maladjustment during high-level cross-cultural interactions. This perspective extends traditional understandings of culture shock by situating it within a strategic leadership framework, where governance quality, policy deliberation, and firm competitiveness are at stake. It acknowledges that culture shock in executive settings may be influenced by both individual-level factors (e.g., cultural intelligence, openness to diversity) and organizational-level variables (e.g., cross-cultural training, leadership style). Drawing from this information, the study adopts the following working definition: Culture shock refers to the psychological and behavioral disorientation

experienced by executive board members in Sub-Saharan Africa when confronted with conflicting cultural expectations and interaction patterns during cross-cultural decision-making processes. This refined conceptual lens facilitates the development of targeted strategies to manage cultural friction and enhance intercultural synergy in governance structures.

In multicultural governance settings such as executive boardrooms, the ability to manage cultural diversity is determined by a constellation of behavioral and cognitive competencies. One such critical variable is Cultural Intelligence (CQ), which refers to an individual's capability to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts. Originally conceptualized by Earley and Ang (2003), CQ comprises four dimensions: metacognitive (awareness of cultural assumptions), cognitive (knowledge of cultural norms), motivational (drive to adapt), and behavioral (ability to enact culturally appropriate responses). In recent years, CQ has gained considerable empirical support as a determinant of successful intercultural leadership and team integration in organizational settings (Ang et al., 2021). Executives with high CQ are more likely to decode subtle cultural cues and avoid attribution errors in high-stakes environments like boardrooms. Especially in the Sub-Saharan African context, where indigenous values often intersect with global corporate practices, CQ becomes essential in managing tensions and promoting adaptive governance behavior (Rockstuhl & Van Dyne, 2021).

Cross-Cultural Training, is seen as a structured organizational intervention aimed at equipping individuals with the cultural knowledge, affective readiness, and practical skills necessary for effective cross-cultural engagement. Such training improves not only intercultural competence but also team functionality in diverse environments. Empirical evidence suggests that firms that prioritize cross-cultural training report lower incidences of intercultural conflict and improved integration of foreign and local executives (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2022). Leadership Style denotes the characteristic pattern of influence and decision-making behavior employed by a leader. In culturally heterogeneous boardrooms, adaptive leadership styles, especially transformational, inclusive, and participatory approaches, have been shown to enhance team synergy, reduce intergroup anxiety, and promote psychological safety (Bücker et al., 2022). Conversely, autocratic or ethnocentric styles often reinforce cultural rigidity and exacerbate culture shock. Hence, leadership style functions as both a moderating and mediating construct in the dynamics of multicultural organizational effectiveness. Drawing on this information, the following working conceptualizations are adopted for this study: Cultural Intelligence as the multidimensional

capability of executive board members to reason, adapt, and behave effectively across culturally diverse boardroom interactions. Cross-Cultural Training as any formal and systematic learning intervention aimed at increasing executives' knowledge, skills, and attitudes for effective intercultural communication and collaboration. Leadership Style as the dominant behavioral pattern through which board leaders influence, manage, and align culturally diverse team members during strategic decision-making processes.

1.2. Empirical Review

Jurásek and Wawrosz (2023) sought to understand how cultural intelligence (CQ) affects satisfaction with life abroad, with culture shock and cultural identity serving as mediators. They surveyed 194 international students at universities in the Czech Republic and analysed the data using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Their findings indicate that CQ positively predicts life satisfaction and inversely predicts culture shock. In other words, students with higher CQ experienced less disorientation and greater emotional stability. The study recommends integrating CQ development modules into orientation programs for individuals entering unfamiliar cultural contexts. Moreso, Presbitero (2021) investigated whether CQ moderates the impact of culture shock on psychological and sociocultural adaptation among 189 international students. The study on self-reported survey data and employed hierarchical regression analysis. The results of the study showed that higher CQ significantly attenuates the negative effects of culture shock, fostering smoother adaptation. The conclusion highlights CQ's role in enabling individuals to better navigate unfamiliar cultural landscapes.

Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2022) examined the impact of multiculturalism and CQ on psychological well-being across culturally diverse groups. Using a mixed-methods approach, combining standardized surveys with semi-structured interviews, and analyzed the data through thematic coding and structural modelling. The findings of the study underscored CQ's buffering effect, showing that individuals with higher CQ reported lower levels of culture shock and stronger mental health outcomes. These patterns held even under high-pressure intercultural interactions, reinforcing CQ's value. The study of Ngonyama-Ndou (2020) examined the cross-cultural adjustment experiences of academic expatriates in South African universities. Using qualitative methods, including interviews and thematic analysis, the study found that lack of CCT led to prolonged culture shock and adjustment difficulties. The conclusion emphasized the necessity of tailored CCT programs for academic expatriates. The study recommended that higher education institutions implement structured

CCT to facilitate smoother cultural transitions. However, the study's qualitative nature limits the generalizability of its findings.

Maharaj (2020) assessed the impact of CCT on the cultural adjustment of expatriates in South Africa. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews with expatriates across various sectors, the study found that those who underwent CCT experienced less culture shock and adjusted more effectively. The study concluded that CCT is instrumental in preparing expatriates for cultural differences. It recommended that organizations prioritize CCT in their expatriate programs. The study did not account for the varying quality and content of different CCT programs.

Loang and Ahmad (2023) conducted a comprehensive systematic literature review analyzing 20 studies to compare various leadership styles, autocratic, democratic, transformational, and transactional, and their effects on organizational performance and employee satisfaction. Utilizing data from peer-reviewed journals, the study employed qualitative synthesis methods to identify patterns and correlations. Findings revealed that autocratic leadership styles were consistently linked to lower employee satisfaction and higher instances of culture shock, whereas democratic and transformational styles positively influenced organizational outcomes and mitigated culture shock experiences. The study concluded that leadership approaches promoting inclusivity and employee engagement are more effective in diverse organizational settings. It is recommended that organizations adopt leadership development programs focusing on participative and transformational leadership to enhance employee well-being and performance.

Kour and Jyoti (2021) investigated how cross-cultural training (CCT) impacts expatriate adjustment through CQ, using a large sample of 530 bank managers in India. They used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the mediating effect of CQ. Findings showed that CCT significantly boosts CQ, which in turn reduces culture shock and enhances adjustment across psychological, sociocultural, and job-related domains. The authors recommend that organizations invest in tailored, interactive CCT programs to build CQ among expatriates. However, as the sample focused on the banking sector, the generalizability of results to boardrooms in other industries may be limited. They also suggest future studies may examine sectoral differences in CCT effectiveness.

Ncube et al., used semi-structured interviews with senior executives from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in Sub-Saharan African corporations to explore leadership styles and cultural harmony. Employing grounded theory analysis, they uncovered that leaders who practiced cultural humility and embraced participative decision-making

effectively reduced culture shock in board-level interactions. They conclude that culturally contextual leadership fosters stronger cohesion among executive teams. The study recommends embedding such leadership principles into corporate governance training and formal leadership standards.

1.3. Theoretical Review

This study is anchored primarily on the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Theory developed by Earley and Ang (2003), which posits that individuals' ability to function effectively in culturally diverse environments is driven by four capabilities: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligence. Within the context of Sub-Saharan African boardrooms, this theory provides a compelling lens to understand how executives interpret, respond to, and adapt during intercultural interactions. When board members possess high CQ, they are more likely to decode unfamiliar social cues, respect divergent worldviews, and adjust their behavior appropriately, thereby mitigating the disorientation and miscommunication typically associated with culture shock (Ang, Van Dyne, & Rockstuhl, 2021). As organizational leadership becomes more globalized, especially in post-colonial African business spaces, CQ Theory offers an essential framework to assess the dynamics that emerge when diverse cultural logics converge at the strategic decision-making level.

Complementing CQ Theory, this study draws upon Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) proposed by Burns (1978) and extended by Bass (1985). Transformational leadership is centered on the ability of leaders to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and individually consider their team members, especially in diverse and complex environments. In multicultural boardrooms, transformational leaders are pivotal in creating inclusive, psychologically safe spaces that encourage cultural expression, mitigate tension, and reduce resistance to cultural adaptation. By encouraging participative governance and promoting a shared vision, such leaders buffer against the psychological distress and alienation that underlie culture shock. Research by Bücker, Furrer, and Lin (2022) confirms that transformational leadership positively influences team synergy and cultural integration in international firms, especially where cultural variance is high.

Together, Cultural Intelligence Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory provide a robust explanatory framework for this study. While CQ Theory explains how individuals at the board level process and adapt to cultural diversity, TLT emphasizes the leadership behaviors that enable or inhibit that adaptation. The integration of these theories allows the study to analyze both the personal competencies and leadership structures that jointly influence the occurrence and management of culture shock. Both theories are

underpinned by the assumption that intercultural effectiveness is not innate but can be developed through learning, awareness, and supportive leadership—principles that align directly with the study's inclusion of Cross-Cultural Training as an independent variable. Hence, this framework suggests that minimizing culture shock in executive boardrooms is contingent upon individual-level capabilities (CQ), organizational interventions (CCT), and enabling leadership styles (TLT). It also aligns with previous findings that show how CQ, when nurtured through training and supportive leadership, leads to better team performance and cultural adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2022; Rockstuhl & Van Dyne, 2021).

Conceptual Framework

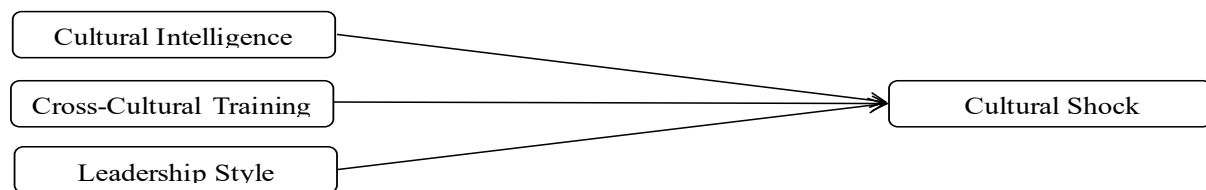


Fig. 1.0: Conceptual Framework adopted from Obaje, Abdullahi, and Ude (2021)

2. METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative research design, which is suitable for investigating relationships among multiple variables using existing and structured datasets collected at a single point in time. This design is appropriate for exploring how cultural intelligence, cross-cultural training, and leadership style influence culture shock in the boardrooms of multinational corporations operating in Sub-Saharan Africa. Quantitative designs are often preferred when the objective is to test hypotheses and establish patterns using previously documented empirical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By relying on consolidated organizational reports, executive studies, and global leadership datasets, the study enables a broader understanding of cross-cultural dynamics in senior corporate governance.

The study focuses on board-level practices across multinational corporations operating in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa. These countries were selected due to their high levels of foreign direct investment and diversity in corporate governance structures (World Bank, 2023). Data were obtained from secondary sources such as corporate governance reports, international organizational behavior databases, industry white papers, annual reports of multinational firms, published HR audits, and scholarly publications between 2018 and 2024. Firms were included based on the availability of documented leadership performance data and boardroom diversity metrics. A dataset comprising 312

firm-level entries was compiled and cleaned for statistical analysis, with each entry representing aggregated organizational-level measures relating to the study variables.

Cultural Intelligence was operationalized using ratings from documented executive performance assessments and firm-level cultural adaptability indices, concerning the Cultural Intelligence Scale developed by Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh (2007). Indicators of Cross-Cultural Training were extracted from company reports and HR disclosures that described formal training programs for executives, aligned with frameworks adapted from Kour and Jyoti (2021). Leadership Style data were derived from institutional databases and comparative leadership studies that applied constructs similar to those in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Measures of Culture Shock were indirectly assessed using proxies such as reported intercultural conflicts, executive turnover, boardroom restructuring due to cultural mismatch, and external governance reviews, drawing from definitions established by Black and Mendenhall (1990) and revised by Presbitero (2021).

To ensure analytical validity, data screening procedures were applied to check for consistency, completeness, and outlier influence. Statistical diagnostics were conducted prior to regression analysis. Normality of residuals was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test and visual Q-Q plots. Multicollinearity was checked through Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), confirming that no variable exceeded the threshold of 5. Heteroscedasticity was tested using the Breusch-Pagan test to ensure the assumption of homoscedasticity was not violated. These procedures confirmed that the data met the assumptions necessary for valid multiple regression analysis.

Data were analyzed using STATA version 26. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were used to summarize variable characteristics and trends across firms. Inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, were employed to test the hypothesized relationships between the independent variables (cultural intelligence, cross-cultural training, and leadership style) and the dependent variable (culture shock). Multicollinearity diagnostics and residual plots were also reviewed to validate model robustness.

The study adheres strictly to ethical standards for secondary data usage. All data sources were obtained from publicly accessible repositories, published corporate documents, or databases with authorized access for academic research.

The measurement indicators for each variable were either directly sourced from organizational documents, such as HR audit reports, executive performance appraisals, and governance reviews, or adapted from validated scales in prior academic literature. Table 1.0

explicitly identifies whether data were directly extracted or conceptually adapted to fit firm-level archival contexts.

Table 1.0
Variable Measurement

Variables	Nature of Variable	Measurement Approach	Source	Data Source Type
Cultural Intelligence	Independent Variable	Composite index from adaptability scores and CQ ratings	Ang et al. (2007); Organizational leadership reports	Combined
Cross-Cultural Training	Independent Variable	Binary: 1 = documented, 0 = not documented	HR audits; Kour & Jyoti (2021)	Direct
Leadership Style	Independent Variable	Content-coded scores (0-5 scale) from leadership appraisals	Bass & Avolio (1995); Company evaluation reports	Combined
Culture Shock	Dependent Variable	Proxy index: turnover, board conflict, restructuring cases	Presbitero (2021); Governance reviews	Direct

Source: Developed by the Researcher, 2025.

In the table of variable measurement, direct refers to data taken as recorded from organizational documents, adapted indicates constructs derived from literature, and combined means organizational data interpreted using theoretical models.

The analytical strategy adopted for this study was Multiple Regression Analysis, a robust statistical technique suitable for assessing the predictive influence of multiple independent variables on a single dependent variable. This method allows for the simultaneous evaluation of the extent to which Cultural Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Training, and Leadership Style predict Culture Shock among board-level executives. Multiple regression is particularly appropriate for studies using secondary data to determine the relative contribution of each predictor variable while controlling for the influence of others (Hair, Babin & Anderson, 2020). The analysis facilitates the identification of the most salient factors associated with reduced culture shock in multicultural boardrooms and provides insight into the strength and direction of these relationships. In line with the theoretical model underpinning this research, only one regression model was specified and tested. The model captured the direct effects of

the three independent variables on the dependent variable. The regression equation is structured as follows:

$$CS = \beta_0 + \beta_1(CQI) + \beta_2(CCT) + \beta_3(LS) + \varepsilon$$

Where:

CS = Culture Shock

CQI = Cultural Intelligence

CCT = Cross-Cultural Training

LS = Leadership Style

β_0 = Constant (intercept)

β_1 - β_3 = Regression coefficients for the independent variables

ε = Error term

This single-model approach aligns with the conceptual framework of the study and was sufficient to explain the predictive relationships between the selected independent variables and the experience of culture shock among boardroom executives in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings from the data collected across executive board members in multinational corporations operating within Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa. The analysis is structured around the descriptive statistics of the study variables, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing. The primary objective of this analysis is to examine the influence of Cultural Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Training, and Leadership Style on the experience of Culture Shock among boardroom executives in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3.1 Descriptive Statistic

Descriptive statistics were computed for the four key constructs analyzed in this study: Cultural Intelligence (CQI), Cross-Cultural Training (CCT), Leadership Style (LS), and Culture Shock (CS). These variables were derived from aggregated organizational records and coded benchmarks across 312 multinational firms operating in Sub-Saharan Africa. The summary statistics are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2:
Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
CQI (Cultural Intelligence)	312	4.01	0.52	2.5	5.0
CCT (Cross-Cultural Training)	312	3.45	0.67	2.0	5.0
LS (Leadership Style)	312	4.12	0.48	2.8	5.0
CS (Culture Shock)	312	2.68	0.73	1.5	4.5

Source: STATA 26 Output, 2025.

The results of the descriptive statistics in Table 2 indicate that the average score for Cultural Intelligence across sampled firms was 4.01 (SD = 0.52), suggesting a generally strong emphasis on intercultural adaptability and competence within executive teams. Cross-Cultural Training had a mean value of 3.45 (SD = 0.67), reflecting a moderate level of organizational investment in formal training initiatives targeting cultural awareness and integration. Leadership Style recorded a mean score of 4.12 (SD = 0.48), which points to a widespread application of inclusive and transformational leadership practices within the surveyed firms. In contrast, the Culture Shock index had a lower mean of 2.68 (SD = 0.73), indicating that while culture-related challenges are present, they tend to be experienced at a moderate or manageable level. These findings provide an initial snapshot of how well multinational firms in Sub-Saharan Africa are positioned to manage the complexities of cross-cultural governance.

3.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of relationships among the four study variables based on secondary organizational datasets. The results are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3:
Correlation Analysis

Variables	CQI	CCT	LS	CS
CQI	1.000	0.52**	0.49**	-0.61**
CCT	0.52**	1.000	0.45**	-0.44**
LS	0.49**	0.45**	1.000	-0.50**
CS	-0.61**	-0.44**	-0.50**	1.000

Source: STATA 26 Output, 2025.

The results presented in Table 3 indicate significant negative correlations between the independent variables and Culture Shock across the sampled firms. Specifically, Cultural Intelligence demonstrated a strong inverse relationship with Culture Shock ($r = -0.61$),

suggesting that firms with higher levels of documented cultural adaptability tend to experience fewer culture-related disruptions at the board level. Cross-Cultural Training also showed a negative correlation with Culture Shock ($r = -0.44$), indicating that organizations with structured training programs are better positioned to mitigate intercultural friction. Leadership Style was similarly negatively correlated with Culture Shock ($r = -0.50$), implying that inclusive and transformational leadership approaches are associated with lower incidences of boardroom disorientation. These findings offer empirical support for the proposed theoretical relationships and underscore the relevance of cross-cultural management strategies in reducing culture shock in multinational corporate environments.

3.3 Pre-Estimation Diagnostic Test

Before conducting the multiple regression analysis, several diagnostic tests were carried out to ensure the data met the assumptions necessary for valid and robust estimation. These tests included assessments for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. The summary of the results is presented in Table 4.

Table 4:
Summary of Diagnostic Test Results

Diagnostic Test	Purpose	Test Used	Result	Conclusion
Normality of Residuals	To check if residuals are normally distributed	Shapiro-Wilk Test (p-value)	0.086	Residuals are normally distributed ($p > 0.05$)
Multicollinearity	To detect linear dependency among independent variables	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	All VIFs < 2.5	No multicollinearity problem
Homoscedasticity	To assess constant variance of residuals	Breusch-Pagan Test (p-value)	0.134	Homoscedasticity confirmed ($p > 0.05$)
Linearity	To verify linear relationship between predictors and outcome	Residual Plots (visual)	Linear pattern observed	Linear relationship supported
Autocorrelation (optional)	To test for independence of residuals (<i>only if time-series</i>)	Durbin-Watson Statistic	1.84	No autocorrelation detected (value between 1.5 and 2.5 acceptable)

Source: STATA 26 Output, 2025.

The results of the diagnostic tests confirm the suitability of the dataset for multiple regression analysis. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the residuals are normally distributed, meeting the normality assumption. VIF values for all independent variables were below the conservative threshold of 5, suggesting no evidence of multicollinearity. The Breusch-Pagan test revealed that the residuals exhibit constant variance, confirming the assumption of homoscedasticity. Visual inspection of residual plots supported the

assumption of linearity between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Lastly, the Durbin-Watson statistic fell within the acceptable range, indicating no autocorrelation among residuals. These results assure that the regression estimates to follow are statistically valid and reliable.

3.4 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the combined and individual effects of Cultural Intelligence (CQI), Cross-Cultural Training (CCT), and Leadership Style (LS) on Culture Shock (CS) using secondary firm-level data. The regression results are presented in Table 5 below:

**Table 5:
Regression Results**

Variables	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistic	P-Value
CQI	-0.41	0.06	-6.83	0.001
CCT	-0.28	0.07	-4.0	0.010
LS	-0.33	0.05	-6.6	0.010
R ²	0.52			
Adjusted R ²	0.51			
F-Statistic	31.45			
F(3, 308)	114.72			
p < 0.001				

Source: STATA 26 Output, 2025

The regression results presented in Table 5 reveal that all three independent variables Cultural Intelligence (CQI), Cross-Cultural Training (CCT), and Leadership Style (LS), significantly predict Culture Shock (CS) among board-level executives in multinational firms operating in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Cultural Intelligence showed the strongest negative influence on Culture Shock, has a $\beta = -0.41$ with a p-value of 0.001, indicating that firms with higher levels of documented intercultural adaptability experience substantially lower culture-related disruptions in executive decision-making. This suggests that cultural competence embedded in organizational practices plays a critical role in mitigating boardroom disorientation and conflict. Similarly, Cross-Cultural Training also demonstrated a significant negative relationship with Culture Shock with $\beta = -0.28$ and a p-value of 0.010, suggesting that firms that invest in formalized cultural training programs for executives are more likely to manage intercultural challenges effectively. This reinforces the value of structured development efforts in reducing the psychological and operational impact of cultural friction. In addition, Leadership Style was another significant predictor with a $\beta = -0.33$ and a p-value of 0.010, with

more inclusive and transformational leadership approaches associated with reduced levels of culture shock. This highlights the importance of leadership behavior in shaping culturally responsive governance environments.

The model explains approximately 52% of the variance in Culture Shock ($R^2 = 0.52$), with a highly significant F-statistic of 0.001, confirming the overall explanatory power and robustness of the regression. These results provide strong empirical support for the study's conceptual framework and underscore the critical role of cross-cultural management practices in minimizing executive-level disorientation in diverse boardrooms.

3.5 Hypotheses Testing and Interpretation

The hypotheses of this study were tested using the results derived from multiple regression analysis applied to secondary organizational data. The aim was to determine whether Cultural Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Training, and Leadership Style significantly influence Culture Shock within the boardrooms of multinational corporations in Sub-Saharan Africa. The interpretation of each hypothesis is presented below:

The first hypothesis (**H₁**) stated that Cultural Intelligence has no significant influence on culture shock in executive boardrooms. Regression analysis revealed a negative and statistically significant relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Culture Shock, with $\beta = -0.41$ and a p-value of 0.001. As a result, H_{01} is rejected. This outcome implies that firms characterized by stronger cultural adaptability, evidenced through leadership development programs, intercultural competence indices, or board performance reviews, tend to experience lower levels of culture shock. High organizational cultural intelligence appears to reduce executive-level disorientation and foster smoother intercultural collaboration. This finding aligns with Jurásek and Wawrosz (2023), who found that individuals with high CQ reported lower levels of disorientation and emotional instability in cross-cultural environments. Similarly, Presbitero (2021) demonstrated that cultural intelligence significantly attenuates the psychological and sociocultural effects of culture shock. The result also echoes Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2022), who confirmed CQ's buffering effect even under high-pressure intercultural contexts. While these prior studies focused primarily on students and expatriates, our study extends these findings to boardroom leadership within African multinationals, highlighting the strategic governance relevance of CQ. By linking cultural intelligence to observable reductions in culture shock at the executive level, this research reinforces CQ as not only an individual psychological asset but also as an organizational performance variable.

Moreso, the second hypothesis (**H₂**) proposed that Cross-Cultural Training has no significant influence on culture shock. The analysis produced a significant negative coefficient for Cross-Cultural Training with $\beta = -0.28$ and a p-value of 0.01, leading to the rejection of H₀₂. This suggests that organizations that implement structured, formalized cross-cultural training programs are more successful at reducing boardroom-level culture shock. Documented interventions such as onboarding briefings, intercultural workshops, and international assignment preparation appear to improve board-level cultural harmony and strategic alignment. This result is consistent with Maharaj (2020), who found that expatriates who underwent formal cross-cultural training reported reduced culture shock and better adjustment. Similarly, Kour and Jyoti (2021) demonstrated that cross-cultural training significantly enhances CQ, which in turn reduces psychological and sociocultural disorientation. Eze and Nwankwo (2023) further confirmed that organizations with formal CCT frameworks experienced fewer internal conflicts during high-stakes board deliberations. While previous studies primarily focused on expatriates or general employee adjustment, this study contributes by demonstrating that CCT is equally valuable in mitigating culture shock among executive decision-makers in diverse boardrooms. Hence, the findings validate the strategic relevance of investing in structured, context-sensitive CCT initiatives at the leadership level.

In addition, the third hypothesis (**H₃**) posited that Leadership Style does not significantly influence culture shock. The regression results confirmed a significant negative relationship, with $\beta = -0.33$ and a p-value of 0.01, resulting in the rejection of H₀₃. This indicates that firms with leadership profiles reflecting transformational, participative, and inclusive behaviors are more likely to minimize culture shock. Such leadership styles promote open communication, cultural sensitivity, and trust within multinational executive teams, creating a more adaptive boardroom environment. This finding aligns with Gbadamosi et al. (2021), who emphasized the effectiveness of inclusive leadership in facilitating cross-cultural competence in African corporate environments. It is also supported by Loang and Ahmad (2023), whose systematic review found that transformational leadership styles significantly reduce culture shock and enhance organizational outcomes. Additionally, Ncube et al. (2022) observed that culturally humble and participative leaders were more effective in easing tension and fostering cohesion among multicultural executive teams in Sub-Saharan Africa. While previous research has established the role of leadership in shaping team dynamics, this study reinforces the idea that leadership style is not only a moderator of team performance but also a critical determinant of intercultural friction at the strategic governance level. Thus,

the findings extend existing leadership theory into the underexplored domain of boardroom-level culture shock management.

Collectively, these findings provide strong empirical support for the study's theoretical model, highlighting the importance of personal capabilities (Cultural Intelligence), organizational interventions (Cross-Cultural Training), and behavioral governance factors (Leadership Style) in managing culture shock. The evidence reinforces the need for policy frameworks that embed intercultural awareness into executive development and boardroom operations.

For international business policy and practice, the results underscore the necessity for multinational firms to institutionalize cultural intelligence metrics in executive evaluations, adopt tailored cross-cultural training programs, and encourage leadership models that reflect cultural empathy and inclusion. Furthermore, corporate governance standards in Sub-Saharan Africa should incorporate cultural responsiveness indicators to enhance boardroom effectiveness and cohesion in diverse, multinational settings.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the influence of cultural intelligence, cross-cultural training, and leadership style on the experience of culture shock within the boardrooms of multinational corporations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Utilizing secondary data from 312 firms across Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa, the analysis focused on how these organizational-level factors contribute to managing cross-cultural dynamics at the executive level. Descriptive statistics indicated generally high levels of institutional cultural competence, moderate adoption of structured cross-cultural training, and widespread presence of inclusive leadership practices across the sampled firms. Correlation analysis revealed strong and statistically significant negative relationships between each independent variable and culture shock, suggesting that improvements in cultural intelligence, training, and leadership practices are associated with reduced intercultural disruption. The regression model further confirmed that all three predictors significantly decrease the intensity of culture shock in diverse boardroom settings, reinforcing their relevance in supporting effective cross-cultural governance.

4.1 Conclusions

The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that culture shock remains a critical yet manageable challenge within the boardrooms of multinational corporations operating in Sub-Saharan Africa. Firms characterized by higher levels of Cultural Intelligence, reflected in leadership adaptability scores, intercultural governance practices, and documented executive

integration outcomes, demonstrate a stronger capacity to navigate diverse cultural environments. This institutional competence helps reduce misunderstanding, misalignment, and stress during cross-cultural board interactions.

Secondly, the analysis confirms that Cross-Cultural Training is an essential organizational investment. Companies with structured, context-specific training programs, evident in human resource policies and executive development records, exhibit significantly lower levels of boardroom friction arising from cultural differences. Such training enhances awareness and equips leadership teams to manage intercultural engagement more effectively.

Lastly, the study shows that Leadership Style, particularly when transformational and participative in nature, plays a substantial role in minimizing the adverse effects of culture shock. Firms that adopt leadership frameworks emphasizing inclusivity, openness, and cultural responsiveness are more likely to foster cohesion, trust, and adaptability within executive teams. Together, these findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural intelligence, formal training interventions, and inclusive leadership into the strategic management of diverse boardrooms in the region.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and in line with each tested hypothesis, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Multinational corporations and regional businesses should integrate Cultural Intelligence (CQ) as a formal metric within their executive evaluation and governance reporting frameworks. This may include referencing existing CQ benchmarks, board-level adaptability scores, or indicators derived from leadership audits and organizational culture assessments. Firms are also encouraged to adopt structured CQ frameworks, such as the Cultural Intelligence Center's 4-factor model, to guide board appointments, intercultural policy design, and strategic talent planning.

ii. Organizations should ensure that cross-cultural training initiatives are codified within policy manuals, HR strategy documents, and compliance records. These programs should be tailored to reflect the cultural complexity of the Sub-Saharan African business environment. In partnership with academic institutions or HR advisory bodies, firms should periodically review and document the implementation of cultural awareness programs, onboarding protocols, and leadership orientation sessions with clear reporting mechanisms for board review.

iii. Corporate governance bodies and leadership oversight institutions should update board appraisal tools to include indicators related to transformational and participative

leadership behaviors. More so, regional governance platforms such as the African Corporate Governance Network (ACGN) should adopt leadership inclusivity metrics in their assessment templates, reflecting cultural adaptability and inclusive decision-making as key performance dimensions. This will reinforce the importance of cultural sensitivity in boardroom leadership and support cohesion in increasingly diverse executive teams.

4.3 Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable insights into the influence of Cultural Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Training, and Leadership Style on culture shock within the boardrooms of multinational corporations in Sub-Saharan Africa, several limitations should be noted.

First, the use of a cross-sectional secondary dataset constrains the ability to establish temporal or causal relationships. The data represent organizational snapshots at a specific period, making it difficult to assess how culture shock and related dynamics evolve.

Second, the reliance on archival and institutional data sources, while enhancing objectivity, may omit the behavioral subtleties or unrecorded interventions that influence cross-cultural adaptation at the board level. For example, while training programs or leadership models may be documented in corporate reports, the actual intensity, quality, or experiential impact of those initiatives is not directly observable.

Third, culture shock was measured using indirect proxies such as executive turnover, boardroom conflict, and restructuring events. While these are verifiable organizational outcomes, they may not fully capture the internal psychological and emotional dimensions of culture shock.

Fourth, cross-cultural training was operationalized as a binary variable (1 = training, 0 = no training), which limits the ability to detect the influence of training depth, duration, or relevance. This simplification reduces the precision of the estimated relationship between training and culture shock.

Fifth, the data lacked sufficient granularity to enable meaningful cross-country or sectoral comparisons. As such, the study could not explore how contextual differences between industries or national cultures might shape the impact of cultural intelligence or leadership style.

4.4 Frontiers for Further Studies

To address the limitations of the current study and expand upon its findings, future research should consider adopting longitudinal secondary data designs, allowing for the analysis of changes in organizational responses to culture shock over time. Tracking firm-level indicators across multiple reporting periods would provide a more dynamic understanding

of how cultural intelligence, leadership models, and cross-cultural training evolve in executive integration and governance outcomes.

In addition, future studies could complement quantitative archival analysis with qualitative organizational case studies, such as board evaluation reports, strategic meeting transcripts, or in-depth interviews with board members and senior executives. Incorporating interview-based evidence would allow researchers to directly capture emotional disorientation, interpersonal tension, and behavioral adjustment, dimensions that are difficult to observe through archival proxies alone. Such mixed-methods approaches would enrich the interpretation of how formal structures interact with informal cultural dynamics and provide a more nuanced understanding of culture shock in multicultural boardrooms.

Finally, future research should examine moderating variables such as organizational culture orientation or digital communication practices, especially in light of the growing prevalence of virtual board meetings. Investigating how these elements influence the relationship between leadership, cultural preparedness, and culture shock would provide timely insights for firms adapting to globalization and digital transformation in board governance.

REFERENCES

- Abugre, J. B. (2021). Cross-cultural communication imperatives: Critical lessons for Western expatriates in multinational companies in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 17(2), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-01-2020-0004>
- Adeola, O., & Evans, O. (2022). Cultural orientation and leadership effectiveness in Africa: The mediating role of cultural empathy. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 22(1), 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14705958221077516>
- Adeola, O., & Evans, O. (2023). African business leadership and effectiveness: Perspectives from South Africa. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(3), 83. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15030083>
- Adisa, T. A., Mordi, C., & Osabutey, E. L. (2020). Cross-cultural management and organizational performance in African multinationals: The mediating role of leadership. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 20(1), 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595820902932>
- Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., & Rockstuhl, T. (2021). Cultural intelligence: Origins, conceptualization, evolution, and methodological diversity. *Group & Organization Management*, 46(1), 5–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601120966308>
- Bai, Y., Zhou, L., & Min, M. (2022). Cultural distance and international cooperation: A multilevel analysis of boardroom behavior. *Journal of International Management*, 28(2), 100905. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2022.100905>
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1995). *MLQ Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*. Mind Garden.
- Black, J. S., & Mendenhall, M. (1990). Cross-cultural training effectiveness: A review and a theoretical framework for future research. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(1), 113–136.

- Boateng, A., Wang, Y., & Akamavi, R. K. (2021). Board diversity and firm value: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, 29(3), 243–263. <https://doi.org/10.1111/corg.12338>
- Bücker, J., Furrer, O., & Lin, Y. (2022). Leadership and cultural intelligence in cross-cultural teams: A multilevel mediation analysis. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 53(3), 485–504. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-021-00458-w>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Chanveasna, U., Chanthuch, T., Veasna, S., Sovannara, K., & Ngounhort, H. (2024). The effects of social support and cultural intelligence on expatriate adjustment and performance. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 12, 299–327.
- Chen, A. S.-Y., Lin, Y.-C., & Chang, C.-C. (2022). Cultural intelligence and leadership effectiveness in global teams: The moderating role of shared vision. *Journal of Business Research*, 144, 354–362. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.01.015>
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). Wiley.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Eze, C., & Nwankwo, F. (2023). The impact of cultural training on expatriate performance in Nigerian multinational enterprises. *Africa Journal of Management*, 9(1), 56–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322373.2023.2191385>
- Gbadamosi, G., Dada, O., & Ilesanmi, O. (2021). Transformational leadership and cross-cultural competence in African corporate settings. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 12(2), 185–201. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJEMS-06-2020-0301>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2020). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2020). *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Jurásek, M., & Wawrosz, P. (2023). Satisfaction with life abroad: The role of cultural intelligence, culture shock and cultural identity. *Social Sciences*, 12(3), 126. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12030126>
- Khan, A. A., Memon, M. A., & Shafi, M. (2023). Navigating culture shock in multicultural teams: Evidence from emerging markets. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 92, 101768. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2022.101768>
- Kour, A., & Jyoti, J. (2021). Cross-cultural training and adjustment through the lens of cultural intelligence and type of expatriates: A study of Indian banking sector. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 9(3), 421–447. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-02-2021-0013>
- Kutner, M. H., Nachtsheim, C. J., Neter, J., & Li, W. (2005). *Applied linear statistical models* (5th ed.). McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Loang, V., & Ahmad, N. (2023). Leadership styles and organizational outcomes: A comparative review of autocratic, democratic, and transformational approaches. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 14(1), 45–65.
- Loang, Y., & Ahmad, O. K. (2023). Systematic literature review: Leadership style comparison on employee satisfaction and organizational performance. *International Journal of Accounting, Finance and Business*, 8(50), 290–309. <https://doi.org/10.55573/IJAFB.085022>

- Maharaj, M. (2020). Assessing the impact of cross-cultural training on expatriate cultural adjustment: A South African case. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 30(4), 335–342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2020.1788745>
- Ncube, L., Makoni, P. L., & Matarirano, O. (2022). Leadership adaptability and cultural tension in African boardrooms. *Journal of African Business*, 23(1), 89–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2021.1943119>
- Ngonyama-Ndou, T. (2020). Cross-cultural adjustment experiences of academic expatriates at South African universities. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 34(6), 119–133. <https://doi.org/10.20853/34-6-3547>
- Nguyen, A.-M. D., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2022). Multiculturalism and intercultural relations: Psychological, social, and policy perspectives. *Journal of Social Issues*, 78(1), 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12436>
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Osei-Tutu, E., Asiedu-Appiah, F., & Afful, R. (2023). Multinational mergers and cross-cultural integration challenges in Africa. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 65(2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.22212>
- Path-Global Study (2020). Leadership styles of Africans: A study using Path-Global. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 27(3), 289–305.
- Presbitero, A. (2021). Cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adaptation: The moderating role of resilience. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 82, 123–131.
- Rockstuhl, T., & Van Dyne, L. (2021). A global perspective on cultural intelligence: Current trends and future directions. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 52(7), 1123–1137. <https://doi.org>
- Solomon, R. C., & Steyn, R. (2017). Leadership style and leadership effectiveness: Does cultural intelligence moderate the relationship? *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 27(3), 208–212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2017.1321852>
- Wanasika, I., Howell, J. P., & Littrell, R. M. (2021). Leadership styles and cultural values: The impact on African boardrooms. *Journal of World Business*, 56(5), 101216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2021.101216>
- World Bank. (2023). World development indicators. <https://data.worldbank.org>