



Kent Academic Repository

Gyensare, Michael Asiedu, Jain, Priyanka, Asante, Eric Adom, Adomako, Samuel, Ofori, Kwame Simpe and Hayford, Yocabel (2025) *Fostering assigned expatriates' thriving at work through cultural intelligence and local embeddedness: The role of relational attachment*. *Journal of International Management*, 31 (2). ISSN 1075-4253.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/112255/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2024.101222>

This document version

Publisher pdf

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

CC BY (Attribution)

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in **Title of Journal**, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).



Fostering assigned expatriates' thriving at work through cultural intelligence and local embeddedness: The role of relational attachment

Michael Asiedu Gyensare^{a,*}, Priyanka Jain^b, Eric Adom Asante^c,
Samuel Adomako^d, Kwame Simpe Ofori^e, Yocabel Hayford^f

^a University of Kent, Kent Business School, CT2 7FS Canterbury, Kent, United Kingdom

^b Manav Rachna University, India

^c Nottingham University Business School China, University of Nottingham Ningbo China, 199 Taikang East Road, Ningbo 31500, China

^d Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK

^e School of Business and Social Sciences, International University of Grand-Bassam, Grand-Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire, Ivory Coast

^f Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gottenburg, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Cultural intelligence
Local embeddedness
Relational attachment
Thriving at work
Assigned expatriates
Multinational corporations (MNCs)
Ghana

ABSTRACT

Past research has noted that assigned expatriates (AEs) face challenges that often lead to premature termination when dispatched by the parent organisation to live and work abroad. However, recent statistics show that most AEs have no knowledge on how to overcome these cultural challenges prior to sending them abroad. Guided by the socially embedded model of thriving at work, we explain how cultural intelligence leads to local embeddedness and the latter's effect on AEs thriving at work. Further, the relationship between local embeddedness and AEs' thriving at work differs across varying levels of relational attachment. Our unique three-month time-lagged data from 234 AEs in eight multinational corporations (MNCs) with subsidiaries in Ghana offered support to our hypotheses. Cultural intelligence promotes local embeddedness, which, in turn, stimulates AEs thriving at work. Additionally, higher levels of relational attachment prompt AEs to leverage their local embeddedness to learn novel things that make them feel alive, energized, and awake at work. Implications for theory and practice, limitations and future research directions are discussed.

1. Introduction

The growing trend of international assignments, whether initiated by individuals or supported by organisations, has become a valuable asset for both employees and their organisations (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Ren et al., 2015). For employees, international assignments provide an opportunity to enhance managerial skills and cross-cultural competencies (Mendenhall, 2001), and are sometimes essential for career progression (Daily et al., 2000). From an organisational perspective, companies acknowledge the pivotal role of international assignments in developing global skills (Takeuchi, 2010) and executing successful cross-border strategies (Mendenhall, 2001). As a result, extensive research has explored the critical factors linked to expatriate success (Harrison et al., 2004;

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: m.gyensare@kent.ac.uk (M.A. Gyensare), eric.asante@nottingham.edu.cn (E.A. Asante), S.Adomako@bham.ac.uk (S. Adomako), ofori.k@iugb.edu.ci (K.S. Ofori).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2024.101222>

Received 23 August 2023; Received in revised form 19 October 2024; Accepted 30 December 2024

Available online 7 January 2025

1075-4253/Crown Copyright © 2025 Published by Elsevier Inc. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Mello et al., 2023; Van der Laken et al., 2023). One group of expatriates shown to be very important to their multinational corporations (MNCs) is assigned expatriates (AEs). AEs are dispatched to live and work abroad by their parent organisations to help achieve the organisational goals (Tharenou, 2015; Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010). Despite their immense importance to their MNCs, recent statistics indicate that 12.1 % of AEs terminate prematurely because of their inability to adjust to work in their novel cultural settings (Employment Conditions Abroad, 2017), supporting previous statistics that “10-80% of AEs sent overseas return home prematurely” (Okpara and Kabongo, 2011, p. 22). Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a growing scholarly interest in cross-cultural factors leading to the successful adjustment of expatriates while on overseas assignment with the subsidiaries (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Han et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2021; Toh and DeNisi, 2005).

One important indicator of AEs adjustment in their novel cultural settings is their ability to thrive at work on their international assignments (Ren et al., 2021; Ren et al., 2015). Conceived by Spreitzer et al. (2005), thriving at work describes the psychological state wherein employees concurrently experience a sense of vitality and a sense of learning. Put together, the vitality and learning facets of thriving foster feelings of positive personal development among employees and create a healthy workplace environment (Goh et al., 2022; Kleine et al., 2019; Spreitzer and Hwang, 2019). Vitality is the positive feeling of being energized and alive whereas learning depicts a sense of acquiring and using new skills and knowledge at work (Rego et al., 2021). Thriving is an important indicator of AEs adjustment because thriving employees feel that their current work experiences and behaviors are inherently motivating and supportive of their self-development and personal growth (Kleine et al., 2019). Moreover, thriving is made up of both affective and cognitive components making it more potent in prediction than similar constructs such as positive affect and job satisfaction (Goh et al., 2022). Further, both reviews and meta-analyses have found thriving to be linked to lower burnout and turnover intention, higher satisfaction, commitment, and task and creative performance (Goh et al., 2022; Kleine et al., 2019; Porath et al., 2022; Shahid et al., 2021).

International assignment provides AEs with the opportunity to experience new cultures (Han et al., 2022; Jokinen et al., 2008). Therefore, to really thrive at work, expatriates need to overcome several cultural challenges such as making sense of and understanding the host country's culture (Farh et al., 2010; Stoermer et al., 2021). One essential factor that has been identified as critical in helping AEs make sense of and understand new cultures is cultural intelligence (Earley, 2002; Earley and Ang, 2003; Pidduck et al., 2022; Stoermer et al., 2021). Cultural intelligence is the ability to effectively relate and work in spheres characterized by diverse cultures (Adair et al., 2013; Earley and Ang, 2003; Schlaegel et al., 2021). Cultural intelligence helps individuals to realize, adapt and shape the cross-cultural context in which they live, move, and have their being. Despite these benefits of cultural intelligence, limited research has focused on its impact on thriving at work among expatriates (Ren et al., 2015; Ren et al., 2021). Theoretically, this restrains a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of thriving at work among AEs. Practically, it does not guide practitioners to emphasize cultural intelligence interventions to help AEs thrive at work in new cultures.

To address the above issues, we draw from the socially embedded model of thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005) and argue that culturally intelligent AEs will thrive at work in their new cultural settings. The socially embedded model of thriving suggests that thriving is a social phenomenon that emanates from relational connections with individuals both on-the-job and off-the-job contexts. Accordingly, cultural intelligence is an enabler of AEs' workplace thriving (Malek and Budhwar, 2013; Ren et al., 2021) since it helps them to connect with people from diverse cultural domains. Apart from thriving at work, AEs must also navigate the difficulties of embedding in the local community where they reside, including community involvement and relating to local citizens. As such, we argue that cultural intelligence can facilitate local embeddedness of AEs in their local district or neighbourhood. Local embeddedness depicts the forces outside of the workplace which keeps AEs rooted where they reside (Lee et al., 2014; Ng and Feldman, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001). Extant research indicates that AEs may find it difficult initially to relate with host country nationals (HCNs) (Fu and Shaffer, 2008; Toh and DeNisi, 2007). But those who are culturally intelligent are adept and socially competent when it comes to interacting with people from all walks of life (Huff et al., 2014; Stoermer et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2015). Therefore, we propose that cultural intelligence will predict local embeddedness, which, in turn, is expected to foster the psychological state of thriving at work.

Extant research concurs that high quality relationships at work can attach employees to the workplace and promote the quality of their work life (Dutton and Ragins, 2007; Ehrhardt and Ragins, 2019). The socially embedded model of thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005) argues that employees are more likely to thrive in environments with easy access to relational resources. We propose that relational attachment which represents high-quality relationships developed at work can further the extent to which local embeddedness enhances AEs thriving at work. Our proposition aligns with Kahn's (2007) meaningful connection model. The model posits that people become attached to their organisations when they perceive their relational needs are being fulfilled through positive workplace relationships (Ehrhardt and Ragins, 2019; Kahn, 2007). Research on personal relationships at work supports the notion that people establish close relationships to fulfil their relational needs. For example, strong relational quality is experienced when employees become each other's burden bearers (Brock and Lawrence, 2009; Ehrhardt and Ragins, 2019; Maisel and Gable, 2009). Hence, we argue that AEs will experience a higher sense of learning and vitality when they are relationally attached to host country nationals (HCNs) and other expatriates in their new local district or neighbourhood where they live, work, and have their livelihood.

Building from the above discussion, we make three contributions to the expatriation literature. First, we are expanding the socially embedded model of thriving to include assigned expatriates (AEs) by exploring how cultural intelligence contributes to the thriving of AEs in Ghana. Previous research drawing from the socially embedded model of thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005) has mainly focused on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) and skilled (im)migrants (SIs) groups. Unlike AEs who are supported by their companies to travel, SIEs and SIs are expatriates who travel abroad on their own volition (Ren et al., 2015; Ren et al., 2021; Zhuang et al., 2022). This difference between AEs and other forms of expatriation can be important in how they adjust and thrive in their new culture. As such, we explore how cultural intelligence fosters AEs thriving at work in Ghana, a sub-Saharan African country dubbed as the beacon of democracy and gateway to the continent of Africa (Amankwah-Amoah and Debrah, 2010). Second, past research has indicated that being embedded in

the organisation rather than the community is what stimulates expatriates thriving (Ren et al., 2021; Stoermer et al., 2021). We challenge and then extend this stream of research by exploring how the embeddedness of AEs in the local district or neighbourhood fuels their thriving at work in the new cultural milieu. Finally, we explain the boundary condition of off-the-job embeddedness by exploring *when* relational attachment – *an interactional adjustment strategy* (Black and Stephens, 1989) – prompts AEs to leverage their local embeddedness to acquire new knowledge and skill sets to complement their energies at work. Specifically, we contend that relational attachment will heighten the positive effect of local embeddedness by helping to discourage premature termination, thereby awakening AEs' sense of energy and urgency for erudition in the new host country's culture.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we discuss the socially embedded model of thriving and present the literature and hypotheses. In Section 3, we discuss the methodology of this research, and present the procedures used for participants recruitment and the measurement scales used for data collection. In Section 4, we present results of the study including confirmatory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, and hypotheses testing. Finally, in Section 5, we present the discussion which includes theoretical and practical implications.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Socially embedded model of thriving

Spreitzer et al.'s (2005) socially embedded model of thriving was advanced to explain how employees thrive at work. This theoretical model proposes that thriving is made possible because of the social context within which an individual is embedded. This theoretical model suggests that both dimensions of thriving – vitality and learning – are “deeply rooted in social systems” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p.539) because the self develops through its interactions with others. However, the theory was advanced primarily to explicate the social systems within the work context and thus, completely neglect the social systems outside of work that have crucial implications for work outcomes.

Extant research suggests that we can appreciate the value of the careers of employees by attending to how their lives outside of work impact their work outcomes (Lee et al., 2011; Voydanoff, 2004). Following this line of reasoning, we extend the core tenets of the socially embedded model of thriving at work with the argument that for AEs, being enmeshed in their new local district or neighbourhood within which they live, work, and have their being can be an important enabler of their workplace thriving. For instance, we reason that being stuck in their new local district or neighbourhood can help AEs to familiarize themselves with the unfamiliar culture of their novel locality and make them more rooted. Such contentment with life outside of the world of work can give AEs peace of mind to work and thrive at work.

Cultural intelligence is one important enabler that can foster AEs' local embeddedness and, in turn, thriving at work (Pidduck et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2015). Cultural intelligence is a key enabler that shapes how AEs interact with others in their novel cultural milieu (Adair et al., 2013; Earley and Ang, 2003; Pidduck et al., 2022). Therefore, we contend that AEs with high cultural intelligence will be deeply rooted in the social system in their neighbourhood. In turn, this will boost their access to affective, relational, and informational resources needed to simplify their workplace thriving (Goh et al., 2022; Kleine et al., 2019; Spreitzer et al., 2005). The embeddedness research has demonstrated that being enmeshed in the community and not organisation is positively associated with non-turnover outcomes (Mitchell et al., 2001; Ng and Feldman, 2014). In sum, we extend the application of Spreitzer et al.'s (2005) model of thriving to the AEs group and add to the empirical literature on off-the-job embeddedness and non-turnover outcomes relationship.

2.2. Conceptualization of thriving as a proxy for expatriate success

Thriving, the joint state of vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005), is essential for the success of global employees and has been suggested to help AEs to take care of their lives while on assignment abroad (Dimitrova, 2020; Ren et al., 2021). Extant research shows that AEs can sustain their thriving by creating and maintaining quality relationships as well as establishing a mutual adjustment on- and off-the-job (Porath et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2015). Spreitzer et al. (2005) note that thriving is an “adaptive function that helps [assigned expatriates] to navigate” their new cultural environment and alter their work settings to advance their development on- and off-the-job. This assertion makes thriving at work, a crucial adaptation and positive adjustment concept supporting AEs' attunement to the work environment (Ren et al., 2015; Spreitzer et al., 2005).

Thriving global employees are easygoing, affable and can forge close and excellent relationships with others on- and off-the-job contexts. These attributes underscore the inclusive nature of thriving as a crucial concept that can be utilised as a proxy for expatriates' success from a cross-cultural perspective (Van der Laken et al., 2023). In fact, expatriates who experience learning and vitality while on international assignment are likely to be energized and motivated to adjust and self-adapt to life in their new host-country culture (Kleine et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2015). Learning helps expatriates build a reservoir of resources that can easily be drawn from and invested in their work duties (Dimitrova, 2020; Porath et al., 2012). Vitality energizes expatriates to be more enthusiastic about their work roles (Goh et al., 2022). Putting together, this implies that thriving emphasizes expatriates' preparedness and inclination to succeed at all costs while on the overseas assignment rather than to terminate prematurely.

Building from the above, we argue that thriving offers a better-nuanced understanding of the self-adaptation and adjustment of expatriates' success in their novel cultural settings. As such, we move beyond the traditional perspective of assessing expatriates' success (see Mello et al., 2023; Van der Laken et al., 2023) with the introduction of an up-to-date concept (e.g., thriving at work) which has started to garner scholarly traction in expatriation literature. Furthermore, we contend that thriving helps to explicate expatriates' actual adjustment since most expatriates, predominantly AEs choose international assignments mainly to learn and experience new

cultures. The new knowledge and skills they acquire and the connections they build are valuable instruments for assessing their adjustment success (Ren et al., 2021). Research reveals that continuous learning and personal growth are crucial elements that can account for the successful adjustments of expatriates on international assignment (Dimitrova, 2020; Porath et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2015). This aligns with Spreitzer et al.'s (2005, p. 545) assertion that “when thriving, [expatriates] are likely to engage in continued exploration behaviours” to succeed in their new host-country culture.

The thriving concept has been criticized on grounds that it (1) is inherently subjective, (2) lacks precision in its conceptualisation as a work-related psychological trait or state, and (3) takes for granted that all employees thrive equally under similar conditions (Goh et al., 2022; Kleine et al., 2019; Porath et al., 2022). Despite these criticisms, thriving – a contextually embedded concept – has been conceived as a measure of adaptation success (see Porath et al., 2012; Porath et al., 2022; Spreitzer et al., 2005) which goes beyond mere employee survival and development (Benson and Scales, 2009; Ickovics and Park, 1998). In line with this assertion, we propose thriving as a salient gauge that multinational companies can use to measure their return on investment (ROI) for the global workforce (e.g., AEs) they send abroad to work on their behalf. Thriving is a unique attribute that emphasizes the success of [AEs] (Spreitzer et al., 2012) because it “captures [their] sense of forward momentum” at work (Goh et al., 2022, p. 197). Hence, we reason that similar to the domestic withdrawal literature (Tett and Meyer, 1993) which uses withdrawal cognition as proxy for the actual withdrawal behaviour of expatriates (Takeuchi, 2010; Takeuchi et al., 2005), thriving can equally be employed as a surrogate for capturing expatriates' success (Ren et al., 2021; Toh and DeNisi, 2005; Van der Laken et al., 2023) because recent studies have conceptualised it as a measure of adaptation success (Mello et al., 2023; Porath et al., 2022). In conclusion, this explains why thriving was used to measure the success of the AEs in our sample.

2.3. Local embeddedness

Job embeddedness is categorized into two dimensions: organisational and community embeddedness (Lee et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001). Organisational embeddedness depicts on-the-job factors which compel employees to remain with their current employers whereas community embeddedness focuses on off-the-job or nonwork factors supporting the retention of employees (Feldman et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2014; Ng and Feldman, 2014). Ng and Feldman (2014) noted that community embeddedness has gained less scholarly traction due to a lack of clarity on “community” in embeddedness. We address this concern by operationalizing a new construct, local embeddedness, which fits well with the expatriation literature. The uniqueness of our local embeddedness construct stems from the fact that it captures the social system that occurs in the local district or neighbourhood where AEs reside and work (Eberly et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001). We define local embeddedness as the degree to which AEs get enmeshed in the web of their neighbourhood network which compels them to remain rather than leave their overseas subsidiaries prematurely. Therefore, we expect AEs who establish strong connections with HCNs and other international assignees to draw emotional and instrumental benefits from their local networks to feel embedded (Feldman et al., 2012). We believe this will inspire them to establish more contacts and connections in the new local district or neighbourhood (Lee et al., 2014).

Furthermore, employees who are locally embedded may experience positive vibration of energy to engage in learning and aliveness at work (Goh et al., 2022; Kleine et al., 2019; Porath et al., 2022). Common sense logic emphasizes that employees with some level of influence in the locality where they live, be it from family or close acquaintances, are likely to feel at home and make the conscious and necessary effort to remain by learning new things and experience a sense of vitality at work (Goh et al., 2022; Ng and Feldman, 2014). Following this line of reasoning, we counter Feldman et al.'s (2012) assertion that an employee's embeddedness in the [locality] may

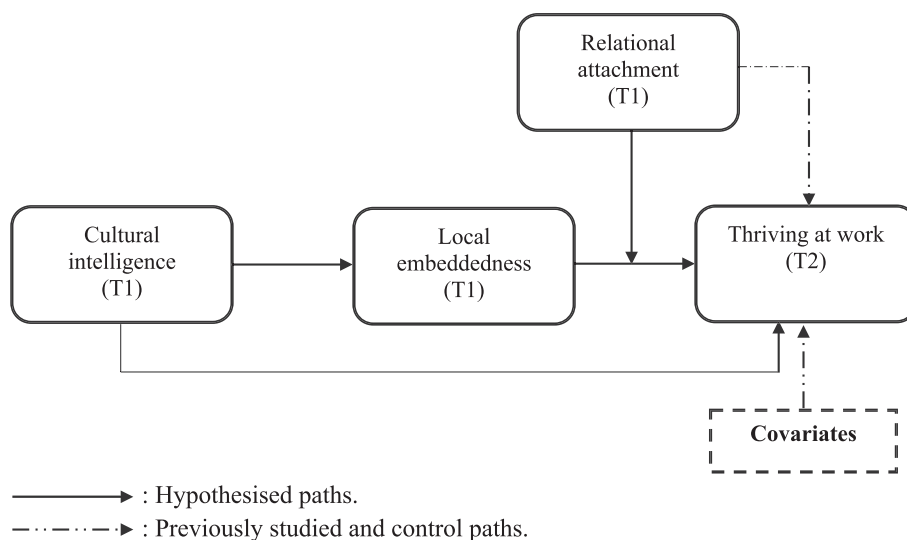


Fig. 1. A fine-grained moderated-mediation model.

have no direct or whatsoever effect on their work outcomes. Our counter-intuitive argument is that off-the-job activities in the local district or neighbourhood where expatriates reside will have direct impact on their thriving at work (Lee et al., 2014). Therefore, we propose that local embeddedness will serve as a theoretical bridge connecting cultural intelligence to AEs thriving at work in our conceptual model.

Building on the above, we argue that Spreitzer et al.'s (2005) model of thriving offers a strong theoretical lens to explain how local embeddedness helps transmit the positive effect of cultural intelligence on AEs thriving at work. Also, it explains how relational attachment at work could strengthen the relationship between local embeddedness and thriving at work. As shown in Fig. 1, we argue that local embeddedness acts via the lens of socially embedded model of thriving at work (*how*) and relational attachment at work as the boundary condition (*when*) moderating the indirect effect.

2.4. Cultural intelligence, local embeddedness and thriving at work

The socially embedded model of thriving is a dynamic model yet acknowledges the significant role of individual factors in shaping employees thriving at work (Spreitzer et al., 2005). The model posits that employees thrive when they feel energized, alive and develop a new skillset. Cultural intelligence has positive effect on thriving at work, albeit with self-initiated expatriates (Lezar and van der Walt, 2023; Ren et al., 2021). The expatriation literature acknowledges global employees (e.g., AEs and SIEs) as crucial assets to their parent organisations (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Luring and Selmer, 2018; Ren et al., 2015). However, because of differences in the orientation of expatriates, it is essential to understand how cultural intelligence can shape AEs joint sense of learning and vitality in new cultural contexts.

Accordingly, we premise our arguments on Spreitzer et al. (2005) model of thriving at work. First, we contend that culturally intelligent AEs can enhance their learning experiences by acquiring and utilising new ideas and experiences in their unfamiliar cultural context (Dimitrova, 2020). Such learning experiences boost their personal and professional identities (Gersick et al., 2000; Peredo and Chrisman, 2006) as they explore new ideas, engage in risk-taking and learn from their mistakes by navigating unfamiliar terrains (Van der Laken et al., 2023). Second, cultural intelligence helps AEs establish strong cultural skills in diverse cultures, which foster their sense of aliveness through shared experiences. In turn, this facilitates their social interaction making them feel more supported and well-integrated in their novel cultural contexts (Dimitrova, 2020; Harrison et al., 2004). Third, SIEs rather than AEs have been found to easily adapt to new cultural context, making them more resilient and successful in their careers abroad (Mello et al., 2023). We contend that because AEs experience adaptation difficulties in diverse cultures while on international assignment (Aycan, 1997; Okpara and Kabongo, 2011; Toh and DeNisi, 2005), thriving nurtured by cultural intelligence can be an important *work adjustment strategy* for their success in the new host-country context.

Working in an unfamiliar country with its unique culture and tradition at the early stages of expatriation can have an adverse effect on the work adjustment of AEs due to cultural novelty (Black and Stephens, 1989; Malek and Budhwar, 2013). However, we expect culturally intelligent AEs to navigate the unaccustomed culture of the host country and thrive at work. This is because cultural intelligence is an individual's ability to effectively connect, and work in environments characterized by cultural diversity (Earley and Ang, 2003; Ren et al., 2014). Ang et al. (2015) found that cultural intelligence facilitates the comfort levels of AEs in their new host-country culture, hence, making it easier for them to adapt to unfamiliar cultures and traditions and thrive at work. Hence, we provide the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Cultural intelligence is positively associated with assigned expatriates thriving at work.

Although we have argued a direct relationship between cultural intelligence and AEs' thriving at work, we believe that unearthing the theoretical lynchpin between cultural intelligence and thriving at work is appropriate. Therefore, we propose local embeddedness as an important mediator. Local embeddedness represents the forces outside of work which make AEs feel part of the host-country culture and assume membership of the locality to sustain their sense of belongingness. Local embeddedness helps expatriates to develop and secure their personal and professional identity within the new host country culture (Peredo and Chrisman, 2006). Such identity sorting can determine the everyday life of AEs while on international assignment.

Extant research indicates that SIEs and SIs are autonomous and flexible with strong desire to immerse themselves in their new culture (Haak-Saheem and Brewster, 2017; Luring and Selmer, 2018). This is often driven by their motivation to progress their economic conditions (Peltokorpi, 2008). However, AEs are likely to struggle in their assignment abroad because of their less language proficiency and mental fortitude in navigating unfamiliar cultural barriers that affect their adjustment in the new culture to thrive at work (Doherty and Dickmann, 2013; Forese and Peltokorpi, 2013). In addition, Andresen et al. (2014) note that SIEs more than AEs exhibit strong self-regulatory abilities while working abroad. Based on these findings, we reason from the socially embedded perspective that culturally intelligent AEs with the apposite social skills can easily seek for and obtain support from their local communities despite the culturally dissimilar context (Farh et al., 2010) to thrive at work. Our argument aligns with Molinsky's (2007) assertion that with greater cultural intelligence, AEs can display higher cognitive and behavioural knowledge to quicken their learning of the host country's language and act in conducts that respect the cultural values of their new localities (Dimitrova, 2020; Farh et al., 2010). Cultivating social skills can easily help AEs to attract the support systems they need from the informal local networks and establish meaningful connections with the local nationals (Tharenou, 2015; Toh and DeNisi, 2005).

Furthermore, we expect AEs with greater cultural intelligence to see the neighbourhood where they dwell, work, and live as a safe haven and a crucial social system facilitating their workplace thriving. This is because the thriving of AEs does not take place in a vacuum but rather through meaningful connections they establish with significant others in and outside of the context of work (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Further, being enmeshed in their neighbourhood, means that AEs can easily experience an excellent and

positive sense of energy and proactively acquire new knowledge and skills, leading to thriving at work.

Building from the above arguments, we reason that when AEs are embedded in their local cultures through meaningful connections with HCNs facilitated by cultural intelligence, they can easily socialise in their localities and, in turn, thrive at work. Given their short stay and the cultural dissimilarities they face initially when sent abroad to work on behalf of their parent organisations, we anticipate that cultural intelligence will facilitate AEs' embeddedness in the new culture of their local district or neighbourhood. Thus, with greater levels of cultural intelligence, AEs can build the competence they require to connect with people from diverse cultural backgrounds given their agility and ease of mingling with foreign nationals (Ang et al., 2007; Kubicek et al., 2019; MacNab and Worthley, 2012; Stoermer et al., 2021). Therefore, our expectation is that cultural intelligence will drive AEs local embeddedness and, in turn, facilitate their sense of vitality and learning at work.

Hypothesis 2. Local embeddedness will mediate the positive association between cultural intelligence and thriving at work.

2.5. Moderating effect of relational attachment

While relational attachment's direct effect on thriving is established (e.g., Ehrhardt and Ragins, 2019), its moderating role is unclear in expatriation literature. Yet, the socially embedded model of thriving acknowledges that employees thriving at work can be shaped by the interplay between relational and contextual factors (Kleine et al., 2019; Spreitzer et al., 2005). Therefore, underpinned by this theoretical model, we posit that relational attachment, the "psychological experience of closeness, connection, and belongingness to others at work" (Ehrhardt and Ragins, 2019, p. 250), constitute an important boundary condition in the thriving literature. Specifically, we propose that as a conduit for meeting AEs social and relational needs in the new host country's cultural environment (Claggett and Karahanna, 2018; Ehrhardt and Ragins, 2019; Farh et al., 2010), relational attachment will strengthen the positive effect of their local embeddedness on their workplace thriving. In addition, we reason that relational attachment will enhance AEs capability to feel enmeshed in their neighbourhood or local district context, and, in turn, nourishes their sense learning and vitality (Klafehn et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2015; Russo et al., 2016). For instance, Toh and DeNisi (2005) noted that without meaningful connections, AEs may face greater difficulty adjusting to their host country's local environment and, therefore, less likely to thrive at work.

Extant research shows that compared to SIEs and SIs, AEs struggle relationally in their new local environments due to their shorter stay which makes it difficult for them to learn the language of the host country (Forese and Peltokorpi, 2013; Haak-Saheem and Brewster, 2017; Tharenou, 2015). We contend that enmeshing in the neighbourhood alone is likely to prove unsuccessful for AEs rather than SIEs and SIs to thrive at work since their shorter stay and less adept language are likely to hinder them from building the right connections in the host-country environment. In addition, the social or relational deficit emanating from the inability to meet AEs needs for meaningful connections can result in loneliness (Ozcelik and Barsade, 2018; Pillemer and Rothbard, 2018). As such, we propose relational attachment as a remedy to social or relational deficit because it "constitutes the environment in which [AEs] live their professional lives" (Gersick et al., 2000, p. 1026).

Based on the above and given its ubiquitous and significant role in the social context of work, we theorise relational attachment as a salient relational factor that AEs can enact to establish strong meaningful connections with the right people in their neighbourhood to meet their social and emotional support needs (Farh et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2003). Again, we reason that while asking for help may be construed as a sign of weakness (Farh et al., 2010; Morrison, 2002), relational attachment can facilitate informal connections between AEs and well-meaning and benevolent colleagues outside of work to facilitate their embeddedness.

Extending Spreitzer et al.'s (2005) theorization to relational enablers of thriving, recent studies (Goh et al., 2022; Kleine et al., 2019) have highlighted relational enablers (e.g., relational attachment) as crucial nourishment of workplace thriving. We argue that as a source of emotional and social support, relational attachment will help AEs to feel energized and acquire and utilize new knowledge and skillsets at work because of their meaningful connections with both host-country nationals and other expatriates in their local communities. Our contention is based on the premise that "relationships...attach people to their [localities]" (Kahn, 2007, p. 190) or communal environments (Peredo and Chrisman, 2006) and since work is fundamentally a social experience, we expect the ability of AEs to thrive at work to be contingent upon varying levels of their quality relationships and how such relationships help to meet their needs. For instance, AEs with high relational attachment can easily absorb and internalize information from their close relationships with significant others in their neighbourhood to reinforce their sense of vitality and provide them with the psychological state to experiment, learn new skillsets and strive to remain relevant at work (Porath et al., 2022; Spreitzer et al., 2005). On the other hand, AEs with low relational attachment due to the absence of meaningful connections and a strong sense of belongingness are likely to feel less embroiled in their local context, and consequently reduce their ability to thrive at work. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. Relational attachment at work will strengthen the positive association between local embeddedness and thriving at work, such that the positive association is stronger under high levels of relational attachment and weaker under low levels of relational attachment.

Drawing further on the socially embedded model of thriving, we argue that because relational attachment facilitates meaningful connections by providing AEs rather than SIEs or SIs access to key emotional and social support needs (Farh et al., 2010; Kahn, 2007), it may allow the positive resources from cultural intelligence – the ability to interact effectively in diverse cultural contexts (Earley and Ang, 2003; Pidduck et al., 2022) – to flow easily to both work and nonwork contexts. Spreitzer et al.'s (2005) socially embedded model of thriving recognizes the intricate link between personal and relational factors as crucial nutrient for thriving at work. From the perspective of this model, we expect the enriching gains of effective interaction with people from all walks of life to profit from

relational attachment which is ubiquitous and a meaningful part of the adjustment of AEs rather than their SIEs and SIs counterparts to their new culture and work environment. Accordingly, by connecting the theoretical logic for our mediation ([Hypothesis 2](#)) and moderation ([Hypothesis 3](#)) claims, we provide the following moderated mediation hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. The strength of the indirect effect of cultural intelligence through local embeddedness on AEs thriving at work will vary along the degree of relational attachment, such that the indirect effect will be stronger when relational attachment is higher (rather than lower).

3. Methods

3.1. Participants and procedure

Time abroad experience represents a significant criterion for researching the right form of expatriates. Hence, we followed past research ([Lauring and Selmer, 2018](#); [Tharenou, 2015](#)) to define AEs as global employees with 1–5 years of overseas work experience. Accordingly, we contacted the HR managers of the eight MNCs to generate a list of their AEs with the right overseas work experience. We collected data from AEs in two waves separated by an interval of three months. Following previous research ([Han et al., 2022](#); [van Vianen et al., 2004](#)), we contend that the three-month interval is adequate because expatriates, especially AEs take time to adjust and adapt to work in new cultural environments. Again, to ensure that our sample consisted of only AEs, we utilised two exclusion criteria. First, we asked the participants to state the years they have spent abroad as international assignees. We utilised this question to screen the data and remove short-term assignees (STAs) with less than a year of abroad experience. Second, we asked the participants to indicate whether they were sent abroad by their parent organisation or self-expatriated on their own volition. Our exclusion criteria led to a distinct, homogenous, sample of AEs which did not overlap with other forms of expatriates.

In Time 1, we distributed 300 questionnaires to the participants in the 8 subsidiaries in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. We assured the participants of their confidentiality and volition to partake in the survey. From the 300 surveys distributed in wave one, we obtained 245 usable responses. After going through the 245 usable responses, we then identified five incomplete responses and removed them from Time 1 data. Thus, the final sample for Time 1 consisted of 240 AEs, representing 80.0 % response rate. At Time 1, we collected data on the controls, cultural intelligence, local embeddedness, and relational attachment. After the three-month interval, we reached out to the 240 AEs who completed the Time 1 survey to complete the Time 2 survey. The final sample in Time 2 was 235 representing a 78.3 % response rate. In time 2, we collected data on thriving at work. This design is appropriate because it attenuates the potential threat of common method bias ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#); [Tharenou, 2015](#)). Finally, we matched the two datasets with a unique code and obtained a matched response from 234 AEs after discarding one response with an unmatched code, yielding a final response rate of 78 %. Our sample is large enough because it falls within the recommended range of 100 to 500 for researching AEs ([Tharenou, 2015](#)).

Our sample comprises of 56.4 % males. The average age is 37.48 (SD = 8.33) years with an average time abroad experience of 3.27 (SD = 2.96) years. Overall, 37.4 % of the sample had a first degree and 65.0 % were unmarried. A majority, 20.6 % were Chinese with 54.7 % AEs as middle-level managers.

3.2. Measures

Unless otherwise stated, all measures were scored on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*.

3.2.1. Cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence was measured with the 10-item short form of cultural intelligence (SFCQ) scale ([Thomas et al., 2015](#)). Sample items included “I know the ways in which cultures around the world are different” (*knowledge*), “I am aware of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with someone from another culture” (*meta-cognition*) and “I can change my behaviour to suit different cultural situations and people” (*skill*). The three facets were averaged to create the composite cultural intelligence measure.

3.2.2. Relational attachment

This measure was assessed with six items from [Ehrhardt and Ragins' \(2019\)](#) relational attachment at work scale. We deleted one item due to poor factor loading. A sample item includes “when thinking about my relationships with others at work, I feel close to them”.

3.2.3. Local embeddedness

We captured the overall impression of employees' enmeshment to the local district or neighbourhood where they reside by adapting [Clinton et al.'s \(2012\)](#) six-item global community embeddedness scale. We replaced community with *local district or neighbourhood*. To help participants understand our focal interest, we started by informing them of our interest in their views on their experiences in the local district or neighbourhood where they reside. We offered participants with this scenario: “John Stoney is a middle-level manager with Google AI headquartered in California, USA. Recently, the company opened a new office in Accra, Ghana and decided to dispatch John Stoney to this overseas subsidiary. Upon arrival, John Stoney was picked up by a colleague at the airport and taken to the local district or neighborhood in the city of Accra where the office is located.” Sample items are “even if I decide to leave my organisation, I will live in the [local district

or neighbourhood] where I am based at the moment” and “there is plenty to keep me happy off duty around here [local district or neighbourhood].”

3.2.4. Thriving at work

The assigned expatriates thriving was assessed with 8 items from Porath et al. (2012) which measured the two dimensions – *learning* and *vitality* – with four items each. Sample items are “at work, I find myself learning often” (*learning*) and “at work, I have energy and spirit” (*vitality*). Following Porath et al. (2012) and Ren et al. (2015), we created a composite measure of thriving at work by aggregating the two dimensions.

3.2.5. Control variables

Following best practice suggestions (Bernerth and Aguinis, 2016) and previous research (Bogilovic et al., 2017; Laurant and Selmer, 2018; Stoermer et al., 2021), we included AEs age (years), gender (0 = female; 1 = male), marital status (0 = unmarried; 1 = married),

Table 1
Measures and results of validity tests of multi-item constructs.

Constructs, details of measures, and results of validity tests	Mean	SD	λ	t-value	SMC
Cultural intelligence – knowledge (Thomas et al., 2015): CR = 0.67; AVE = 0.62					
CQK1. I know the ways in which cultures around the world are different.	4.73	1.11	0.73	Fixed ^a	0.53
CQK2. I can give example of cultural differences from my personal experience.	4.81	1.13	0.69	9.27	0.47
Cultural intelligence – meta-cognition (Thomas et al., 2015): CR = 0.78; AVE = 0.54					
CQM1. I enjoy talking with people from different cultures.	4.69	1.20	0.65	Fixed ^a	0.42
CQM2. I have the ability to accurately understand the feelings of people from other cultures.	4.91	1.18	0.81	9.81	0.66
CQM3. I sometimes try to understand people from another culture by imagining how something looks from their view.	4.87	1.12	0.72	9.13	0.52
Cultural intelligence – skills (Thomas et al., 2015): CR = 0.75; AVE = 0.50					
CQS1. I can change my behaviour to suit different cultural situations and people.	4.82	1.26	0.59	Fixed ^a	0.35
CQS2. I accept delays without becoming upset when in different cultural situations and with culturally different people.	4.91	1.03	0.65	7.39	0.43
CQS3. I am aware of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with someone from another culture.	5.13	1.11	0.67	7.52	0.45
CQS4. I think a lot about the influence that culture has on my behaviour and that of others who are culturally different.	4.92	1.13	0.69	7.62	0.47
Relational attachment (Ehrhardt and Ragins, 2019): CR = 0.87 AVE = 0.57					
RLAT1. When thinking about my relationships with others at work, I feel close to them.	4.61	1.33	0.73	Fixed ^a	0.53
RLAT2. When thinking about my relationships with others at work, I feel attached to them.	4.92	1.14	0.71	10.48	0.50
RLAT3. When thinking about my relationships with others at work, I feel committed to them.	4.81	1.35	0.75	11.11	0.56
RLAT4. When thinking about my relationships with others at work, I feel a sense of oneness with them.	4.69	1.36	0.83	12.22	0.68
RLAT5. When thinking about my relationships with others at work, I feel like I belong with them.	4.59	1.48	0.76	11.31	0.58
Local embeddedness (Clinton et al., 2012): CR = 0.87; AVE = 0.52					
LEMB1. The local district or neighbourhood where I am based right now is suitable for my family and friends.	4.82	1.05	0.74	Fixed ^a	0.54
LEMB2. There is plenty to keep me happy off duty around here.	4.93	1.12	0.82	12.33	0.68
LEMB3. Even if I decide to leave this organisation, I will still live in the local district where I am based at the moment.	4.94	1.08	0.72	10.79	0.52
LEMB4. My family/partner has strong ties around the local district or neighbourhood where I am currently based.	4.92	1.09	0.69	10.25	0.47
LEMB5. Leaving the neighbourhood where I am currently based will mean many personal and/or family sacrifices.	4.91	1.12	0.68	10.23	0.47
LEMB6. I will be very sad to leave the general local district or neighbourhood where I am based right now.	5.06	1.13	0.66	9.91	0.44
Thriving at work – learning (Porath et al., 2012): CR = 0.83; AVE = 0.55					
TAWL1. At work, I find myself learning often.	4.79	1.07	0.76	Fixed ^a	0.58
TAWL2. At work, I continue to learn more as time goes by.	4.81	1.10	0.72	11.44	0.52
TAWL3. At work, I see myself continually improving.	4.82	1.16	0.74	11.73	0.54
TAWL4. At work, I am developing a lot as a person.	4.69	1.20	0.75	11.99	0.56
Thriving at work – vitality (Luk et al., 2008): CR = 0.81; AVE = 0.52					
TAWV1. At work, I feel alive and vital.	4.73	1.19	0.70	Fixed ^a	0.49
TAWV2. At work, I have energy and spirit.	4.84	1.10	0.82	12.03	0.67
TAWV3. At work, I feel alert and awake.	4.80	1.19	0.74	10.90	0.55
TAWV4. At work, I am looking forward to each new day.	4.89	1.21	0.62	9.20	0.39

Model fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 629.61$; $df = 329$; RMSEA = 0.06; NNFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.91; SRMR = 0.046 λ = standardised factor loading. CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

^a Fixed to the value of 1.00.

job position, time abroad experience (years) and country of origin as covariates and run the analysis with them since they are associated with the endogenous variables (Aguinis and Vandenberg, 2014; Becker et al., 2016). Also, given its strong association with expatriates' success (Ren et al., 2015; Zhang, 2013), *cultural novelty* was controlled for with 8-items from Black and Stephens (1989) on a 5-point scale (1 = very similar to 5 = very different).

3.3. Assessment of common method bias

We ruled out the potential for common method bias since we collected our independent and mediating variables at Time 1 from the same participants by performing several *ex-ante* and *ex-post* remedies. For the *ex-ante* remedies, we (1) assured the AEs of confidentiality and anonymity before answering the survey questions, (2) provided preambles to each section of the survey to ensure temporal psychological separation, and (3) used a three-month time-lagged data collection approach. The *ex-post* remedies included Harman's single-factor test to check if the variance in the data is attributable to a single factor (Chang et al., 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results of the EFA indicated that the one-factor solution explicated 38.56 % with eigenvalue value above 1 which is below the 50 % mark. Next, we estimated three separate CFA models for comparison (Cote and Buckley, 1987). In the *method-only model*, all variables were loaded to a single latent factor, and we obtained ($\chi^2 [n = 243, df = 350] = 1668.76; \chi^2/df = 3.77; RMSEA = 0.13; NNFI = 0.68; CFI = 0.70; SRMR = 0.08$). In the *trait-only model*, all indicants were loaded onto their suitable theoretic constructs ($\chi^2 [n = 243, df = 329] = 629.61; \chi^2/df = 1.91; RMSEA = 0.06; NNFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.91; SRMR = 0.05$). The *method-and-trait model* combined both Model 1 and Model 2 resulting in a good fit ($\chi^2 [n = 243, df = 294] = 516.64; \chi^2/df = 1.76; RMSEA = 0.06; NNFI = 0.91; CFI = 0.93; SRMR = 0.05$). The three CFA models reveal that Model 1 provided a poor fit to the data whereas both Model 2 and 2 yielded an acceptable fit, albeit Model 3 was the superior CFA model. Hence, we concluded that CMB was not a serious issue in our study and proceeded to conduct the rest of the analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Confirmatory factor analysis

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the validity and reliability of our constructs with the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator in LISREL 8.80 (Joreskog and Sorbom, 2006). In line with previous research (Hair Jr. et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021) we used six heuristic fit indices – RMSEA, SRMR, NNFI, CFI, χ^2/df and χ^2 – to evaluate the fit of our CFA model. The CFA model produced an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 [n = 243, df = 329] = 629.61; \chi^2/df = 1.91; RMSEA = 0.06; NNFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.91; SRMR = 0.05$).

Furthermore, we evaluated the reliability and construct validity of our measures using standardised factor loadings (SFLs), Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), and the average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 1, SFLs for all measures were above 0.50 and significant at 1 % while the α s (Table 2) and CRs and AVEs exceeded 0.70 and 0.60 cut-off marks (Hair Jr. et al., 2019; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) save for the *knowledge* facet of cultural intelligence. Hence, our results confirm the convergent validity of the indicators used to measure the latent constructs.

To test for discriminant validity, we utilised the Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion and compared the square root of AVEs (\sqrt{AVE} s) with the paired correlation (Table 2) and found the former to be greater than the latter, confirming discriminant validity in our data. We used the VIF indices to assess the issue of multicollinearity in our data with the highest VIF index (3.61) being less than the 4.0 threshold (O'Brien, 2007). Hence, because multicollinearity did not affect our data, we continued with the hypothesis testing.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

In Hypothesis 1, we examined the direct effect of cultural intelligence on AEs thriving at work. As we anticipated, cultural intelligence was positively associated with AEs thriving at work ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$), which supports Hypothesis 1 (Table 3). According to Hypothesis 2, the positive impact of cultural intelligence on AEs thriving at work will be mediated by local embeddedness. Extant research shows that the bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence intervals can inflate the likelihood of Type 1 error and create imbalance (Hayes and Scharkow, 2013; Miocevic et al., 2018). As such, we used the percentile bootstrap confidence interval approach to estimate our mediation model. Following Preacher and Hayes (2008) and more recently Hayes (2022), we employed Model 4 of PROCESS with percentile bootstrap confidence interval based on 10,000 bootstrap samples to examine the mediation hypothesis. As shown in Table 4, the percentile bootstrap result supported the indirect effect ($\beta = 0.21, 95 \% CI: [0.11; 0.28]$) since the confidence interval did not contain zero, suggesting Hypothesis 2 is supported.

According to Hypothesis 3, relational attachment will strengthen the positive effect of local embeddedness on AEs thriving at work. Table 3 shows that the interaction effect (local embeddedness \times relational attachment) was significantly related to the AEs thriving at work ($\beta = 0.10, p < 0.05$), which supports Hypothesis 3. Following Hayes (2022), we used the JN technique to probe further the interaction effect. The JN technique was employed to examine the region of significance (Spiller et al., 2013) for the local embeddedness and AEs thriving at work association across different levels of relational attachment. Fig. 2a and b depict the graphical illustration of the interaction effect. As shown in Fig. 2b, the 95 % CIs of the direct effect did not contain zero and was significant when relational attachment was higher than the JN score of 3.30. But the effect was nonsignificant when relational attachment was lower than the JN score of 3.30, which lends support to Hypothesis 3.

Finally, we examined a conditional indirect hypothesis which posited the strength of the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on

Table 2

Means, standard deviation and inter-construct correlation.

Variable	Mean	sd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. T1 Gender ^a	0.56	0.50	1.00																	
2. T1 Age	37.48	8.33	−0.00	1.00																
3. T1 Education ^b	1.90	0.79	0.10	−0.05	1.00															
4. T1 Marital status ^c	0.65	0.48	−0.07	0.03	0.02	1.00														
5. T1 Job position ^d	1.93	0.67	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.36***	1.00													
6. T1 Time abroad experience ^e	3.27	2.96	−0.10	−0.03	0.02	0.00	−0.12 [†]	1.00												
7. T1 Country of origin ^f	4.98	3.06	−0.06	−0.05	−0.29***	−0.05	−0.01	−0.09	1.00											
8. T1 Cultural novelty	3.44	0.82	0.07	−0.02	−0.05	0.05	0.07	−0.00	−0.14*	(0.86)										
9. T1 Cultural intelligence	4.81	0.77	0.11 [†]	0.01	0.05	−0.02	−0.07	−0.08	0.06	−0.06	(0.84)									
10. T1 Knowledge	4.77	0.97	0.06	0.08	0.02	0.00	−0.05	−0.01	0.09	−0.07	0.85***	(0.67)								
11. T1 Skill	4.83	0.91	0.13*	−0.06	0.11 [†]	0.01	−0.04	−0.08	−0.03	−0.04	0.80***	0.53***	(0.74)							
12. T1 Metacognition	4.82	0.96	0.08	−0.01	−0.00	−0.05	−0.07	−0.12 [†]	0.09	−0.04	0.81***	0.53***	0.45***	(0.77)						
13. T1 Relational attachment	4.72	1.08	0.09	−0.01	0.02	−0.07	−0.09	−0.08	0.17**	−0.04	0.59***	0.51***	0.35***	0.58***	(0.87)					
14. T1 Local embeddedness	4.93	0.85	0.04	0.04	−0.02	−0.06	−0.13*	−0.11 [†]	0.13*	0.00	0.59***	0.54***	0.33***	0.58***	0.58***	(0.86)				
15. T1 Interaction ^g	0.53	0.91	0.07	0.03	0.05	−0.01	−0.09	0.00	−0.03	−0.09	0.31***	0.24***	0.25***	0.26***	0.21***	0.13*	1.00			
16. T2 Thriving at work	4.80	0.89	0.12 [†]	0.04	0.02	−0.06	−0.13*	−0.12 [†]	0.10	0.00	0.62***	0.55***	0.40***	0.55***	0.55***	0.58***	0.27***	(0.90)		
17. T2 Learning	4.78	0.92	0.11 [†]	0.04	0.02	−0.08	−0.14*	−0.09	0.09	0.01	0.56***	0.51***	0.36***	0.50***	0.51***	0.55***	0.25***	0.95***	(0.83)	
18. T2 Vitality	4.82	0.94	0.12 [†]	0.04	0.02	−0.04	−0.11	−0.14*	0.10	−0.01	0.61***	0.54***	0.41***	0.54***	0.53***	0.56***	0.27***	0.96***	0.82***	(0.81)
Square root of AVE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.71	0.79	0.71	0.74	0.76	0.72	n/a	0.73	0.74	0.72
Highest VIF	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.01	n/a	1.96	1.49	1.97	1.86	1.99	n/a	n/a	3.28	3.51

Note. $N = 234$. [†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. T1: Time1 and T2: Time 2.

^a Gender: 0 = female; 1 = male.

^b Education level: 1 = diploma; 2 = first degree; 3 = postgraduate (MA/MPhil/PhD).

^c Marital status: 0 = not married; 1 = married.

^d Job position: 1 = low managerial position; 2 = upper middle managerial position; 3 = top level managerial position.

^e Time abroad experience: captured in years.

^f Country of origin: 1 = China; 2 = South Africa; 3 = Denmark; 4 = Australia; 5 = UK; 6 = USA; 7 = Sweden; 8 = The Netherlands; 9 = South Korea; 10 = Germany; 11 = Russia.

^g Local embeddedness \times relational attachment (created after mean-centering). Cronbach alphas are reported in bold face along the diagonal; n/a = not applicable.

Table 3
Results of moderated mediation analysis.

Controls	Local embeddedness					Thriving at work				
	<i>b</i>	(SE)	<i>t</i>	Percentile bootstrap		<i>b</i>	(SE)	<i>t</i>	Percentile bootstrap	
				LLCI	ULCI				LLCI	ULCI
<i>Intercept</i>	−3.19***	0.45	−7.14	−4.08	−2.31	2.86***	0.56	5.06	1.74	3.97
Control variables										
Gender	−0.04	0.09	−0.45	−0.22	0.14	0.08	0.09	0.96	−0.09	0.26
Age	0.00	0.01	0.80	−0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.79	−0.00	0.01
Education level	−0.01	0.06	−0.19	−0.12	0.10	0.01	0.06	0.09	−0.11	0.12
Marital status	−0.02	0.10	−0.16	−0.22	0.19	−0.01	0.10	−0.07	−0.20	0.18
Job position	−0.13	0.07	−1.71	−0.27	0.02	−0.08	0.06	−1.22	−0.21	0.05
Time abroad experience	−0.02	0.03	−0.62	−0.08	0.04	−0.01	0.04	−0.37	−0.09	0.06
Country of origin	0.03	0.02	1.52	−0.01	0.06	0.01	0.18	0.44	−0.03	0.04
Cultural novelty	0.06	0.06	0.98	−0.06	0.19	0.04	0.05	0.94	−0.05	0.14
Main effects										
Cultural intelligence	0.63***	0.05	11.98	0.53	0.74	0.36**	0.09	3.93	0.18	0.54
Local embeddedness						0.28**	0.07	3.73	0.13	0.42
Interaction effect										
Relational attachment						0.14*	0.06	2.51	0.03	0.25
Local embeddedness × relational attachment						0.10*	0.04	2.23	0.01	0.19
<i>R</i> ²	0.38					0.49				

Note. *N* = 234. Unstandardised beta coefficients are reported. SE = standard error.

PBC = Percentile bootstrap confidence interval based on 16th, 50th and 84th percentiles.

* *p* < 0.05.

** *p* < 0.01.

*** *p* < 0.001.

Table 4
Results of mediation and moderated mediation analysis.

	<i>b</i>	(SE)	Percentile bootstrap	
			LLCI	ULCI
Mediation effect				
Cultural intelligence → local embeddedness → thriving at work.	0.21	0.05	0.12	0.31
Moderated mediation effect				
Cultural intelligence → local embeddedness → thriving at work.				
High relational attachment (+1SD)	0.26	0.07	0.13	0.38
Low relational attachment (−1SD)	0.12	0.05	0.02	0.22
Moderated mediation index	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.12

Note. *N* = 234. Bootstraps sample = 10,000. LL = lower limit; UP = upper limit; CI = confidence interval; SE = standard error.

Percentile bootstrap confidence interval based on 16th, 50th and 84th percentiles.

AEs thriving at work through local embeddedness is bounded by relational attachment. Results of the second stage conditional indirect effect (Model 14) are reported in Table 4 and examined by scrutinising the indirect effect at +1SD above the mean and −1SD below the mean of relational attachment, and the moderated mediation index (Hayes, 2021). The conditional indirect effect at +1SD and −1SD levels of relational attachment is significant. The indirect effect is stronger and significant at higher levels of the moderator ($\beta = 0.24$, 95 % CI: [0.13, 0.36]) but weaker and significant at lower levels of the moderator ($\beta = 0.11$, 95 % CI: [0.01, 0.22]) while the moderated mediation index test (Hayes, 2015) is significant ($\beta = 0.06$; 95 % CI: [0.01, 0.12]), suggesting Hypothesis 4 is supported.

4.3. Supplementary analysis: a dual path model moderated by relational attachment

To check the robustness of our theoretical model and empirical findings, we collected additional data which included the community and organisational embeddedness facets of the job embeddedness construct in a dual pathway model moderated by relational attachment. Using a two-wave dataset from 168 AEs (Fig. 3) which does not overlap with the main data for the study, cultural intelligence was significantly related to community ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$) not organisational ($\beta = 0.11$, $p > 0.05$) embeddedness facet. In a similar vein, the community ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$) not organisational ($\beta = 0.09$, $p > 0.05$) embeddedness was significantly related to AEs' thriving at work. Furthermore, we found that the community (indirect effect = 0.41, 95 % CI: [0.27, 0.54]) rather than organisational (indirect effect = 0.05, 95 % CI: [−0.03, 0.04]) embeddedness mediated the effect of cultural intelligence on AEs' thriving at

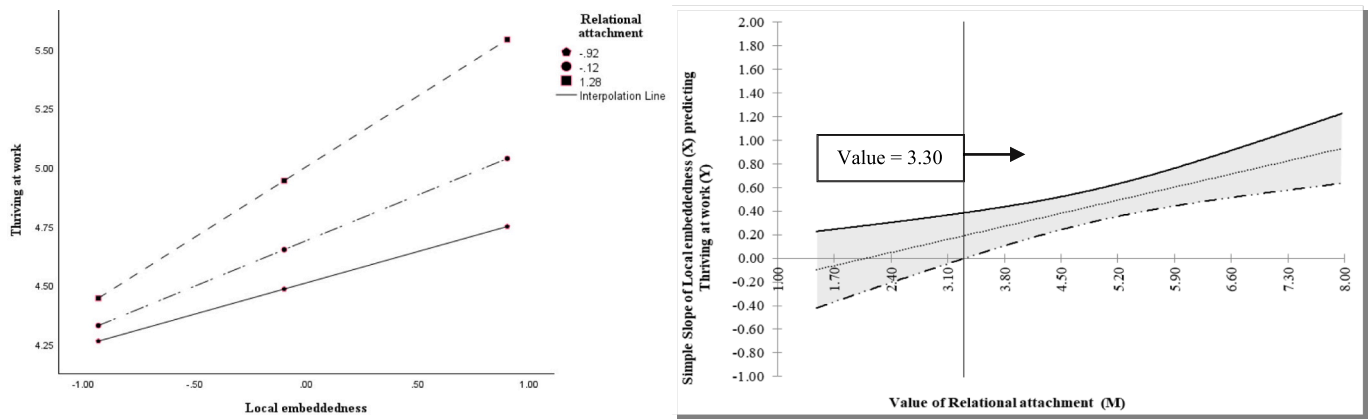


Fig. 2. a. Moderating effect of relational attachment.
b. JN plot of the moderating effect of relational attachment.

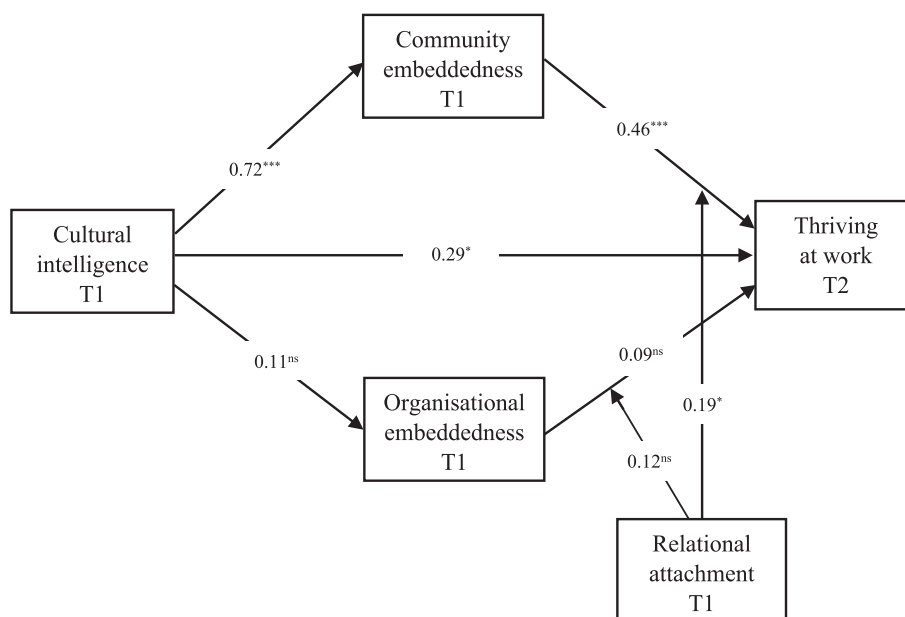


Fig. 3. Supplementary analysis including both dimensions of job embeddedness.

work. In addition, relational attachment moderated the linkage between community embeddedness and the AEs' thriving at work ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.05$) and not organisational embeddedness link with AEs thriving at work ($\beta = 0.12, p > 0.05$). Confirming our earlier theorizing, we conclude that in the context of our study and about AEs whose responsibilities require them to travel and work abroad for their parent organisations, it is the combination of off-the-job (not on-the-job) factors and relational characteristics that facilitate the adjustment of AEs at work in the new cultural environment while on global assignment with the overseas subsidiaries.

5. Discussion

Drawing from Spreitzer et al.'s (2005) socially embedded model of thriving at work, we developed and tested a model in which local embeddedness channels the positive effect of cultural intelligence on AEs' sense of vitality and learning, whereas relational attachment at work moderated the indirect effect. As expected, AEs' cultural intelligence both directly and indirectly via local embeddedness impacted their thriving at work in the host country context after controlling their age, gender, education level, marital status, job position, time abroad experience and country of origin. Further, relational attachment moderated the impact of local embeddedness on AEs thriving at work. Finally, the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on AEs thriving at work through local embeddedness was bounded by relational attachment. We discuss the implications of our findings in tandem with theory and practice and highlight the limitations which lead us to provide future research suggestions.

5.1. Theoretical implications

We make three theoretical contributions. First, the existing body of research on the socially embedded model of thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005) has predominantly centered on the experiences of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) and skilled (im)migrants (SIs), while comparatively neglecting the examination of company-assigned expatriates (AEs). This study seeks to expand the application of the socially embedded model of thriving beyond SIEs and SIs to encompass AEs. SIEs are individuals who autonomously relocate abroad in pursuit of improved livelihoods (Chen and Shaffer, 2017; Luring and Selmer, 2018), while skilled (im)migrants consist of professionals who voluntarily move abroad with the intention of permanent residency through job offers or talent programs (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014; OECD, 2008). On the other hand, AEs are employees who are specifically designated by their organisations to live and work abroad with the aim of supporting organisational goals (Tharenou, 2015; Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010). Despite the shared commonality of living and working abroad, each expatriate group possesses distinct characteristics. This requires each group of expatriates to be given specific attention. However, the application of the socially embedded model of thriving has primarily focused on understanding how SIEs and SIs thrive in new cultural environments (Ren et al., 2015; Ren et al., 2021; Zhuang et al., 2022). In contrast, scant attention has been devoted to examining how AEs, who are mandated by their organisations to relocate, thrive in unfamiliar cultural settings. To address this gap, our study delves into the role of cultural intelligence in fostering the thriving of AEs in their work context in Ghana. Our findings reveal that AEs with high levels of cultural intelligence exhibit an enhanced ability to embed in their new local communities and successfully thrive in their work within a different cultural backdrop.

Second, in our study, we aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of local embeddedness by making two significant contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, we challenge and extend recent empirical findings which suggest that only on-the-job

embeddedness facilitates the successful adjustment of expatriates at work (Ren et al., 2021; Stoermer et al., 2021). Our research indicates that for employees whose roles involve traveling and working abroad, off-the-job embeddedness supports their learning of new knowledge and skills and energizes them at work. We argue that these employees are expected to consciously and proactively integrate themselves into their new communities by forming meaningful connections with both host country nationals and other expatriates, which in turn supports their socialization process (Toh and DeNisi, 2005; van Vianen et al., 2004). Secondly, we deviate from the traditional research focus on the link between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment and instead position cultural intelligence as a key enabler that supports the embeddedness of employees in their local networks. This shift in perspective contributes to the micro-level antecedents of the community embeddedness literature (Andresen and Bergdolt, 2017; Schlaegel et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2015) and aligns with the view that off-the-job embeddedness plays a significant role in facilitating the adjustment of employees to the challenges of their new host country environments (Ng and Feldman, 2014). We emphasize that successfully adjusting to an unfamiliar country is a critical aspect of the experience for employees living outside their home country, as they must navigate and adapt to the unfamiliar conditions before fully embracing and appreciating the culture and traditions of the host country.

Third, by examining relational attachment as a boundary condition, we contribute to the interactional adjustment dimension of the cross-cultural adjustment literature (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Han et al., 2022; van Vianen et al., 2004). Current discourse on expatriation and repatriation highlights the adjustment challenges that AEs face while on international assignment (e.g., Ang et al., 2007; Han et al., 2022; van Vianen et al., 2004). Despite past research (Aycan, 1997; Ren et al., 2015; Okpara and Kabongo, 2011) and recent statistics (Employment Conditions Abroad, 2017) highlighting social and relational deficit as one of the reasons for AEs premature termination, rarely has interactional contingencies that facilitate the smooth adjustment of AEs to the culture and tradition of their new local settings and encourage their thriving at work been examined. Accordingly, we carefully examined the impact of relational attachment as a boundary condition in our study, particularly in relation to how it facilitates the impact of local embeddedness on expatriates' thriving at work. Guided by the socially embedded model of thriving at work (Spreitzer et al., 2005), our findings show that AEs who are relationally attached to HCNs and other types of expatriates will leverage their local connections and networks to experience a psychological state of learning and vitality. We reason that the impact of AEs local embeddedness on their sense of vitality and learning can be enhanced if they build strong social bond with close proximate HCNs and other expatriates in their new local district or neighbourhood. As such, not only do we shine light on relational attachment as an essential boundary condition, but also, we extend its application beyond positive psychology literature to the expatriation and repatriation literature.

5.2. Practical implications

We provide two practical importance. First, prior research has determined the strategic implications of cultural intelligence in expatriation research (Hajro et al., 2022; Thomason and Gibson, 2022). Yet, available statistics indicate that only 18 % of MNCs offer pre-cultural training to their AEs before sending them overseas (Employment Conditions Abroad, 2017). Given that cultural intelligence is trainable and malleable (Adair et al., 2013; Ang et al., 2007; Thomas et al., 2015), it will be advantageous to MNCs to train their AEs on the needed cultural skills, knowledge, and metacognition to function well in their new cultural context. We suggest they use the short form of CQ inventory because it offers in-depth understanding of how AEs can effectively manage the cultures and traditions in their new local district or neighbourhood (Thomas et al., 2015). This is so because the SFCQ shines light on cross-cultural differences among AEs who already have rich social skills, are intelligent and emotionally matured in their operational endeavours.

Second, local embeddedness was found to be a key enabler of thriving at work when AEs develop and maintain high quality relationships at work (e.g., Heaphy et al., 2018; Dutton and Ragins, 2007). Since relational attachment serves as essential interactional adjustment for the potency of local embeddedness, MNCs' through their HR department can support AEs in the socialization process to forge close interaction with HCNs through social activities or events such as community-based programmes (e.g., local concerts) and social events (e.g., cooking competition and sporting activities). Making AEs part of these programmes and social events will offer them the opportunity to fit into their local district or neighbourhood to broaden their key contacts and networks with HCNs. In addition, these programmes and social events will strengthen their connections off-the-job (Mitchell et al., 2001; Ng and Feldman, 2014) and in turn promote their sense of energy and learning. Once AEs absorb the required information in the new cultural settings and use it in their ongoing encounter with HCNs and other expats, they will be in a better position to enmesh themselves in their new domains to thrive at work.

5.3. Limitations and future research direction

Like any empirical research, we do acknowledge some limitations of our study and thus provide some direction for future research. First, although our analysis is robust and well supported by the socially embedded model of thriving, we are of the view that our theoretical model could be explored with other types of expatriates such as SIEs and SIs. Our cogitation is that local embeddedness and relational attachment can equally facilitate their thriving at work. However, the scope of our study did not capture these expatriate groups, therefore, we acknowledge this as a potential limitation of our study and ask that future research conduct a comparative study across the three widely recognized expatriate groups emphasised earlier to augment our findings and extend its generalization. Next, our data collection overlooked an important contextual variable like geographical distance. Hence, we suggest that future research include geographical distance as a contextual variable to enhance the strength of our study's findings and extend its generalizability. Similarly, while previous expatriation studies have controlled for all three facets of adjustment – *general*, *work* and *interaction* (Ren et al., 2015; Takeuchi, 2010) – as well as institutional and host country variables (van Vianen et al., 2004), our dataset did not include these covariates. Therefore, we recommend that future research include these variables as covariates to enhance the generalizability of

our findings. Furthermore, we believe that the collectivist cultural context of Ghana can constrain our findings and hence, calls for more research to test our model in countries with different cultural orientations. The potency of the cultural intelligence and relational attachment concepts are likely to differ in a collectivist culture (e.g., Ghana) that emphasizes group membership and a sense of community from an individualist culture (e.g., USA) (Hofstede, 1980; Kuada, 2010; Triandis, 1994).

Second, relational attachment – a positive psychology construct – was examined as a boundary condition from an expatriation perspective. Even though our research extends the application of this new construct beyond the positive psychology literature, we ask that future research examine how the indirect influence of CQ can be accentuated by the HCNs' social support with its informational, instrumental, and emotional benefits (Jolly et al., 2021; Sokro and Pillay, 2020) and attenuated by HCNs relational conflict (e.g., Jehn, 1995). This is because HCNs play an important role in the socialization and successful adjustment of expatriates while on assignment overseas. Also, we suggest future research to examine other key factors such as Cable and DeRue's (2002) three fit perceptions (*person-organisation fit*, *needs-supplies fit* and *demands-abilities fit*), cultural shock and uncertainty from the real options' perspective (Ahsan and Musteen, 2011) as boundary conditions. Although our research focused on thriving at the micro level, a recent meta-analysis has suggested thriving as a multilevel construct which should be explored at the micro, *meso* and macro levels (see Goh et al., 2022). Hence, we ask future research to improve upon and test our model with multi-source and multilevel data.

Finally, despite collecting time-lagged data at three-month intervals, we acknowledge that our research design lacks rigour since cultural intelligence and local embeddedness were sourced from the same participants at the same time. However, we have firm belief in our findings because we followed recent psychometric suggestions to address CMB/CMV (Bozionelos and Simmering, 2022; Chang et al., 2010; Cooper et al., 2020). While this attempt provides some confidence in our findings, we suggest future research to advance our study by conducting a random assignment laboratory experiment (Ramani and Aguinis, 2023) to indicate that cultural intelligence predicts local embeddedness. This will provide evidence of causality to buttress a novel point in our study. Specifically, future research can randomly assign college students to read one of two scenarios that describe a study abroad student taking classes in a new cultural environment in sub-Saharan Africa. Scenario one should describe the student as having high cultural intelligence and scenario two as the student having low cultural intelligence. Finally, participants can be asked to complete manipulation check questions about the study abroad student's ability to relate and work in domains of cultural diversity.

6. Conclusions

In this study, we examined *how* and *when* cultural intelligence predicts AEs thriving at work. Drawing theoretical insight from a socially embedded model of thriving and examining relational attachment as a boundary condition, we provide empirical support to our theoretical

argument that cultural intelligence fosters AEs thriving at work through local embeddedness. Our study is imperative and timely because it addresses the adjustment problem that AEs are confronted with often resulting in early termination while on assignment abroad. It is our firm belief that our findings encourage future research interest in the key enablers that foster AEs thriving at work in their new host country environments.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Michael Asiedu Gyensare: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Priyanka Jain:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Conceptualization. **Eric Adom Asante:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Samuel Adomako:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Kwame Simpe Ofori:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Yocabel Hayford:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Conceptualization.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

References

- Adair, W.L., Hideg, I., Spence, J.R., 2013. The culturally intelligent team: the impact of team cultural intelligence and cultural intelligence and cultural heterogeneity on team shared values. *J. Cross Cult. Psychol.* 44 (6), 941–962.
- Aguinis, H., Vandenberg, R.J., 2014. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure: improving research quality before data collection. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 1, 569–595.
- Ahsan, M., Musteen, M., 2011. Multinational enterprises' entry mode strategies and uncertainty: a review and extension. *International Journal of Management Review* 13 (4), 376–392.
- Amankwah-Amoah, J., Debrah, Y.A., 2010. The protracted collapse of Ghana Airways: lessons in organisational failure. *Group & Organisation Management* 35 (5), 636–665.
- Andresen, M., Bergdolt, F., 2017. A systematic literature review on the definitions of global mindset and cultural intelligence – merging two different research streams. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* 28 (1), 170–195.
- Andresen, M., Bergdolt, F., Margenfeld, J., Dickmann, M., 2014. Addressing international mobility confusion – developing definitions and differentiations for self-initiated and assigned expatriates as well as migrants. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* 25 (16), 2295–2318.
- Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., Koh, C., Ng, K.Y., Templer, K.J., Tay, C., Chandrasekar, N.A., 2007. Cultural intelligence: its measurement and effects on cultural judgement and decision making, cultural adaptation and task performance. *Manag. Organ. Rev.* 3 (3), 335–371.

- Ang, S., Rockstuhl, T., Tan, M.L., 2015. Cultural intelligence and competencies. In: *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 5, pp. 433–439.
- Aycan, Z., 1997. Expatriate adjustment as a multifaceted phenomenon: individual and organizational level predictors. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* 8 (4), 435–456.
- Becker, T.E., Atinc, G., Breaugh, J.A., Calson, K.D., Edwards, J.R., Spector, P.E., 2016. Statistical control in correlational studies: 10 essential recommendations for organisational researchers. *J. Organ. Behav.* 37, 157–167.
- Benson, P., Scales, P., 2009. The definition and preliminary measurement of thriving in adolescence. *J. Posit. Psychol.* 4 (1), 85–104.
- Bernherth, J.B., Aguinis, H., 2016. A critical review and best-practice recommendations for control variable usage. *Pers. Psychol.* 69, 229–283.
- Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., Harrison, D.A., Shaffer, M.A., Luk, D.M., 2005. Input-based and time-based models of international adjustment: Meta-analytic evidence and theoretical extensions. *Acad. Manage. J.* 48 (2), 257–281.
- Black, J.S., Stephens, G.K., 1989. The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management* 15 (1), 529–544.
- Bogilovic, S., Cerne, M., Skerlavaj, M., 2017. Hiding behind a mask? Cultural intelligence, knowledge hiding, and individual and team creativity. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology* 26 (5), 710–723.
- Bonache, J., Brewster, C., 2001. Knowledge transfer and the management of expatriation. *Thunderbird Int. Bus. Rev.* 43 (1), 145–168.
- Bozionelos, N., Simmering, M.J., 2022. Methodological threat or myth? Evaluating the current state of evidence on common method variance in human resource management research. *Hum. Resour. Manag. J.* 32 (1), 194–215.
- Brock, R.L., Lawrence, E., 2009. Too much of a good thing: Underprovision versus overprovision of partner support. *J. Fam. Psychol.* 23 (2), 181–192.
- Cable, D.M., DeRue, S.D., 2002. The convergent and discriminant validity of subjective fit perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87 (5), 875–884.
- Cerdin, J.-L., Selmer, J., 2014. Who is a self-initiated expatriate? Towards conceptual clarity of a common notion. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 25, 1281–1301.
- Chang, S.-J., van Witteloostuijn, A., Eden, L., 2010. From the editors: common method variance in international business research. *Journal of International Business Studies* 41, 178–184.
- Chen, Y.-P., Shaffer, M.A., 2017. The influences of perceived organisational support and motivation on self-initiated expatriates' organisational and community embeddedness. *Journal of World Business* 52, 197–208.
- Claggett, J.L., Karahanna, E., 2018. Unpacking the structure of coordination mechanisms and the role of relational coordination in an era of digitally mediated work processes. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 43 (4), 704–722.
- Clinton, M., Knight, T., Guest, D.E., 2012. Job embeddedness: a new attitudinal measure. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 20 (1), 111–117.
- Cooper, B., Eva, N., Fazlelahi, F.Z., Newman, A., Lee, A., Obschonka, M., 2020. Addressing common method variance and endogeneity in vocational behavior research: a review of the literature and suggestions for future research. *J. Vocat. Behav.* 121, 1–14.
- Cote, J.A., Buckley, M.R., 1987. Estimating trait, method, and error variance: generalizing across 70 construct validation studies. *J. Market. Res.* 24 (3), 315–318.
- Daily, C.M., Certo, S.T., Dalton, D.R., 2000. International experience in the executive suite: the path to prosperity? *Strateg. Manag. J.* 21 (4), 515–523.
- Dimitrova, M., 2020. Of discovery and dread: the importance of work challenges for international business travelers' thriving and global role turnover intentions. *J. Organ. Behav.* 41, 369–383.
- Doherty, N., Dickmann, M., 2013. Self-initiated and assigned expatriates: talent management and career considerations. In: Vaiman, V., Haslberger, A. (Eds.), *Talent Management of Self-Initiated Expatriates: A Neglected Source of Global Talent*. Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, pp. 234–255.
- Dutton, J.E., Ragins, B.R., 2007. Moving forward: positive relationships at work as a research frontier. In: Dutton, J.E., Ragins, B.R. (Eds.), *Exploring Positive Relationships at Work: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation*. Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 387–400.
- Earley, C.P., 2002. Redefining interactions across cultures and organizations: moving forward with cultural intelligence. *Res. Organ. Behav.* 24, 271–299.
- Earley, P.C., Ang, S., 2003. *Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions across Cultures*. Stanford University Press, London.
- Eberly, M.B., Bluhm, D.J., Guarana, C., Avolio, B.J., Hannah, S.T., 2017. Staying after the storm: how transformational leadership relates to follower turnover intentions in extreme contexts. *J. Vocat. Behav.* 102, 72–85.
- Ehrhardt, K., Ragins, B.R., 2019. Relational attachment at work: a complementary fit perspective on the role of relationships in organisational life. *Acad. Manage. J.* 62 (1), 248–282.
- Employment Conditions Abroad, 2017. How to prepare employees for international assignment success. Retrieved August 22, 2023, from.** <https://www.eca-international.com/insights/articles/february-2017/how-to-prepare-employees-for-assignment-success>.
- Farh, C., Bartol, K.M., Shapiro, D.L., Shin, J., 2010. Networking abroad: a process model of how expatriates form support ties to facilitate adjustment. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 35 (3), 434–454.
- Feldman, D.C., Ng, T.W., Vogel, R.M., 2012. Off-the-job embeddedness: a reconceptualization and agenda for future research. In: Martocchio, J.H., Joshi, A., Liao, H. (Eds.), *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*. Emerald Group Publishing, Bingley, pp. 209–251.
- Forese, J., Peltokorpi, V., 2013. Organizational expatriates and self-initiated expatriates: differences in cross-cultural adjustment and job satisfaction. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 24 (10), 1953–1967.
- Fornell, C.G., Larcker, D.F., 1981. Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *J. Market. Res.* 18 (1), 39–50.
- Fu, C.K., Shaffer, M.A., 2008. Socialization tactics, fit, and expatriate outcomes. *Acad. Manag. Proc.* 2 (1), 1–6.
- Gersick, C., J.G., Dutton, J.E., Bartunek, J.M., 2000. Learning from academia: the importance of relationships in professional life. *Acad. Manage. J.* 43, 1026–1044.
- Goh, Z., Eva, N., Kiazad, K., Jack, G.A., De Cieri, H., Spreitzer, G.M., 2022. An integrative multilevel review of thriving at work: assessing progress and promise. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* 43, 197–213.
- Haak-Saheem, W., Brewster, C., 2017. 'Hidden' expatriates: international mobility in the United Arab Emirates as a challenge to current understanding of expatriation. *Human Resource Management Journal* 27 (3), 423–439.
- Hair Jr., J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., Anderson, R.E., 2019. *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 8th ed. Cengage, Hampshire.
- Hajro, A., Zilinskaite, M., Gibson, C.B., Baldassari, P., Franklin, K., Mayrhofer, W., Brewster, C., Brannen, M.Y., 2022. Movement of people across borders: expanding our horizons toward practice-informed transdisciplinary research to meet the current challenges in migration, business, and society. *Academy of Management Discoveries* 9 (2), 125–131.
- Han, Y., Sears, G.J., Darr, W.A., Wang, Y., 2022. Facilitating cross-cultural adaptation: a meta-analytic review of dispositional predictors of expatriate adjustment. *J. Cross Cult. Psychol.* 3 (9), 104–1096.
- Harrison, D.A., Shaffer, M.A., Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., 2004. Going places: roads more and less travelled in research on expatriate experiences. *Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management* 23, 199–247.
- Hayes, A.F., 2015. An index and test of linear moderated mediation. *Multivar. Behav. Res.* 50 (1), 1–22.
- Hayes, A.F., 2021. *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-based Approach*, 2nd ed. The Guilford Press.
- Hayes, A.F., 2022. *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-based Approach*, 3rd ed. The Guilford Press, New York.
- Hayes, A.F., Scharkow, M., 2013. The relative trustworthiness of inferential tests of the indirect effect in statistical mediation analysis: does method really matter? *Psychol. Sci.* 24 (10), 1918–1927.
- Heaphy, E.D., Byron, K., Ballinger, G.A., Gittell, J.H., Leana, C., Sluss, D.M., 2018. The changing nature of work relationships. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 43 (4), 558–569.
- Hofstede, G., 1980. *Culture's Consequences: Differences in Work-related Values*. Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Huff, K.C., Song, P., Gresch, E.B., 2014. Cultural intelligence, personality, and cross-cultural adjustment: a study of expatriates in Japan. *Int. J. Intercult. Relat.* 38, 151–157.
- Ickovics, J., Park, C., 1998. Paradigm shift: why a focus on health is important. *J. Soc. Issues* 54 (2), 237–244.
- Jehn, K.A., 1995. A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict. *Adm. Sci. Q.* 40 (2), 256–282.
- Johnson, E.C., Kristof-Brown, A.L., Van Vianen, A.E.M., De Pater, I.E., 2003. Expatriate social ties: personality antecedents and consequences for adjustment. *Int. J. Sel. Assess.* 11, 277–282.

- Jokinen, T., Brewster, C., Suutari, V., 2008. Career capital during international work experiences: contrasting self-initiated expatriate experiences and assigned expatriation. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* 19 (6), 979–998.
- Jolly, P.M., Kong, D.T., Kim, K.Y., 2021. Social support at work: an integrative review. *J. Organ. Behav.* 42, 229–251.
- Joreskog, K.G., Sorbom, D., 2006. LISREL 8.80 for Windows. Scientific Software International, Lincolnwood, IL.
- Kahn, W., 2007. Meaningful connections: Positive relationships and attachments at work. In: Dutton, J.E., Ragins, B.R. (Eds.), *Exploring Positive Relationships at Work: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation*. Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 189–206.
- Klafehn, J., Li, C., Chiu, C., 2013. To know or not to know, is that the question? Exploring the role and assessment of metacognition in cross-cultural contexts. *J. Cross Cult. Psychol.* 44 (6), 963–991.
- Kleine, A.-K., Rudolph, C.W., Zacher, H., 2019. Thriving at work: a meta-analysis. *J. Organ. Behav.* 40, 973–999.
- Kuada, J., 2010. Culture and leadership in Africa: a conceptual model and research agenda. *African Journal of Economic Studies* 1 (1), 9–24.
- Kubicek, A., Bhanugopan, R., O'Neill, G., 2019. How does cultural intelligence affect organisational culture: the mediating role of cross-cultural role conflict, ambiguity, and overload. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 30 (7), 109–1083.
- Lauring, J., Selmer, J., 2018. Person-environment fit and emotional control: assigned expatriates vs. self-initiated expatriates. *Int. Bus. Rev.* 27, 982–992.
- Lee, M.D., Kossek, E.E., Hall, D.T., Litrico, J.-B., 2011. Entangled strands: a process perspective on the evolution of careers in the context of personal, family, work, and community life. *Hum. Relat.* 64 (12), 1531–1553.
- Lee, T.W., Burch, T.C., Mitchell, T.R., 2014. The story of why we stay: a review of job embeddedness. *Annual Review of Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behaviour* 1, 199–216.
- Lezar, L.W.P., van der Walt, F., 2023. Cultural intelligence, flourishing, and thriving in the South African Work Context. *SAGE Open* 1–16.
- MacNab, B.R., Worthy, R., 2012. Individual characteristics as predictors of cultural intelligence development: the relevance of self-efficacy. *Int. J. Intercult. Relat.* 36, 62–71.
- Maisel, N.C., Gable, S.L., 2009. The paradox of received social support: the importance of responsiveness. *Psychol. Sci.* 20 (8), 928–932.
- Malek, M.A., Budhwar, P., 2013. Cultural intelligence as a predictor of expatriate adjustment and performance in Malaysia. *Journal of World Business* 48 (2), 222–231.
- Mello, R., Suutari, V., Dickmann, M., 2023. Taking stock of expatriates' career success after international assignments: a review and future research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review* 33 (1), 100913.
- Mendenhall, M.E., 2001. Introduction: New perspectives on expatriate adjustment and its relationship to global leadership development. In: Mendenhall, M.E., Kuhlman, T.E., Stahl, G.K. (Eds.), *Developing Global Business Leaders: Policies, Processes, and Innovations*. Quorum, Westport, CT, pp. 1–16.
- Miočević, M., O'Rourke, H.P., MacKinnon, D.P., Brown, H.C., 2018. Statistical properties of four effect-size measures for mediation models. *Behav. Res. Methods* 50 (1), 285–301.
- Mitchell, T.R., Holtom, B.C., Lee, T.W., Sablinski, C.J., Erez, M., 2001. Why people stay: using job embeddedness to predict voluntary turnover. *Acad. Manage. J.* 44 (6), 1102–1121.
- Molinsky, A., 2007. Cross-cultural code-switching: the psychological challenges of adapting behaviour in foreign cultural interactions. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 36, 622–640.
- Morrison, E.W., 2002. Information seeking within organizations. *Hum. Commun. Res.* 28, 229–242.
- Ng, T.W., Feldman, D.C., 2014. Community embeddedness and work outcomes: the mediating role of organizational embeddedness. *Hum. Relat.* 67 (1), 71–103.
- Nunnally, J.C., Bernstein, I.H., 1994. *Psychometric Theory*, 3rd ed. McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York.
- O'Brien, R.M., 2007. A caution regarding rules of thumb for variance inflation factors. *Qual. Quant.* 41 (5), 673–690.
- OECD, 2008. *The Global Competition for Talent*. OECD, Paris.
- Okpara, J.O., Kabongo, J.D., 2011. Cross-cultural training and expatriate adjustment: a study of western expatriates in Nigeria. *Journal of World Business* 46 (1), 22–30.
- Ozcelik, H., Barsade, S.G., 2018. No employee an island: workplace loneliness and job performance. *Acad. Manage. J.* 61 (6), 2343–2366.
- Peltokorpi, V., 2008. Cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates in Japan. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* 19 (9), 1588–1606.
- Peredo, A.M., Chrisman, J.J., 2006. Toward a theory of community-based enterprise. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 31 (2), 309–328.
- Pidduck, R.J., Shaffer, M.A., Zhang, Y., Cheung, S.S.Y., Yunlu, D.G., 2022. Cultural intelligence: an identity lens on the influence of cross-cultural experience. *J. Int. Manag.* 28 (100928), 1–22.
- Pillemer, J., Rothbard, N.P., 2018. Friends without benefits: understanding the dark sides of workplace friendship. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 43 (4), 635–660.
- Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Lee, J.-Y., Podsakoff, N.P., 2003. Common method biases in behavioural research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88 (5), 879–903.
- Porath, C., Spreitzer, G., Gibson, C., Garnett, F.G., 2012. Thriving at work: toward its measurement, construct validation, and theoretical refinement. *J. Organ. Behav.* 33, 250–275.
- Porath, C.L., Gibson, C.B., Spreitzer, G.M., 2022. To thrive or not to thrive: pathways for sustaining thriving at work. *Res. Organ. Behav.* 42, 1–17.
- Preacher, K.J., Hayes, A.F., 2008. Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behav. Res. Methods* 40, 879–891.
- Ramani, R.S., Aguinis, H., 2023. Using field and quasi experiments and text-based analysis to advance international business theory. *Journal of World Business* 58 (101463), 1–10.
- Rego, A., Cavazotte, F., Cunha, M.P. e, Valverde, C., Meyer, M., Giustiniano, L., 2021. Gritty leaders promoting employees' thriving at work. *Journal of Management* 47 (5), 1155–1184.
- Ren, H., Shaffer, M.A., Harrison, D.A., Fu, C., Fodchuk, K.M., 2014. Reactive adjustment or proactive embedding? Multistudy, multiwave evidence for dual pathways to expatriate retention. *Pers. Psychol.* 67 (1), 203–239.
- Ren, H., Yunlu, D.G., Shaffer, M., Fodchuk, K.M., 2015. Expatriate success and thriving: the influence of job deprivation and emotional stability. *Journal of World Business* 50 (1), 69–78.
- Ren, H., Yunlu, D.G., Shaffer, M.A., Fodchuk, K.M., 2021. Thriving and retention of expatriates: cultural intelligence and organisational embeddedness inputs. *Int. J. Cross-cult. Manag.* 21 (2), 203–226.
- Russo, M., Buonocore, F., Carmeli, A., Guo, L., 2016. When family supportive supervisors meet employees' need for caring: implications for work-family enrichment and thriving. *Journal of Management* 44 (4), 1678–1702.
- Schlaegel, C., Richter, N.F., Taras, V., 2021. Cultural intelligence and work-related outcomes: a meta-analytic examination of joint effects and incremental predictive validity. *J. World Bus.* 56 (4), 101209.
- Shahid, S., Muchiri, M.K., Walumbwa, F.O., 2021. Mapping the antecedents and consequences of thriving at work: a review and proposed research agenda. *Int. J. Organ. Anal.* 29 (1), 78–103.
- Sokro, E., Pillay, S., 2020. Host country nationals' attitudes, social support, and willingness to work with expatriates. *Glob. Bus. Rev.* 21 (5), 1184–1199.
- Spiller, S.A., Fitzsimons, G.J., Lynch, J.G., McClelland, G.H., 2013. Spotlights, floodlights, and the magic number zero: simple effects tests in moderated regression. *J. Market. Res.* 50 (2), 277–288.
- Spreitzer, G., Hwang, E.B., 2019. How thriving at work matters for creating psychologically healthy workplaces: current perspectives and implications for the new world of work. In: *Creating Psychologically Healthy Workplaces*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 293–310.
- Spreitzer, G., Sutcliffe, K., Dutton, J., Sonenshein, S., Grant, A.M., 2005. A socially embedded model of thriving at work. *Organ. Sci.* 16 (5), 537–549.
- Spreitzer, G.M., Porath, C.L., Gibson, C., 2012. Toward human sustainability. *Organ. Dyn.* 41 (2), 155–162.
- Stoermer, S., Davies, S., Froese, F.J., 2021. The influence of expatriate cultural intelligence on organisational embeddedness and knowledge sharing: the moderating effects of host country context. *Journal of International Business Studies* 52, 432–453.

- Takeuchi, R., 2010. A critical review of expatriate adjustment research through a multiple stakeholder view: Progress, emerging trends, and prospects. *J. Manag.* 36, 1040–1064.
- Takeuchi, R., Tesluk, P.E., Yun, S., Lepak, D.P., 2005. An integrative view of international experience. *Acad. Manage. J.* 48 (1), 85–100.
- Tett, R.P., Meyer, J.P., 1993. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention: path analyses based on meta-analytic findings. *Pers. Psychol.* 46, 259–293.
- Tharenou, P., 2015. Researching expatriate types: the quest for rigorous methodological approaches. *Human Resource Management Journal* 25 (2), 149–165.
- Tharenou, P., Caulfield, N., 2010. Will I stay or will I go? Explaining repatriation by self-initiated expatriates. *Acad. Manage. J.* 53 (5), 1009–1028.
- Thomas, D.C., Liao, Y., Aycan, Z., Cerdin, J.-L., Pekerti, A.A., Ravlin, E.C., van de Vijver, F., 2015. Cultural intelligence: a theory-based, short form measure. *J. Int. Bus. Stud.* 46, 1099–1118.
- Thomason, B., Gibson, C., 2022. A meta-theory of global work encounters. *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 1–47.
- Toh, S.M., DeNisi, A.S., 2005. A local perspective to expatriate success. *Acad. Manag. Exec.* 19 (1), 132–146.
- Toh, S.M., DeNisi, A.S., 2007. Host country nationals as socializing agents: a social identity approach. *J. Organ. Behav.* 28 (3), 281–301.
- Triandis, H.C., 1994. *Culture and Social Behaviour*. McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.
- Van der Laken, P.A., van Engen, M.L., van Veldhoven, M.J.P.M., Paauwe, J., 2023. Fostering expatriate success: a meta-analysis of the differential benefits of social support. *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* 29 (4), 100679.
- van Vianen, A.E.M., De Pater, I.E., Kristof-Brown, A.L., Johnson, E.C., 2004. Fitting in: surface- and deep-level cultural differences and expatriates' adjustment. *Acad. Manage. J.* 47 (5), 697–709.
- Voydanoff, P., 2004. The effects of work and community resources and demands on family integration. *J. Fam. Econ. Iss.* 25 (1), 7–23.
- Zhang, Y., 2013. Expatriate development for cross-cultural adjustment: effects of cultural distance and cultural intelligence. *Hum. Resour. Dev. Rev.* 12, 177–199.
- Zhang, M.F., Dawson, J.F., Kline, R.B., 2021. Evaluating the use of covariance-based structural equation modelling with reflective measurement in organizational and management research: a review and recommendations for best practice. *Br. J. Manag.* 32 (2), 257–272.
- Zhuang, W.-L., Lee, C.-H., Lin, H.-M., Nien, Y.-F., 2022. Moderating effect of paternalistic leadership on the relationship between thriving at work and expatriate performance. *Sustainability* 14 (8119), 1–20.