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AN EXAMINATION OF CULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES AND NEW ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT:

All over the world, people move to new countries for many reasons, such as studying, working, or migrating. Although their motivations differ, they often choose a particular place because of its safety, cultural appeal, traditions, food, language, or simply because they feel connected to it. Whatever the reason, thousands of people each year make their dream of living in a new country come true. Adapting to a new environment, however, can be challenging, especially with the administrative tasks people must handle upon arrival. To avoid becoming isolated in the "expat bubble," individuals need to learn how to adjust to life in a foreign country or a new work environment (Sian 2018). Studying culturally appropriate behaviors and developing effective problem-solving strategies are essential foundations for successful adaptation. Many previous studies indicate that the process of adjusting to a new country and culture is known as **culture shock**. Culture shock develops gradually and requires time, effort, and personal reflection to overcome. While some people view living and working abroad as an exciting adventure, others argue that it presents a wide range of challenges. Therefore, the adjustment process varies from person to person and depends on individual circumstances, resources, and goals (Winkelman, 1994). The aim of this study is to investigate participants' experiences of living in a new country and adapting to a new work environment. The findings highlight the diverse ways in which individuals navigate unfamiliar cultural contexts, manage culture shock, and develop strategies for effective adaptation. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of intercultural experiences and offers insights that may support individuals, organizations, and policymakers in facilitating smoother transitions for people entering new national and workplace environments.

KEYWORDS: Culture, experiences, foreign country, work environment, organizational, multicultural management.

INTRODUCTION:

The increasing mobility of individuals across borders has led to a growing number of people adapting to life in foreign countries and new work environments. Moving into countries with new cultures poses many problems such as culture shock, language barriers, feeling lonely, change in standard of living and financial management (Hiltrop, 1990). It is good for experts to understand that preparation can help a lot in adapting to new cultures because, through that, expats take less time to blend in (Mao, 2015). Moreover, cultural adaptation has been noted to be an efficient way of minimizing the problems because it allows one to process reality in that people in foreign countries are different from those in the native countries. Therefore, common problems can be avoided making it easy for expats to live a wonderful life (Guthridge, 2014). Conversely, work culture exerts a substantial influence on several critical dimensions of the employee experience, including individual and collective morale, workplace engagement, and overall job satisfaction. Although work culture emerges naturally within all organizations, its development may at times be detrimental to organizational effectiveness. The persistence of negative behaviors and toxic attitudes can foster an unhealthy and costly work environment. Moreover, organizationaexperienceot only shapes employees' conduct and experience but also serves as an important signal to external stakeholders, including customers, regarding the desirability of engaging in business with the organization. Given the diversity of individuals who relocate such as expatriates, migrants, international students, and foreign workers it is essential to understand the range of cultural experiences they encounter. Examining how people interpret, manage, and adapt to these new contexts can provide valuable insights for organizations, policymakers, and support services seeking to facilitate smoother transitions.

Problem Statement: As global mobility increases, individuals relocating to foreign countries encounter a complex set of cultural, social, and organizational challenges. Although existing research has examined topics such as culture shock, intercultural communication, and expatriate adjustment, much of the literature focuses on specific groups most commonly corporate expatriates or international students. As a result, less attention has been given to the broader and more diverse population of individuals who move abroad for varied reasons, including work, education, migration, or personalt aspirations. Furthermore, the transition to

a new cultural environment is often accompanied by entry into a new workplace, where organizational norms, management styles, and communication practices may differ significantly from those in the individual's home country. These dual transitions adapting to a foreign society and adjusting to a new workplace can amplify stress, affect job satisfaction, disrupt personal routines, and influence overall well-being. However, the interaction between national cultural adjustment and workplace cultural adaptation remains insufficiently explored, especially among populations with differing backgrounds, motivations, and levels of preparedness. This gap in understanding limits the ability of organizations, policymakers, and support systems to develop effective strategies that assist individuals in navigating intercultural challenges. Therefore, there is a need to examine how diverse participants experience cultural adjustment in both foreign country contexts and new work environments.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine how individuals from diverse backgrounds experience and interpret cultural adjustment when relocating to a foreign country and entering a new work environment. The study seeks to explore the personal, social, and professional challenges associated with these transitions, as well as the strategies individuals use to navigate cultural differences and adapt to new expectations. By capturing participants' perspectives, the study aims to identify the factors that support or hinder successful adaptation in both national and organizational contexts.

Study questions:

1. How do individuals describe their initial experiences when adapting to life in a new country?

2. What challenges do participants report facing during their adjustment to a new workplace environment?

3. How do cultural differences influence participants' personal and professional experiences abroad?

Literature review:

The movement of individuals across borders has drawn increasing academic attention to the processes of cultural adjustment and the challenges associated with living and working in foreign environments. Scholars widely recognize that relocating to a new national context requires individuals to navigate unfamiliar social norms, values, behaviors, and communication styles. This encounter with difference often results in a period of psychological and emotional adjustment, commonly referred to as *culture shock*. Early

theorists describe culture shock as a gradual process involving stages of excitement, disorientation, adaptation, and eventual integration. More recent perspectives emphasize that cultural adjustment is nonlinear and shaped by individual characteristics, motivations, and contextual factors.

Cultural Experiences

Among the biggest challenges to integrating into a 'new' culture is culture shock. Culture shock is the moment one experiences a kind of disorientation because of a new environment, which has different ways of doing things. Culture shock, which normally induces anxiety on, expatriates result in negative outcomes such as job dependency, being lonely and over thinking among others (Ward, 2005). Secondly, the language barrier poses as one of the major challenges because without learning a foreign country's language, it is hard for one to communicate efficiently which is important (Bradfield, 2006). This is because interacting with people in a foreign country requires one to understand their language as they do.

Without learning the foreign language, one can be seen as arrogant or ignorant hence destroying relationships, which could help in the adaptation process. The language barrier has been associated with loneliness because interacting with people is a challenge (Gjersing, 2010). Repetition of a language is important because one can fit in well in a foreign culture without experiencing common challenges.

Adapting to the standards of living poses another challenge for expatriates because when one moves to a region which has a different culture, the standard of living changes. This can be seen broadly in the sense that housing changes, financial management also becomes an issue due to the difference in currency (Tahir, 2007). When one moves to another country, especially a first-world country, there are very many expectations such as earning more money, but what people do not understand is the fact that in foreign countries there are things that one should not do or are not available (Stahl, 2005). Therefore, it is advisable for people willing to work or study abroad to prepare well and start adapting to certain languages or ways of life earlier before they start living within foreign cultures.

Switching from one social life to another is a challenge for expatriates because when one leaves their native country, they join new people and communities, which are very different. Having new friends in an unfamiliar society can be challenging because everything is new meaning that having some reliable friends is the best idea to maneuver through the adaptation process (Peltokorpi, 2010). However, for an expatriate to relate well with new cultures, it is

advisable for one to allow cultural adaptation. Cultural adaptation is the process and time one takes to feel comfortable and build confidence in a new culture (Mehta, 2018). Cultural adaptation can minimize the problems caused by new culture through motivating one to learn more about the new culture to have enough knowledge on how to relate with the people who already exist in these societies (Mehta, 2018).

Cultural adaptation begins with understanding that there are cultural differences present between the expatriate and the foreign people (Mao, 2015). As a result, the brain can become flexible in terms of accepting the new ways of doing things hence becoming familiar with people's expectations (Guthridge, 2014). Moreover, one can spend time listening and talking to programs about ways of surviving and relating well with people in the new environment. By adapting and interacting with other expatriates who have spent time there, they can help one adapt easily and avoid problems associated with new cultures (Click, 2018). Cultural adaptation can reduce the culture shock because one adjusts fast compared to another person who is not ready to adapt to the new environment (Hiltrop, 1990). This is explained in the notion that expats who do not consider cultural adaptation end up falling into the rejection stage, which may lead to depression (Click, 2018).

Cultural adaptation also helps expats understand foreign cultures better and at the same time learn what the expat has to offer in terms of growth and development in such societies.

Overall, the literature suggests that cultural adjustment is influenced by the interaction between individual factors (e.g., language proficiency, resilience), social factors (e.g., community engagement, support networks), and organizational factors (e.g., leadership style, onboarding practices). This study builds on these insights by examining participants' lived experiences in both societal and workplace environments (Western Sydney University).

Method:

This study gathered participants' experiences through open-ended survey questions designed to capture personal narratives about living in a foreign country and working in a new cultural environment. The questions focused on:

- Difficulties encountered in daily life
- Experiences with workplace culture
- Language challenges
- Emotional responses to cultural differences

- Strategies used to adapt

- Perceived support from colleagues, institutions, and local communities

Data collection: Data is collected through interviews, where the discussions are mainly carried out through interviews questions of about 25 people living and working in Norway, the interview was taken in different city of Norway such as Drammen, Stavanger, Trondheim, Bergen, and Tromsø. The main aim is to find out about the culture experiences when the first arrive in Norway and what kind of challenges they have faced and finally what helped them to be part of the society. The interview took approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The data were categorized and analyzed using Excel, google drive, and codes was given to each data collected.

The participants were allowed to answer the questions willingly. Data was collected through an interview guide. Twenty-five participants were subjected to the interview process, and the participants were foreigner from different part of the world, Africa, Asia, America, Europe, Middle East, and Scandinavia. The interviews were anonymous, not to share with anybody.

Participants: Twenty-five (25) people were interviewed, and the participants was from different part of the world, with different culture, age, education, tradition, background, and language.

The following are some of the interview questions.

Table 1: Source: Author, January 2026

1 - What is your personal information, and marital status?
2 – What was the challenges you faced upon arrival?
3 – Was the interaction with other people hard for you?
4 – What is different in your native community to the neighborhood you lived in Norway?
5 – What help you to overcome challenges?
6 – Do you think that adjustment to life here in Norway is a process that occurs gradually and takes time?
7 – How long does it take to feel like home, or to adapt?
8 – Do you miss your country?

Data analysis: It was analyzed to determine experience of individual adjusting to life in a new country or workplace environment. The participants' responses were considered, and valuable. Participants provided responses describing their perspectives and challenges. The collected data were reviewed for recurring themes such as culture shock, communication barriers, administrative challenges, workplace integration, and social support.The approach allowed participants to express their experiences freely and in their own terms, providing

insight into diverse perceptions and interpretations of cultural adaptation.

Findings:

Analysis of participants' responses revealed several recurring themes related to cultural experiences in foreign countries and new work environments. Although individual experiences varied, common patterns emerged regarding the challenges, perceptions, and strategies associated with cultural adjustment.

4.1. Demographic profile of the participants: When it comes to the demographic profile of the participants, they were in total 25 participants, 11 was male and 14 females, the age of the participants was between 22-60 years. On the marital status, 5 participants were married, 7 were divorced, 10 of them were single, and 3 were widows.

Moving to education level (university & college); Heighten (18) of the participants received a formal education, and seven of the participants were not educated. Some of them were working (8 P), studying (6 P), immigrants (4 P), au-pair (4 P), on benefit (3 P).

4.2. Interview overview of a participant living in Oslo, Norway

Note: The interviews were conducted in Norway primarily due to the researcher's residence in the country, which made it convenient to travel to various cities and recruit participants willing to take part in the study. Additionally, over the past 15 years, Norway has become increasingly multicultural, with individuals from diverse regions of the world arriving for purposes such as employment, education, immigration, and asylum. This demographic diversity provided relevant and appropriate context for the research.

This interview was conducted to explore the cultural experiences of an immigrant upon arrival in Oslo, Norway, the challenges encountered during the integration process, and the factors that facilitated successful adaptation into Norwegian society. The interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes.

The participant is a 32-year-old female who migrated from the Philippines to Oslo, Norway, through an au pair cultural exchange program. The interview took place in a coffee shop, where the participant reflected on her experiences after relocating to Norway. Having lived in the country for two years, she has gradually adapted to Norwegian culture and has achieved a stable and integrated lifestyle.

Code: **Interviewer (I); Participant (P)**

I: What motivated you to move to Norway?

P: I initially moved from the Philippines to Norway as an au pair. After two years, I pursued further education in animal health because I wanted to secure stable employment. This eventually led to my current job.

I: What challenges did you experience upon your arrival?

P: During my first days in Oslo, I experienced significant culture shock, as cultural practices in the Philippines differ greatly from those in Norway. For example, in my home country people are generally open, friendly, and expressive. In contrast, people in Norway tend to be more reserved and less socially expressive. I felt the need to adapt quickly in order not to fall behind.

I: Were there any additional challenges you faced?

P: Yes. Language was the most significant challenge, followed by the weather and broader cultural differences.

I: Did language barriers affect your interaction with others?

P: Yes, communication was difficult because I did not speak Norwegian at the time, and my English was not as fluent as that of the people I interacted with, including classmates and neighbors.

I: How does your native community differ from the neighborhood you lived in here in Norway?

P: The standard of living in Oslo is considerably higher than in my native country. For example, the cost of living is significantly more expensive, which made adaptation challenging. Additionally, social relationships function differently. Establishing friendships was difficult because I was initially perceived as a stranger. In the Philippines, people are generally warm, welcoming, and friendly, whereas people in Norway tend to be more distant.

I: What factors helped you overcome these challenges

P: There is a saying in my home country that emphasizes adapting to the environment you are in. In simple terms, it means that one should adjust to local customs and behaviors in order to integrate successfully.

I: Could you elaborate on that?

P: It means that adaptation is essential. I began learning the language as quickly as possible, attending church services, socializing with others, and participating in shared activities. These actions greatly helped me understand Norwegian culture and build social connections.

I: Is there anything else you would like to add?

P: I believe that every culture has its strengths. Through my experience, I have adopted positive aspects of Norwegian culture and combined them with my own cultural background. As a result, I have become a more mature individual who integrates both Asian and Nordic cultural values.

P: added; that's enough for today, ok?

I: Fine, again many thanks for helping, I really appreciate.

P: My pleasure, and Bye-bye

I: Bye.

Moving to initial adjustment, and everyday challenges: 85% of the participants male and female described the early phase of relocation as overwhelming, marked by practical challenges such as navigating administrative systems, understanding local routines, and managing communication barriers. Difficulties related to housing, transportation, and accessing public services contributed to feelings of uncertainty during the initial period. Participants often emphasized that even simple daily tasks required significant effort due to unfamiliar procedures or linguistic limitations.

When it comes to ***experiences of culture shock***: 90% of the participants male and female agreed about culture shock. Six (6) participants in Drammen, five (5) participants in Tromsø, and seven(7) P, reported experiencing various aspects of culture shock, including confusion about social norms, unexpected cultural differences, and emotional fluctuations. Several participants noted moments of isolation or frustration when confronted with behaviors that differed from those in their home culture. However, some also expressed curiosity and motivation to learn, viewing differences as opportunities for personal growth.

A Male participant age 35 for Brazil stated: «In Brazil people are generally warm and expressive and engage in physical touch, whereas in Norway people tend to be more reserved, calm, and distant. She noted that Norwegians often feel uncomfortable with close

physical proximity and frequent touch, which she described as a significant culture shock".

A refugee couple from Africa stated that: "In our country of origin, people tend to speak loudly, greet one another warmly, and spend extended periods of time socializing with neighbors. However, after moving to Norway, we experienced a markedly different social environment, noting that we did not even know our neighbors, we laughed and joked about it home".

The participant noted that "finding familiar African ingredients, such as "foufou" "cassava leaves" "typical spice or seasoning used in cuisine", was challenging in local stores. While they valued their traditional cuisine, they had to adapt to the available options in Norway".

One female participant in Oslo stated: «Whether you move abroad to study, volunteer, or work, adapting to a foreign culture can bring a whirlwind of emotions. Encountering new languages, unfamiliar customs, and different social cues can feel overwhelming, leaving you feeling out of place or misunderstood».

She added. «This isn't limited to places that feel drastically different either; culture shock can happen even in countries that share a language or have historical ties with your home country. Suddenly, everyday routines, social norms, and values can feel completely different».

A male participant originally from China stated that: "When I moved to Drammen three years ago, I did not experience public curiosity or attention. I noted that no one asked to take photos of me, which surprised me, as I was accustomed to public curiosity towards foreigners in China. I emphasized that people in Norway appeared less curious and more reserved in comparison".

A 45-year-old male participant who lives and works in Bergen highlighted an important aspect of culture shock. *He stated that* *"culture shock can affect individuals physically, mentally, and emotionally."*

A female participant from Saudia Arabia stated: *"*In Saudi Arabia, there are strict social rules around gender segregation, especially in public spaces. Dress codes also require both men and women to dress conservatively, but in Norway people are more liberal»

Moving to *workplace integration and organizational culture*: 70% of the participant male

and female agreed. Adjusting to a new work environment emerged as a central theme. Most of the participants encountered differences in communication styles, decision-making processes, leadership behaviors, and expectations regarding hierarchy or teamwork. These variations influenced job satisfaction, workplace relationships, and overall motivation.

A married 51-year-old male participant originally from Africa who lives in Stavanger stated that: "He found workplace culture in Stavanger, Norway, to be more flexible and supportive than in his country of origin. He particularly appreciated the flat management structure, noting that it is often difficult to distinguish who holds managerial authority. He contrasted this with his experience in Africa, where workplace hierarchies were perceived as rigid and clearly defined, emphasizing that authority figures were not easily approachable".

Language and communication as key factors: 100% of the participants recognized the language challenges. Difficulties in expressing oneself, participating in discussions, or understanding instructions often resulted in reduced confidence at work and in social contexts. Conversely, participants who had stronger language skills reported smoother adaptation and more meaningful interactions with colleagues and others in the host society.

A 35-year-old single female participant living in Trondheim reported that; "language barriers were among the most significant obstacles she faced after relocating to the city. She explained that speaking fluently and confidently in daily interactions can be intimidating, as she often feels self-conscious about her accent and fears being misunderstood. These concerns have hindered her ability to seek better employment opportunities and to socialize freely. Furthermore, she noted that limited language proficiency frequently leads to economic difficulties, as individuals often end up working in low-wage jobs that do not require advanced communication skills".

A 45-year-old widowed female participant living in Oslo stated that: "Individuals who do not speak the Norwegian language are often perceived as unwilling to integrate into Norwegian society, which she described as being interpreted as a lack of respect for the Norwegian community". She further expressed that: "The inability to speak the language made her feel useless, frustrated, and discouraged, and that this struggle led her to socially isolate herself".

A 23-year-old male student who recently moved to Oslo emphasized the importance of

language for integration. He stated, *"The Norwegian language is a key that opens doors to many opportunities."* He further explained that proficiency in Norwegian is essential for everyday activities, such as visiting a doctor, shopping at local stores, communicating with others, and understanding Norwegian culture and traditions. He concluded by noting that, "*learning Norwegian is my priority, as I don't want to face the difficulties experienced by those who arrived before me".*

When it comes to *social support and sense of belonging*: All participants male and female (100%) admitted that social support emerged as a crucial element in successful adaptation. Participants who formed friendships, built networks, or received support from colleagues reported a greater sense of belonging and reduced stress. Those who relied primarily on co-national groups or remained in expatriate circles often experienced slower integration into the broader society.

A male participant living in Drammen stated that: "My first year in Norway was very challenging, particularly in forming friendships with locals, and that I struggled considerably. To connect with the local community and build a social network, I began attending community gatherings and participating in local activities, such as group sports, nature tours, church events, and volunteer work. I noticed that these social activities were instrumental in helping me integrate into Norwegian society, develop friendships with locals, and receive more genuine social support".

The following figure provides a summary of the percentage of participants associated with cultural experience factors.
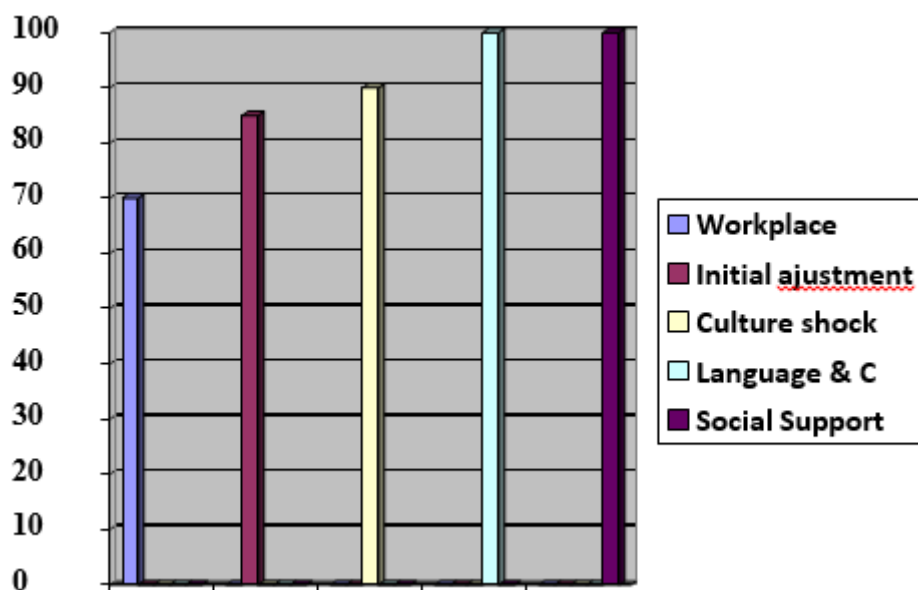
Figure 1: Source: Author, January 2026.

DISCUSSION:

The findings of this study provide insight into the complex and multifaceted nature of cultural adjustment among individuals living in foreign countries and entering new workplace environments. Consistent with existing literature, participants' experiences demonstrate that adaptation is not a uniform or linear process, but one shaped by individual backgrounds, expectations, and contextual factors. Participants described various strategies for managing their adjustment, including seeking information, practicing the local language, observing cultural norms, and adopting a more open or flexible mindset. Many reflected on personal growth gained through overcoming challenges, noting improved resilience, intercultural awareness, and self-confidence. Some participants emphasized that adaptation was ongoing and required continuous effort. The findings indicate that national culture and workplace culture were deeply interconnected in shaping participants' experiences. Differences between societal norms and organizational practices sometimes created confusion, while in other cases, the workplace served as a key environment for cultural learning. Participants often relied on workplace interactions as a means of understanding broader cultural expectations within the host country.

A recurring theme in the data is the **difficulty of early adjustment**, particularly in managing practical and administrative demands. This reflects earlier research suggesting that initial challenges often overlooked in theoretical discussions play a significant role in shaping early impressions of the host context and influencing long-term adaptation outcomes. Participants'

descriptions confirm that routine tasks require additional effort when cultural cues, linguistic information, and familiar procedures are absent. The findings also reaffirm the central role of «**culture shock**» in shaping intercultural experiences. Participants reported emotional fluctuations, confusion regarding social norms, and moments of frustration, all of which align with established models of culture shock. However, the variability in how individuals interpreted these experiences supports contemporary perspectives arguing that cultural adjustment is dynamic and individualized rather than a predictable sequence of stages.In workplace contexts, participants' experiences highlight the significance of **organizational culture** as a defining factor in successful integration. Differences in leadership styles, communication practices, and workplace expectations influenced the extent to which individuals felt comfortable and valued in their new roles. This confirms previous research that workplace culture can either facilitate or hinder adaptation and has direct implications for job satisfaction and well-being. The importance of **language proficiency** emerged strongly, reinforcing the idea that communication skills are a foundation for successful intercultural engagement. Participants with stronger language abilities reported more positive experiences, both professionally and socially, suggesting that language fluency enhances confidence, social connection, and access to opportunities. Another significant theme concerns the role of **social support**. The results demonstrate that meaningful relationships, whether with colleagues, friends, or local network play a critical role in reducing stress and promoting a sense of belonging. This aligns with scholarship emphasizing that integration is strongly dependent on the availability and quality of social connections. However, findings also reveal that reliance solely on co-national groups may delay deeper cultural understanding, indicating that the type of support network matters as much as the presence of one.

Finally, the interaction between **national culture and workplace culture** highlights the complexity of adaptation. Participants often relied on workplace interactions to interpret broader societal norms, indicating that the workplace functions as a microcosm of the host culture. This finding expands on existing literature by suggesting that organizational culture may serve as a bridge or a barrierto wider cultural integration.Overall, the findings suggest that cultural adjustment is a deeply personal process influenced by the interplay of individual strategies, social resources, and the structures of both the host society and workplace. The study contributes to a broader understanding of intercultural experiences by highlighting the diversity of challenges and responses across participant groups and by emphasizing the interconnectedness of national and organizational cultural contexts.

This study raises three important questions about, **(1)** how do individuals describe their initial experiences when adapting to life in a new country? **(2)** What challenges do participants report facing during their adjustment to a new workplace environment? And **(3)** how do cultural differences influence participants' personal and professional experiences abroad? According to the findings, the researcher was able to answer the three questions.

To begin with the first question: ***How do individuals describe their initial experiences when adapting to life in a new country?*** Participants described their initial adaptation to life in a new country as a complex and challenging process. Across interviews, both male and female participants emphasised that upon arriving in Norway, they encountered unfamiliar cultural norms, traditions, food practices, work systems, and language barriers. Difficulties in establishing social networks and forming meaningful relationships with local people were also commonly reported. Despite these challenges, participants reflected on their early experiences as formative, noting that they contributed to a deeper understanding of Norwegian culture over time. Overall, the findings indicate

A couple from Africa stated, *"Everything felt new to us, and we had to learn about almost everything. Although the country is very clean and has beautiful natural surroundings, it takes time to become part of society, and the weather can be quite extreme."*

Moving to the second question: ***What challenges do participants report facing during their adjustment to a new workplace environment?*** Participants reported multiple challenges during their adjustment to a new workplace environment. Commonly identified difficulties included unfamiliar work systems, different professional norms and expectations, language barriers, and communication challenges with colleagues. Several participants also described feeling uncertain about workplace culture, including hierarchy, teamwork, and informal social interactions. These challenges often contributed to feelings of stress and isolation in the early stages of employment. Over time, however, participants noted that increased exposure, learning, and personal effort helped them gradually adapt to the new work environment.

A female participant from Philippines explained: *«Language was the most significant challenge, followed by the weather and broader cultural differences».*

She added; *«During my first days in Oslo, I experienced significant culture shock, as cultural practices in the Philippines differ greatly from those in Norway. For example, in my home*

country people are generally open, friendly, and expressive. In contrast, people in Norway tend to be more reserved and less socially expressive».

Finally, the third question: **How do cultural differences influence participants' personal and professional experiences abroad?** Participants reported that cultural differences influenced both their personal and professional experiences abroad. They faced challenges in social integration, encountering unfamiliar norms, traditions, and communication styles, which sometimes led to feelings of isolation. In the workplace, differences in professional culture, such as hierarchical structures, teamwork expectations, and communication practices, affected their ability to perform and collaborate effectively. Despite these challenges, participants emphasized gradual cultural learning as a key factor in adaptation. Developing cultural awareness and understanding local norms helped participants integrate socially, improve workplace performance, and gain a stronger sense of belonging.

In summary, the findings of the research were satisfactory to the researcher, and the participants demonstrated generally positive attitudes. The participants' responses highlighted the significant challenges associated with living, studying, and working in a new country or unfamiliar work environment. Furthermore, several dimensions of cultural experience were discussed during the interviews, including culture shock, language barriers, early adjustment, and adaptation. The participants emphasized that these cultural challenges are inevitable when living abroad, as addressing them plays a crucial role in facilitating integration into the host country and its work environment.

Moreover, the participants noted that integration into a new country and professional environment can be a complex and time-consuming process. However, once language barriers are overcome and an understanding of the host country's culture and traditions is achieved, the process of integration becomes more manageable and rewarding. Integration is closely linked to adaptation; when these challenges are effectively addressed, they enhance individuals' well-being, promote greater engagement within the host society, and contribute to a more positive experience of living abroad. A sense of acceptance within the host country may ultimately encourage individuals to perceive it as a second home.

One female participant, aged 43, from Sweden and currently living in Oslo, reported that "her experience of living abroad had contributed significantly to her personal development, providing valuable life lessons and enhancing her sense of maturity".

Another male participant, aged 51, from Iran and currently residing in Drammen, reported that «his migration to Norway had been highly beneficial, leading to an improved quality of life, a stronger sense of personal freedom, and significant personal transformation. He further noted that his experiences in Norway had shaped a new perspective, which differs from those commonly held in his country of origin, including among members of his own family».

Additionally, *a couple of participants (a male aged 58 and a female aged 49) from Africa*; «expressed profound gratitude for being accepted into Norwegian society. They described their resettlement in Norway as a significant privilege, particularly in light of the substantial personal losses they had experienced in their country of origin, including the loss of family members, property, employment, and social networks. The couple emphasized their appreciation for the support provided by Norwegian authorities and local communities, stating that they feel happy, secure, and consider Norway to be their new home»

CONCLUSION:

This study explored the cultural experiences of individuals living in a foreign country and adapting to new workplace environments. The findings reveal that cultural adjustment is a dynamic and multifaceted process shaped by personal, social, and organizational factors. Participants' experiences highlight that the transition to a new cultural context involves both practical and emotional challenges, particularly during the initial stages when administrative tasks, language barriers, and unfamiliar social norms are most prominent.Despite these difficulties, many participants demonstrated resilience and adaptability, relying on personal strategies, prior experiences, and social support networks to navigate the adjustment process. The results emphasize that language proficiency and meaningful interpersonal relationships are central to successful integration, influencing confidence, well-being, and the ability to participate fully in professional and social settings. The study also shows that workplace culture plays a crucial role in shaping the overall cultural experience. Differences in leadership styles, communication patterns, and organizational expectations either facilitated or hindered participants' sense of belonging and job satisfaction. This underscores the importance of culturally responsive management practices and the need for organizations to foster inclusive and supportive work environments. Overall, the findings contribute to a

deeper understanding of how individuals confront and make sense of cultural differences in both societal and professional contexts. They illustrate that adaptation is not solely an individual responsibility but a shared process influenced by the environment, organizational structures, and the quality of social interactions. Recognizing the interconnected nature of these factors can support the development of more effective strategies to enhance cultural integration and improve the experiences of individuals living and working abroad.

Implications for Practice:

The findings of this study have several important implications for individuals, organizations, and policymakers involved in supporting cultural adaptation in foreign countries and new work environments. **First**, the results highlight the need for **comprehensive orientation programs** that address both practical and cultural aspects of relocation. Clear guidance on administrative procedures, local systems, and workplace expectations could significantly ease the initial adjustment phase and reduce stress for newcomers. **Second**, the study underscores the importance of **language support**. Providing language training either before arrival or as part of ongoing professional development—can enhance communication, strengthen workplace participation, and foster a greater sense of confidence and belonging. **Third**, the findings suggest that organizations should actively cultivate **inclusive workplace cultures**. Implementing culturally responsive leadership practices, promoting open communication, and encouraging intercultural dialogue can help prevent misunderstandings and reduce feelings of isolation. **Fourth**, the study demonstrates the value of **social connections** in the adaptation process. Institutions and employers can facilitate social integration by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction, such as team-building initiatives, social events, and community engagement activities. Finally, the results indicate that adaptation extends beyond the workplace. Policymakers and community organizations can contribute by offering accessible resources, intercultural workshops, and community support systems that help individuals navigate both cultural and practical aspects of living abroad. Together, these implications emphasize that successful cultural adaptation is most effective when supported collectively by individuals, organizations, and society. Implementing these practices can improve well-being, enhance job satisfaction, and contribute to more productive and harmonious multicultural environments.

Limitations:

While this study offers valuable insights into cultural experiences in foreign countries and new workplace environments, several limitations should be acknowledged. The findings are based on participants' self-reported experiences, which may be influenced by memory, personal interpretation, or subjective bias. Participants may have emphasized certain aspects of their experiences while omitting others, which could affect the overall depth and accuracy of the data. Furthermore, the sample size and composition limit the generalizability of the results. Although the participants provided diverse perspectives, the study does not represent all demographic groups, nationalities, or professional sectors. Cultural adjustment processes may vary significantly across different contexts that were not captured within this sample.. The study focuses primarily on individual experiences without systematically examining the influence of broader structural factors such as immigration policies, socioeconomic conditions, or organizational resources. The use of survey questions, while effective for gathering a range of experiences, restricts the depth that could be obtained through more detailed methods such as in-depth interviews or participant observation. This may have limited the richness of the narratives and the ability to explore complex cultural dynamics in greater detail. Moreover, the study captures experiences at a single point in time. Cultural adjustment is an ongoing process, and participants' perspectives may change as they spend more time in the new country or workplace. Longitudinal research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how adaptation evolves. These limitations do not diminish the value of the findings but indicate areas where further research could strengthen the understanding of cultural adjustment in both societal and workplace contexts.

Future Research:

Future research could expand upon the findings of this study by exploring several important areas related to cultural adaptation in foreign countries and new workplace environments.

First, longitudinal studies would provide deeper insight into how individuals' cultural experiences develop over time. Since adaptation is a dynamic and continuous process, tracking participants across several months or years would allow researchers to identify long-term patterns, shifts in attitudes, and the factors that contribute to sustained adjustment.

Second, future research could benefit from comparing different groups, such as international students, migrant workers, expatriate professionals, and refugees. Each group encounters distinct challenges and forms of support, and a comparative design would help clarify how various social, economic, and cultural conditions influence the adjustment process. **Third**,

future research should explore the influence of **digital tools and online communities** on cultural adaptation. With the increasing use of remote communication, social media, and virtual workplaces, digital environments may play a significant role in shaping individuals' sense of connection, identity, and belonging in a new culture. Finally, researchers could incorporate a wider range of methodological approaches, such as in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, or mixed-method designs. These approaches would provide richer, more nuanced insights into the emotional, social, and behavioral dimensions of adaptation that survey responses alone cannot fully capture.

Recommendations:

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made for individuals, organizations, and institutions involved in supporting cultural adaptation in foreign countries and new work environments. These are some recommendention could be considered:

1. Strengthen pre-arrival preparation: Individuals and employers should encourage better preparation before relocation. This may include learning basic language skills, familiarizing oneself with cultural norms, and gaining an understanding of local administrative systems. Early preparation can ease anxiety, reduce misunderstandings, and facilitate a smoother transition.

2. Provide comprehensive onboarding and orientation: Organizations should develop structured onboarding programs that address both practical and cultural aspects of the workplace. Clear communication about expectations, values, and daily procedures can help newcomers integrate more quickly and effectively.

3. Offer language support and communication training: Language proficiency is crucial for successful adaptation. Employers and community institutions should offer accessible language-learning opportunities and communication workshops to enhance both verbal and cultural fluency.

4. Foster Inclusive and culturally responsive work environments: Leaders and managers should promote openness, respect, and cultural sensitivity within teams. Encouraging collaborative problem-solving, recognizing diverse perspectives, and addressing conflicts early can reduce workplace stress and increase employee satisfaction.

*5. Encourage Participation in Diverse Social Networks:*To avoid isolation and dependence on co-national groups, individuals should be encouraged to engage with diverse social circles, local communities, and intercultural activities. This fosters deeper cultural understanding and strengthens a sense of belonging.

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