INVESTIGATION OF THE CULTURAL ADAPTATION EXPERIENCES OF EXPAT TEACHERS IN OMAN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the cultural adaptation experiences of expat teachers living in Oman, focusing on the impact of cultural differences on intercultural adaptation and communication. Using the Cultural Intelligence Scale CQS, the study investigates how expat teachers navigate Oman's significantly different cultural landscape. It also explores the role of cultural intelligence in successful adaptation by examining the multifaceted nature of culture and its stages of adaptation. Prior to the research, a literature review was conducted on cultural adaptation and the display of emotions in intercultural experiences.

Interviews with 16 expat teachers in higher education were conducted using six questions based on the cultural intelligence scale to uncover the difficulties encountered and the strategies used to manage cultural differences in communication in both professional and social contexts. The aim was to highlight the experiences of expat teachers in responding to the cultural differences they encounter and their adaptation processes by emphasizing the distinct cultural differences between Omani culture and other cultures.

Keywords: Expat, Expat Teachers, Cultural Adaptation, Oman

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INTRODUCTION

The literature defines expatriate adjustment in various ways. It attracts the attention of multinational companies because it is considered a form of expatriate 'achievement.' This focus has led to expat adaptation becoming a prevalent research topic in the international management literature (Aycan, 1997).

Gregersen and Black (1990) view expatriate adjustment as the "degree of psychological comfort" the expat feels about the new situation. Aycan (1997) states that there is a degree of harmony between the expatriate manager and the new environment in both work and non-work areas. In the expatriate context, the term "adaptation" has been used synonymously with "socialization" (Feldman & Bolino, 1999) and "adaptation" (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999). According to Louis (1980), socialization involves learning simple cues, assuming an organizational role, and understanding the values, skills, expected behaviors, and social knowledge required as an organizational member. All these definitions show that expats need to know about adaptation and the new role to be effective in the organization. Therefore, expatriate

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adjustment is the degree to which the expat has learned different aspects of their new role and how comfortable they feel in applying what they have learned (Toh, 2003).

Black's (1988) adaptation-to-daily-life scale outlines three key aspects of expatriate adaptation. The first aspect is the job role, which refers to the level of harmony the expat feels with their work and responsibilities. The second aspect is interaction with home country employees, which pertains to the comfort felt by the expat in interacting with managers, co-workers, and subordinates. The third aspect is general culture and daily life, defined as a person's comfort in various areas of the host country's culture (Lueke & Svyantek, 2000). General adjustment is synonymous with expat cross-cultural adaptation, which involves developing familiarity, comfort, and expertise with expected behaviors and assumptions in the new culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

Expat employee compliance is divided into three parts: general or cultural fit, job fit, and interaction fit (Gelfand et al., 2007). Factors that influence all aspects of adaptation include personal factors such as propensity to learn and self-efficacy, work and organizational factors such as support from co-workers and accessible resources, and supervisory support of expatriate employees, especially those with previous international experience (Black et al., 1991). Among non-work factors, spousal compatibility determines all adjustment aspects (Caligiuri et al., 1998). Although the U-curve hypothesis has been generally supported in the literature, the fit of the side-S (i.e., initial U-curve fit followed by an inverted U-curve) model better explains the mentioned fit aspects (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Additionally, the determinants of each adaptation aspect are different. Job adaptability has been found to increase with lower role ambiguity, role conflict, and role innovation (Gilley et al., 1999).

Additionally, it has been observed that the appointment length and the interaction with the host country people increase job adaptability (Caligiuri, 2000). A positive relationship has also been found between openness to new experiences (Huang et al., 2005) and job adjustment. Knowing the language of the country of residence has been beneficial for non-native English speakers who go to English-speaking countries. When expats from countries whose native language is English go to countries where the native language is not English, knowing the language of the country of residence is not very useful (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005).

While previous experience of living in a similar culture affects the relationship between current tenure and overall adjustment, previous experience of living in any culture also affects the relationship between tenure and job adjustment (Palthe, 2004). Based on meta-analyses by Hechanova, Beehr, and Christiansen (2003), it was concluded that adaptation reduces expat tension. Fisher's (1985) research on newcomer adjustment provides clear evidence of the significance of supportive work relationships. Emotional support enables individuals to feel cared for, esteemed, valued, and part of a network characterized by communication and mutual obligation. Regarding the approach to coping with stress in expat management, many studies have shown that symptom-focused coping is more beneficial than

problem-focused coping for those working in lower positions or countries with distant cultures (Selmer, 2002). In a meta-analysis examining factors influencing expatriate effectiveness, van der Laken et al. (2019) discovered that social relationships with host country nationals and fellow expatriates positively impact expatriates' adjustment, performance, and commitment to their assignments.

1. EXPAT DEFINITION

Ward and Kennedy (1994) define travelers as individuals who travel voluntarily to a new culture, usually for specific goals such as educational and professional opportunities, reside there for a limited time, and often aim to return to their hometown. These characteristics differentiate them from immigrants and refugees who have longer-term goals. Expats are often sent by their employers to work for a certain period in a branch of their company abroad. They are expected to leave that location when their contract expires. This definition applies only to highly skilled technicians, professionals, and managers. This research includes adult professionals who have worked abroad for a certain period, having applied and been hired independently of an institution for a new temporary or permanent position abroad (Shortland, 2015).

1.1 Expats Who Change Countries Voluntarily

People who voluntarily choose to work abroad and are defined as "self-initiated expatriates (SIEs)" are an essential workforce source for organizations around the world that want to meet their talent needs (Furusawa & Brewster, 2019). However, the management of SIEs has received less academic attention in the international management literature (Pereira et al., 2017) than that of organization-appointed expats. It is noted that the international management literature has gained size and depth to address issues related to expatriate management, but comprehensive information on the management of SIEs is rare (Bozionelos & Singh, 2017). The challenges that SIEs face and cope within the workplace differ from those of host country nationals. The resources required to perform well in the host country significantly shape SIEs' perceptions and attitudes toward employing organizations (Lapointe et al., 2020).

In this study, we define SIEs as individuals who independently choose to move abroad, often covering their own expenses, and not being transferred by an organization. They relocate to a country of their choice, driven by a desire for cultural, personal, and career growth opportunities, often without a specific timeframe (Shaffer et al., 2012).

1.2 Culture and Intercultural Adaptation

To examine intercultural communication, it is necessary first to define culture. As Dervin (2012) states, culture is still a highly debated topic among academics. There are two opposing views about culture. According to the essentialist perspective, culture is something static. Individuals are grouped according

to specific and fixed identities that all culture members share. Hofstede (1983) uses this view to categorize different cultures based on four dimensions. He sees the characteristic features of culture as profoundly connected to culture. Adler (1975) similarly views culture as a framework of perception shared by a group, influenced by one's orientation and worldview.

In contrast, the opposing view of these definitions is that culture is dynamic, fluid, and interaction-oriented (Dervin, 2012). According to Dervin, culture changes, adapts to new conditions, and is shaped through social communication. Kim (1988) argues that we acquire our culture through communication. According to this view, culture consists of shared values, beliefs, behaviors, and perspectives. It is not just about nationality. In his book on culture, Dettwyler mentions that culture consists of overlapping knowledge, beliefs, and practices that are not based solely on nationality or ethnicity (Dettwyler, 2011).

1.3 Culture Shock

Culture shock is one of the oldest acculturation terms used to describe individuals who are introduced to a very different culture. Culture shock, first expressed by Oberg (1960), was seen as a work disease from a psychological perspective. It has been claimed that it occurs due to the loss of habitual signs and symbols such as facial expressions, words, gestures, traditions, and norms. This sense of loss leads to cultural stress and anxiety, which may result in tension, confusion, helplessness, irritability, fear of being deceived or harmed (Adler, 1975).

Oberg (1960) offers four stages to explain the culture shock model and identifies the symptoms of each stage:

1. Honeymoon: This stage describes a feeling of admiration, enthusiasm, and optimism that lasts from a few days to a few months. Immigrants often interact with local people who speak their language and are polite to foreigners. Getting through this stage depends on how quickly the person wants to cope and communicate with the new culture.

2. Crisis: The second stage is a tumultuous period marked by conflicting and stereotypical emotional responses, a direct result of the challenges of adaptation. The individual begins to feel the stark differences, which can lead to heightened anxiety, anger, and a sense of inadequacy. The full force of culture shock is experienced at this stage. It's during this time that immigrants may find solace in forming stronger bonds with fellow immigrants. Overcoming this stage is a journey of learning the language of the host country and acclimating to the new environment.

3. Recovery: This stage is a testament to the individual's increased language skills and ability to interact. Negative emotions gradually give way to a proactive search for solutions. Immigrants start to feel at home in their new physical environment and gain a deeper understanding of the new way of life.

4. Adaptation: In the final stage, anxiety almost disappears. New traditions are accepted as part of a different lifestyle and are welcomed positively. At this stage, immigrants stop tolerating customs and instead enjoy the food, habits, and customs of the new culture.

Expats who lack sufficient knowledge of the practices of another culture may fail in their roles because they do not understand how culture affects international business practices. In general, culture shock refers to the anxiety or stress caused by being in a new and foreign environment and the absence of familiar signs and symbols from one's home country (Moore, 2009).

1.4 Cultural Intelligence (CI) SCALE

The Cultural Intelligence (CI) Scale, developed by the Cultural Intelligence Center (2005), was prepared to reveal people's cultural intelligence. The scale, consisting of 20 items, has a 7-point Likert-type rating. It consists of four sub-dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral (Sahin et al., 2013).

There are 4 items in the metacognitive sub-dimension, which assess the extent of their cultural knowledge and their control over this information:

-   I am aware of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.
-   I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is foreign to me.
-   I am aware of the cultural knowledge I apply in cross-cultural interactions.
-   I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge when interacting with people from different cultures.

There are 6 items in the cognitive subscale that reflect the knowledge people have about different cultures:

-   I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.
-   I know the rules of other languages (e.g. vocabulary, grammar).
-   I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.
-   I know the marriage systems of other cultures.
-   I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.
-   I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behavior in other cultures.

There are 5 items in the motivation sub-dimension, which reflects individuals' interest in interacting with people from different cultures and their self-efficacy belief in this regard:

-   I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.,
-   I am confident that I can socialize with local people in a culture that is foreign to me.
-   I am confident that I can handle the stress of adapting to a new culture.

- I enjoy living in cultures that are foreign to me.
- I am confident that I can get used to different shopping conditions.

There are 5 items in the behavior sub-dimension that reflects the ability of individuals to regulate appropriate verbal or non-verbal behaviors when encountering people with different cultural backgrounds:

- I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when cross-cultural interaction requires this.
- I use pauses and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.
- I change my speaking pace when an intercultural situation requires it.
- I change my nonverbal behavior when an intercultural situation requires it.
- I change my facial expressions when an intercultural interaction requires this.

1.5 Cultural Differences Between Western Countries and Oman

In Oman and the Arab world, Islam profoundly influences governance, culture, and society and shapes management practices. The Quran and the Sunnah are the primary sources shaping Islamic governance principles. Understanding the relationship between Islam and human resources management is of great importance not only for Islamic countries but also for non-Muslim countries with significant Muslim populations. One-fifth of the world's 300 million Muslim population lives in countries where the majority religion is not Islam (Grim & Hsu, 2011). This shows that businesses should provide organizational guidance services to support their employees regarding their religious beliefs. The religion of Islam is integrel to many stages of Muslims' lives. For example, in Muslim cultures, approximately 50% of women graduating from university do not work after graduation because some families view female employment as anti-Islamic behavior. Some women reject educational scholarships offered by the government and companies to study abroad because they fear surpassing the age of twenty-six while studying abroad. It is almost impossible for a woman over this age to find a partner because, in Omani culture, single men do not want to marry a woman over twenty-six. According to cultural rules, foreign men cannot marry Omani women, but Omani men can marry foreigners (Al Mahrouqi, 2018).

Shouting in public and exposing people who violate the rules in media and public spaces are seen as behaviors contrary to Islam. The dress code does not allow sleeveless dresses, short shorts, or miniskirts; instead, it requires wearing clothes that completely cover the shoulders, preferably trousers that fall below the knee and long skirts. Additionally, Omani women are required to cover their entire body except for their faces and hands. There is a severe gender discrimination (Abu-Odeh, 1991).

There are also notable economic differences between Oman and Western countries. Creating a fair pay system for expatriates, locals, and third-country nationals in different socio-economic environments—

ranging from varying economic development levels to cultural differences compared to the expatriate's host country—requires more than using one-size-fits-all solutions across the company (Bartlett, 1981). Due to Islamic teachings, employees are sincere, and theft and plunder are rare. Crime rates are very low. This difference reduces operating costs and increases profits, competitiveness, and business confidence. Even if an Omani citizen does not pay their rent, it is very difficult or even impossible to evict them, as it is considered un-Islamic and cruel. Foreigners working in the real estate sector should consider this. Charging or demanding interest is considered an abomination or a sin ("Haram" in Arabic). Many Omani citizens and Arabs living in oil-rich GCC countries do not want to do simple, unprestigious jobs that do not require much skill, such as domestic servants, gardeners, cooks, garbage collectors, and construction workers.

Additionally, per Oman governmental policy and in line with Islamic teachings, businesses must maintain up to 20 percent profit margins. This may surprise Western expats who have worked in third-world countries where profits can reach fifty or even one hundred percent due to inflation. This government policy in Oman leads to consumer prices remaining very stable in Oman in the long run. Business life in Oman is built on personal connections and trust, often based on family relationships. Although this perspective is rapidly changing and not implemented in large companies, many companies are managed by large families who maintain such traditions. In such companies, the head of the family is usually the determining factor in the decision-making process. Communicating with family members can be surprising for an expat accustomed to corporate-level senior management meetings (Al Mahrouqi, 2018).

The fact that the official weekend is Friday and Saturday can also be considered a surprising cultural difference. The reason for this is that the dominant culture in Arab countries such as Oman is Islam, and Muslims go to mosques to pray on Fridays. In other countries considered Christian, church visits occur on Saturdays and Sundays. The official weekends expats from countries other than Oman and Middle Eastern countries are accustomed to are Saturdays and Sundays. Businesses typically stay open for very long hours, at least eight hours. However, significant breaks of three to four hours are associated with worship. During Ramadan, working hours are often shortened by three hours, and people do their work early in the morning or later in the evening after breaking their fast (Daher, 2021). Therefore, expats need to adapt to the demands of the business community in Oman, such as taking breaks from working hours for prayers.

The literature states that the people of Oman speak Arabic. Although the official language is Arabic, English is also widely used in government offices and private transactions in Oman, with even business cards and brochures printed in English. Politeness and courtesy are highly valued traits in Oman. It is important to always arrive on time for any meeting. However, an expat should also know that punctuality

is never considered a virtue in Oman. People often wait before and during business meetings. This often comes as a surprise to expats because, for them, time is money. However, no matter how surprising this waste of time is, expats must be patient and not view delays as a sign of disrespect (Al Mahrouqi, 2018). It is stated in the literature (Minces, 1982) that conservative clothing rules are restrictive, especially for women. Men and women must wear suits and business clothes covering their arms and legs. Recently, there have been increasing tensions not only among Omanis but also in other Arab countries over the clothing habits of expats and how offensive these dress codes are. This problem is different for expats living in Oman. All Arab countries require foreigners to dress according to their culture during business meetings. Notably, the clothes that expats are used to wearing are considered inappropriate in this new environment. Often, female expats say they are scolded by older women accustomed to Arab culture for not respecting cultural rules (Omair, 2009).

The cultural environment of the host nation plays a significant role in shaping the roles of mothers and fathers. For instance, research in the UAE reveals that living there simplifies the lives of academic mothers, while academic fathers often receive substantial support from their universities (Dickson, 2019; Dickson and Dickson, 2021).

According to a study by Leung, Zhu, and Ge (2009), the more significant the gap between expats and locals regarding economic, cultural, and social factors, the more likely relationships are to be unbalanced. Difficulties in the relationships between host culture residents and expats often arise from the lack of knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity of expats to local culture and traditions. Conflicts between Arab culture and the culture of expats' home countries occur on personal levels. These conflicts often arise from cultural distance, causing differences and misinterpretations during interactions. For example, marriage and cohabitation are challenging for expats in Arab countries, including Oman. In Oman, a man and a woman who are not legally married are prohibited from living together. This has been a significant and persistent problem for single expat couples working in Oman. To avoid problems, most single couples address each other as husband or wife and act as if they are married by wearing wedding rings. This is a challenging rule for expats, as in other cultures, a man and a woman living together without marriage attracts no one's attention. It is stated that in Arab countries, cohabitation of unmarried couples has severe sanctions, including imprisonment, deportation, or both (Torstrick & Faier, 2009).

2. Research Method

This research examined how expat teachers living in Oman, a country with a different culture than their own, experience intercultural communication and cultural harmony. Before conducting the research, a literature review was carried out on cultural adaptation and the display of emotions in intercultural experiences. The six open-ended questions asked in the surveys were created using 20 statements that

addressed cultural strategy development, cultural knowledge, and cultural behavior questions from the section on culture-related opinions and awareness of cultural values on the cultural intelligence scale. Out of the 128 full-time undergraduate teachers from six universities who were approached via e-mail and personal contacts, 30 agreed to participate in the research. Of these, 16 provided satisfactory answers to the open-ended questions in the study. Data collection was carried out in May 2024. The forms were prepared in English, and the responses were translated into Turkish. The survey consisted of 16 closed-ended and six open-ended questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

The participants consist of 16 expat teachers, five females and eleven males, between the ages of 31 and 60. Five of the participants came to Oman from Canada, five from the United Kingdom, two from the USA, two from Iran, one from India, and one from Turkey. Ten of the participants have been working at their current institution for more than seven years, while the other six participants have been working for four to seven years.

Tablo 1 Characteristics of Participants

	Marital Status	Living with Family	Arabic Language Level	Experience Working in Another Country Before Oman	Working Time in Another Country Before Oman	Satisfaction Level with Living in Oman	Satisfaction Level with Job in Oman
P1	Single	Yes	Intermediate	No	-	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
P2	Married	Yes	Beginner	Yes	3-5 Years	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
P3	Married	Yes	Beginner	Yes	5+ Years	Satisfied	Satisfied
P4	Single	No	-	Yes	3-5 Years	Neutral	Neutral
P5	Single	No	-	Yes	1-2 Years	Neutral	Very Satisfied
P6	Married	Yes	Intermediate	Yes	5+ Years	Satisfied	Satisfied
P7	Single	No	Intermediate	Yes	1-2 Years	Satisfied	Satisfied
P8	Single	No	Beginner	Yes	1-2 Years	Satisfied	Satisfied
P9	Married	Yes	-	Yes	5+ Years	Very Satisfied	Satisfied

P10	Married	Yes	Beginner	No	-	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied
P11	Married	Yes	Beginner	Yes	5+ Years	Neutral	Neutral
P12	Married	Yes	-	Yes	5+ Years	Neutral	Satisfied
P13	Married	Yes	Beginner	Yes	3-5 Years	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied
P14	Single	No	Beginner	Yes	5+ Years	Satisfied	Satisfied
P15	Single	Yes	Beginner	No	-	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied
P16	Single	No	Intermediate	Yes	3-5 Years	Satisfied	Dissatisfied

P: Participant

The six open-ended questions asked to the participants and their answers are as follows:

1. Questions and Answers (Do you ever adjust your speech during cross-cultural interactions? If yes, how do you change your speech? Provide examples and reasons if relevant. Additionally, please address any perceived benefits or drawbacks of making these adjustments. If not, why don't you adjust your speech during cross-cultural interactions?)

Participant 1: Sometimes, speech has to be shifted to broken English and even closer to the Arabic structure for some people to comprehend. I do this both to be understood the first time and to show that I respect the other person's language level. I also need to adjust my speech to respect Oman's religious and cultural background.

Participant 2: I change my tone and register. I tend to speak in a more formal way and to focus on being more polite with less use of slang. I tend to avoid topics such as religion and politics as these are generally not topics of public discourse. When talking with Omani ladies I generally avoid overly personal questions unless they themselves have initiated this area of discussion.

Participant 3: I need to restrict what I say in order not to offend local people. I do not speak as freely here as I do with my friends in Canada. If there are people from different cultures in the environment, I am cautious about the jokes I make to avoid being misunderstood.

Participant 4: Clear voice, slower, stronger pronunciation on syllables or vowels so they will understand. Drawbacks might be they pretend to understand and say "ok", even though they really are not understanding.

Participant 5: Firstly, I will try to use some Arabic phrases such as greeting language or simply yes and no Arabic words to build rapport or comfort of non-native English speakers. Secondly, I will adjust grammar tenses, using present tense verbs for past tense. And omit articles and prepositions of ease of communication with non-native speakers. The only drawback is more for me as I have always found it more work to adjust my natural speaking language to a reduced or ' pigeon ' like speaking style.

Participant 6: I slow down when I speak. If the message is still misunderstood, then I switch to Pigeon or broken English to match the Arabic or Hindi grammar. I also use some Arabic vocabulary I picked here

Participant 7: I try to grade my language to the level of English of the speaker, especially in service situations. I want to ensure that communication is clear and easy for them, that I am not making things difficult for them by using advanced vocabulary or speaking too quickly. When speaking to friends who grew up in different cultural contexts, I try not to use too many idioms or culturally specific phrases, again to avoid creating a power imbalance between us. The only drawback is being a bit self- conscious when I'm speaking.

Participant 8: I speak more slowly and use more simple vocabulary depending on the English language level of the person. The benefit is that the person can understand better, but ideas are sometimes less complex.

Participant 9: During cross-cultural interactions, I adjust by speaking clearer and slower to enhance understanding and reduce miscommunication. This improves comprehension and communication but risks seeming condescending if overdone. When talking with someone with limited English, I simplify language by saying phrases like "what, repeat that?" or "I go store. I buy food." This ensures clearer communication and understanding. For instance, when I recently tipped a grocery delivery guy, he seemed unsure of my gesture. So, I clarified by saying, "For you, for fast delivery, thanks." making my intention clearer. In Oman, if someone isn't fluent in English, they might repeat words to get their point across. For example, instead of asking, "Do you want your car washed again?" they might just say, "Same same." This way, even with limited language skills, they can still communicate effectively. I might answer, "yes, same same."

Participant 10: I usually tend to simplify it based on the nationality being spoken to. I also tend to speak slower.

Participant 11: I slow my speech and am also aware of how my cultural expectations do not match with people from other cultures. This means that I do not speak about certain topics, such as religion or politics for fear of causing offense.

Participant 12: This will depend on the language proficiency of the person I am talking to as much as cultural factors. I will grade my language according to this, and to the function and situation of the

conversation I am having. But yes, where the person I am talking to is from will affect the interaction. If this research includes how I engage with Omanis, which I believe it does, then this will depend on their gender and age. Language will almost always play a role in my assuming a degree of deference to male and female colleagues, for example. I am likely to be more conservative in what I will say to female colleagues in particular. (I want to avoid any innuendo, or anything that could be interpreted as flirtatious). In essence, in the GCC, there is a strong sense that should you fall foul of local cultural conventions, and/or become the subject of gossip, then the consequences include being required to leave. This is true in both non-Omani's professional and social lives in my view. Also, I tend to say less than I might in other contexts. It is important to know what not to say. (Equally, it is important to know when not to write something down). I don't believe it is possible to be anything other than an ex-pat in Oman. I have lived in many countries where I was able to integrate fully into the community and am married to someone from another culture and have bi-lingual children. Making these adjustments, as indicated, from my point of view is to avoid conflict. There are no benefits or drawbacks per se of adopting behaviors; they are a requirement of being here.

Participant 13: I am, generally speaking, much politer in public and with people I don't know. I would say I do this in general, even in the US.

Participant 14: Use of graded English such as simplified vocabulary containing less syllables and a greatly reduced speed. It is required I feel to adjust speech during cross cultural interactions and I do it frequently when traveling and living abroad.

Participant 15: I incorporate Arabic words I know, especially when conversing with Omanis. This practice not only adds a friendly and warm tone to our interaction but also resonates with Omanis, making our communication more sympathetic. For instance, I often use words like 'inshallah, mashallah, alhamdulillah'.

Participant 16: I use fewer English idioms than I would otherwise, even if the other person's English level is quite good. I avoid using higher level vocabulary unless the person I am speaking to has an excellent English. I avoid certain topics and keep certain opinions to myself. I do find that most Omanis aren't as uptight as people think, so I'm not as guarded as some other people might be. I avoid mentioning I have a boyfriend with some people, and I don't express many negative opinions about the government in Oman. I avoid mentioning that I don't believe in God, though if someone asks me directly, I will usually be honest. I tend to drop my t's when speaking to native English speakers, and I do this much less when speaking with non-native speakers. I think this is very helpful in making myself clearer. Also, my accent changes a bit, it becomes closer to the accent of the person I am speaking to. This is unintentional, and I think it is a natural feature of language and our social nature. I drop a lot of Arabic words into conversation as well. This tends to be received very well.

2. Questions and Answers (Do you ever adjust your non-verbal behavior during cross-cultural interactions? (e.g., eye contact, gestures, physical proximity) If yes, how do you adjust your non-verbal behavior? Provide examples and reasons if relevant. Additionally, do you perceive any benefits or drawbacks to making these adjustments? If not, why don't you adjust your non-verbal behavior during cross-cultural interactions?)

Participant 1: I've come to appreciate the nonverbal communication elements, such as gestures, facial expressions, and exclamations, that Omanis use when speaking Arabic. I've found it beneficial to incorporate these into my conversations when necessary, showcasing my adaptability and respect for their culture.

Participant 2: Yes, I generally allow for more personal space/distance, and avoid physical contact altogether. With Omani ladies, I do not shake hands unless they offer first. While it is common in the UK to allow ladies to enter/exit a room first etc. in Oman ladies prefer to avoid a man walking directly behind them, and so prefer a man to walk ahead of them.

Participant 3: In Oman, I pay much more attention to what I wear and how I act in public. People in traffic here are very polite; getting angry or honking the horn is not tolerated even if the vehicle in front of you is going so slow that it obstructs the traffic, so I make an extra effort to act calmer in traffic.

Participant 4: Look at them, show respect with more sincerity and act less casual in body language. The benefit would be in them knowing I am showing sincerity in treating them with this respect.

Participant 5: I am very mindful or averting eye contact if the person I am interacting with seems to be doing the same. I'm mindful of appropriate physical distance within person interactions. In a work setting and in public in general, I am mindful of dress code and choice of clothing that is appropriate to the environment. Longer style tops for work environment and no low cut or revealing clothing.

Participant 6: I keep a comfortable distance when I talk to people here, especially Omani women. I shake hands with men but not with women. I find adjusting neutral.

Participant 7: When I am interacting with Arab men in certain contexts (at work with men I don't know, on the street), I try not to be overly smiley or relaxed with my body language, as I learned in Egypt that (some) men can interpret it as flirtatious and an invitation to sexual harassment. The drawback is that I am not behaving as spontaneously or authentically as I would like.

Participant 8: If language level is very low, then I sometimes point or mime in order to communicate. I try to respect cultural norms i.e. I won't expect to shake hands with an Omani woman, while I would expect to shake hands with men when I meet.

Participant 9: Yes, I adjust my non-verbal behavior during cross-cultural interactions. For instance, with Omani women, I avoid prolonged eye contact and maintain more physical space than usual. I also use modest body language and gestures, and I tend to look down more than usual. While these

adjustments show respect for cultural norms, they can create more formal relations, limiting opportunities to get to know each other well. However, they still help in ensuring smooth interactions and avoiding discomfort.

Participant 10: When talking to Arab males, I ensure that I do not shake hands till they make the first move. Maintaining a safe distance from male students and adults is also something I am conscious about. Other than that, not much.

Participant 11: I might stand closer to someone who is from another culture. Europeans and Americans tend to have wider personal space bubbles. I might gesture less, more or differently depending on who I am talking to. Eye contact can be held more or less, and also whether I stand directly in front of or beside someone.

Participant 12: Again, referring to Omani culture, I keep more distance between myself and the person I am talking to than in other contexts, again especially women. I have adopted a handshake free of any strength as a greeting. I try not to impose myself. Once again this comes down to my own perception of the need to show deference (whether or not I find the recipient to be worthy of it).

Participant 13: Not so much with men, but with women I won't shake hands unless she offers her own. Nor will I stand too close or speak alone with a woman in a private space.

Participant 14: I have used hand gestures before to emphasize or explain things such as the "ok" gesture with thumb and index finger. The X gesture with arms, a crossed chest, avoiding eye contact as it is deemed rude in some Korean contexts, sitting on a desk is considered rude and unprofessional when teaching in Korea. I feel it is essential to adjust non-verbal behavior when abroad.

Participant 15: I think Omanis are more friendly and much more positive than us Turks. When communicating with them, I smile more, have a positive attitude, and speak in a softer tone.

Participant 16: I do not hug or shake hands with Omani males. Other than that, I think my behavior is mostly the same. I tend to be very smiley and animated, and that stays the same whether I am dealing with other cultures or my own.

3. Questions and Answers (Can you recall any times when you felt particularly comfortable or uncomfortable during cross-cultural interactions? What do you think influenced these feelings?)

Participant 1: I usually feel comfortable interacting with people from various cultures as I already get to know the basic elements.

Participant 2: I generally feel comfortable as I have lived here for more than a decade, so I have no issues dealing with people in cross cultural situations

Participant 3: I felt unable to voice my concerns when I saw what I perceived as ethically and morally corrupt behavior.

Participant 4: Perhaps, the insistence of some Omani men to sit with them, have dates and coffee. Dates and coffee don't seem to appeal to me so much. Also, sometimes because some Omanis or non-Westerners really want to go to Canada, they may be extra nice to me because they view me as a possible connection.

Participant 5: In my first teaching contract and first time in Oman in 2005, Al Ghrub, I came out of a shop, and a Non-Omani expatriate (from Pakistan I think) began yelling and clearly chastising me in his language in response to my clothing I believe, Jean and a T-Shirt type top. Except for when I did a CELTA certificate in Egypt in 2004, it was one of my first experiences in a middle east country, and I was not well versed in the culture. Initially, the incident left me feeling a bit mortified at the level of verbal aggression, uncomfortable, and a bit unsafe. Fortunately, there were a couple locals (Omani) nearby and they gestured to me in a manner to communicate not to worry or be alarmed by this man's behavior. This was reassuring and helpful.

Participant 6: Because our cultural characteristics are at least partially similar, I do not remember a moment when I felt exceptionally comfortable or uncomfortable.

Participant 7: I really enjoy having friends from other cultural backgrounds, and I feel happiest when we are laughing together and it feels like we have a shared understanding of something as women, or as human beings, or across our differences. On the flip side, I tend to feel triggered when friends from other backgrounds switch to their L1 with each other when we're socializing in a group. I can feel excluded very easily. For that reason, I prefer to meet friends who share an L1 one-on-one.

Participant 8: I have a couple of examples. Firstly, when I travelled to France when I was a child. I remember trying to order food in a cafe. I waited at the counter but was ignored by the waiter. I didn't really understand but it was perhaps my lack of language skills and knowledge of the correct etiquette, which made it even more difficult to navigate. In Saudi Arabia, I went to a cultural festival in Riyadh with my sister. I had the religious police ask me to tell her to cover her hair. Legally this wasn't required, so I felt uncomfortable.

Participant 9: I've felt both comfortable and uncomfortable in cross-cultural interactions. I'm usually fine with not fully understanding cultural differences unless they directly affect me. However, showing deference to authority in other cultures often makes me very uncomfortable. Cultural differences in respect and authority can be challenging for me. In Turkish culture, respecting elders and authority figures is crucial. Unfortunately, I noticed during my time there that authority figures often made decisions without clear reasons, which bothered me. For example, employees waiting for hours for buses to drive them home from work because a manager insisted, they wait until she was ready to leave. This shows how arbitrary decisions by authority figures can impact others, who feel pressured to accept them because of cultural norms.

Participant 10: I feel particularly comfortable with my Omani female colleagues as we share a lot of similarities between our cultures. However, there have been occasions when very direct comments from our European colleagues have not been received well from the locals and I have had to step in and clear any misunderstandings.

Participant 11: I've noticed that my comfort or discomfort in cross-cultural interactions is often influenced by the clash of cultural expectations. These moments of discord arise when the expectations of one culture are not in line with those of another, leading to a sense of unease.

Participant 12: I realized that in formal meetings at a high level that in this context a meeting itself can be performative. The real negotiations happen elsewhere. On the way to this realization, I have found myself giving opinions and later understanding that no input was required or desired. I became aware on reflection that I had transgressed a cultural norm. When this happens, it is very difficult to evaluate the seriousness or not of one's actions in this context. I realize a common thread in my answers is a notion of feeling relatively disempowered. This is perhaps exacerbated by working in a military hierarchy.

Participant 13: The only time I feel uncomfortable in Oman is if I end up somewhere a bit more conservative and I'm not dressed appropriately (shorts, t shirt, etc.)

Participant 14: Shaking hands in Oman sometimes makes me feel uncomfortable. I remember particularly during Covid19 in 2020 when elbow exchanges became more common, but often felt awkward. I felt I looked strange in front of others or possibly ignorant of the culture.

Participant 15: I initially felt very uncomfortable when people I did not know smiled, said hello, or started a small conversation. I was either shying away from responding or trying to keep the interaction short, but as I lived here, I realized that this was a part of the culture, and I started to love it. For example, in the first days after I moved in, I found it very disturbing when a neighbor I met in the parking lot of my house asked me if I needed help and gave me advice about buying a car. However, now that I think about it, I understand how valuable this interaction was. I wish people and neighbors in Turkey would help each other this much.

Participant 16: Something that makes me cringe is remembering asking for the phone number of an old student of mine from England, who was now a high-ranking staff member at the university I currently work, so we could stay in touch. I asked for his number in front of his wife, who was waiting in the car, and he did give it to me. I now realize that culturally this was a big faux pas. I have also been slightly offended by males refusing to shake my hand, although I am used to that now and it's fine. I also feel that as a European (white) woman, males in Oman assume certain things about my conduct. There have been one or two occasions where I have been followed in malls or harassed while walking, in both countries. I don't smile at strange males (Omani and South Asian) anymore because they get the wrong idea. Previously I walked around smiling at everyone.

*4. Questions and Answers (**How do you use your cultural knowledge when interacting with people from other cultures? Provide examples if relevant.**)*

Participant 1: I generally pay attention to my body language and nonverbal communication expressions, such as gestures and facial expressions.

Participant 2: I think it's largely subconscious, in that you have an awareness of how to react and what to say or not to say and what the boundaries of behavior are. I don't find it any different to dealing with interactions in my own culture.

Participant 3: While living in Oman, I pay attention to how I speak. For example, I use different expressions and give extra examples for better understanding. I work with people from different cultures and always try to find common ground. For example, if someone is from India, I ask which city they are from, list the cities I know or have been to in India, and try to find a common thread. This helps break the ice, and I gain sympathy by showing interest in their culture.

Participant 4: I think humor is essential, and being lighthearted, but also always greeting with Salam Alaikum modestly. It's all about gentle respect here. If you present your case with a real sincere respect and don't raise your voice or feel entitled (which they would pick up), the people tend to treat you much better.

Participant 5: To adjust behaviour or speaking style for the comfort of other people and ease of communication. To speak in a quieter or composed manner in public places.

Participant 6: I generally observe how the locals interact with each other. Then I interact with people in a similar manner.

Participant 7: Having lived in Egypt, Turkey, and Oman since 2011, I feel familiar with how to carry myself and speak conservatively in Muslim societies. For example, I don't usually try to shake hands with anyone, especially men. I can speak a little Arabic and know the standard greetings. I also try to adjust my expectations around time. For example, to me, Omanis do everything in a very leisurely fashion, whereas I have been socialized to want to do everything as quickly and efficiently as possible (e.g. paying for something at a checkout counter). I try to remind myself to be patient.

Participant 8: When I greet people, it can make a difference i.e. kiss on cheek, shaking hands, hug or none of the above. I try not to discuss taboo topics, especially religion and politics.

Participant 9: In cross-cultural interactions, I rely on my cultural knowledge to understand and respect differences. For instance, in cultures where showing deference to authority is important, like in Turkey, I adjust my behavior to demonstrate respect, even if it makes me uncomfortable. This adaptation helps ensure smoother interactions and avoids problems related to cultural misunderstandings and differences.

Participant 10: As a leader, to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. 2. To be a role model and show others that direct criticism from others is not an attack on my professionalism or questioning my knowledge - but rather an opportunity for discussion. 3. I approach different members of the team in a different manner - for some it can be a casual brainstorming session over coffee while others prefer it official and over emails.

Participant 11: I am now working in a country where one culture is dominant. There are other cultures here, but in service roles. I try to be polite, friendly but distant with people who come from other countries because there are sometimes misunderstandings and power differentials between people.

Participant 12: I don't know that 'cultural knowledge' is something this discrete from our broader individual personalities and our awareness of our situation when talking to anyone, including from the culture we ourselves are from. In fact, I think the term 'cultural knowledge' needs some definition for me. Again, here in Oman, there are topics I would avoid such as gender rights, homosexuality, freedom of speech, human trafficking, racism, bigotry and so on. I may actively want to discuss these topics elsewhere, though this is because I perceive the world as moving to the right, which is contrary to my own personal values. 'Cultural knowledge' would inform where it is prudent to express liberal values, but that would apply anywhere. It would not be specific to a culture, but to sub-cultures.

Participant 13: Knowing what to say/do and not to say/do makes interacting with people a much smoother process. My understanding of Arab cultures has made interactions here easy and enjoyable.

Participant 14: I use these forms of knowledge to avoid significant embarrassment in social settings. For example, sticking chopsticks straight into a bowl of rice (indicates incense sticks at a funeral) writing names in red. Both Korean contexts.

Participant 15: When with people from different cultures, I ask questions or start a conversation about foods I know, special occasions, or cities or people. For example, when talking to Omanis, they ask questions such as "How do you make halwa," "What do you put in it," and "On which special occasions do you consume it the most." Alternatively, praising the revolutions made by Sultan Qaboos in the country is a subject I frequently use in cultural interactions, as he is a trendy figure in Oman.

Participant 16: I am quite knowledgeable about Omani culture compared to my colleagues, I would say. I mostly use this in class with my students, where I can see they really appreciate the fact that I know so much about their foods, their customs and their language. I can also use Omani memes and jokes in class, which often makes the students laugh. I would say it definitely improves interactions with Omani people. Several Omani teachers have complimented me on it, so it is definitely a good thing. I have also used the knowledge to make learning resources more relevant, which makes them much more interesting to the students.

5. Questions and Answers (*What parts of other cultures interest you the most? Is there a reason or experience behind your interest in these areas?*)

Participant 1: The allure of different countries' perspectives on events, their behavior, and especially their unique stance towards life, has always captivated me. It's like stepping into a new world, a world that is different from mine, yet so intriguingly familiar.

Participant 2: The history of other cultures, particularly Omani culture, has a profound impact on me. The way they respect and understand each other, creating an environment of comfort, is something I deeply admire.

Participant 3: Different cultures' music, cuisine, and literature interest me the most.

Participant 4: Their familial loyalty. They include everyone. Students in my class, for example, help each other as if there is no difference between a brother and student, it's quite built in.

Participant 5: In terms of Oman and interested in living and working there on and off since 2005, the measure of public safety and societal civility is of interest. In fact, after three straight years in Oman from November 2019- July 2022 during a teaching contract, I actually found and still find sometimes, adjusting to difficulties with the society in my own home country. Crime, loud aggressive people and behavior, rudeness, people now. Bringing their dogs to the workplace under the guise of " diversity and inclusion" is a problem for me. It makes me want to leave and return to Oman. I like how the Omani people and culture value composed behavior in public and during their interactions.

Participant 6: Locals generally avoid confrontations either in private or public. I find this interesting. If there is an issue with someone, my colleagues try to speak to their friend rather than to the person himself.

Participant 7: Growing up as a little white girl in Canada, I didn't feel like I had a "culture." I was jealous of every nationality that did. Now my ideas have changed, and I think of white or Western culture as being driven by consumerism and individualism. From my perspective, the whole world would benefit if we embraced and celebrated traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems, land-based practices, and artistic traditions. I also think the Western perspective has become the hegemonic way of viewing the world, and so I have a keen interest in hearing the perspectives of people whose experiences fall outside the dominant paradigm.

Participant 8: I'm interested in the history and art of other cultures, because this is something that interests me about my own culture. I studied history at university.

Participant 9: What interests me about other cultures is how concepts differ from one language to another and from one culture to another. This curiosity stems from my experiences in cross-cultural interactions, where I've observed varying interpretations of ideas and behaviors. However, I also find

intrigue in cultures that remain unfamiliar to me. This lack of full understanding allows me to approach them without feeling pressured by preconceived notions or expectations.

Participant 10: I find how people greet each other in different places interesting. Whether it's a handshake, a bow, or a kiss on the cheek. But I usually stick to what I know. Like in Oman, they do handshakes, but men and women don't shake hands with each other here.

Participant 11: The food, the art, the literature and the films. Sometimes to a lesser degree the languages but non-European, non-German and non-Romance languages can be difficult to acquire. Gendered behavior and expectations are interesting, as well as how other cultures interact with immigrants and people providing services. Often the power differential leads to interesting dynamics and beliefs.

Participant 12: I am interested in how cultures function at a community level, if they do. This interest was piqued when I moved to Greece as a young adult and found it a far more functional country than the UK on a human level, rather than metrics such as infrastructure, GDP etc. Governments often work against the interests of the community whether by design or default. When I moved to Germany, I was told there was no class system, and it's true. This is very hard for an English national to get their head around as it is so ingrained. I like to critically appraise the country I am from based on what I see elsewhere.

Participant 13: Food! My in-laws own a restaurant, and they really got me into the joy of food and travel.

Participant 14: I find customs to be particularly interesting because of my love of travel and photography. I like to capture moments when I travel that express a culture in practice.

Participant 15: I am most interested in how people communicate with each other and with me, that is, with foreigners, because it gives many clues about what the people of that country are like. Food, or food culture in general, is again exciting because the food culture of many countries is as different as ours, and some are much richer than ours. Other aspects that interest me are the language spoken and the special day celebrations I witnessed.

Participant 16: Mostly I am interested in language. I am very enthusiastic about learning new languages, especially when I first arrive in a new country. I also like trying new food. Omani food is nice, but there isn't much variety, and it tends to be quite heavy.

6. Questions and Answers (*What aspects of living in an unfamiliar culture do you find interesting or challenging?*)

Participant 1: I find it interesting to explore new worlds. Differences in the education system and academic life can sometimes be challenging.

Participant 2: It is always interesting to learn about an unfamiliar culture. The language is always challenging, and I am aware that without learning more Arabic, I will not progress much further in my understanding of the culture

Participant 3: I need to know the moral rules. The most exciting thing about living in a culture I do not dominate is discovering the weird and different aspects of people. For example, in Oman, men hang out only with men, women hang out only with women, or male workers from Asian countries hold hands in public places. Even though I am still trying to understand why this is the case, I find it interesting.

Participant 4: Interesting, maybe how Omani's know how to relax much more than my culture, have stronger faith in how things will turn out, are very patient and understanding (not trying to dominate), and do things more as a group or family. In terms of challenging, maybe the conservative refrain from being silly or less dignified (letting loose more so in the West) can sometimes make one long for a change. The lack of females in a more dominant male society as well.

Participant 5: Having grown up in a western country, Canada, that can sometimes be fast paced, I sometimes have struggled with the slower pace of processes in Oman.

Participant 6: I avoid using hand gestures as certain gestures might mean totally different than intended to mean or even be offensive.

Participant 7: I like the feeling of being part of a community and outside of it at the same time. I am privileged to not be held to the same expectations as a local would be, from a family or social perspective. I like living in an unfamiliar culture because it is full of new stimuli, even after years. There is always something surprising or different if I look for it. I feel like I learn a lot by being slightly outside of my comfort zone.

Participant 8: I think that the language barrier and different cultural references sometimes means that humor doesn't always translate well. I also worry about misunderstandings which may be seen to be as rude. This can be challenging. For example, I remember meeting a student's parent accidently at Wadi Shab and being offered to go and sit and drink tea. I was with friends, and we were going to the beach, so I politely refused. When I came back to college, the student seemed upset and in retrospect I hadn't realized that I was being very impolite by refusing an invitation.

Participant 9: Adjusting to different social norms and cultural expectations that I am aware of is not especially challenging for me, and I sometimes find it interesting. However, bureaucratic rules and

regulations, which vary widely across cultures, can present tedious obstacles and complexities in everyday tasks and interactions, such as obtaining a driver's license, work permit, or having utility bills put into your name. Additionally, there can be discomfort in not knowing if these tasks are being done correctly.

Participant 10: I can count the language barrier as a difficulty. Knowing the do's and don'ts when communicating with Omanis and knowing business ethics are also important to avoid difficulties.

Participant 11: Sometimes I think I am not really living in another culture as the interplay between the immigrants and host nation is very much at a distance. I don't have friends that are from the host nation as I work a lot and don't have time to interact. The topics at a fundamental level, politically and religiously are difficult or impossible to talk about without causing offense so it is better to not say anything. There seems to be an incompatibility despite the host nation's degree of tolerance for other cultures and peoples.

Participant 12: I have lived outside the UK for 29 years in a dozen countries. This has been a challenging but rewarding way to live. However, I do feel an internal conflict between my own values and those of countries that do not observe basic human rights. I am sometimes ashamed of what I turn a blind eye to for my own family to live well.

Participant 13: Again, food. I like to eat everything local no matter how off-putting it may seem. I find the language challenging whenever I travel to more rural places both in Oman and outside of the country.

Participant 14: Social norms can be challenging for me, especially because they are things that should not be questioned or explained.

Participant 15: At first, everything is challenging because you are not in the environment you are used to. However, everything is also very interesting because it is always different from what you know. The more time you spend, the less challenging things become. For example, it was annoying at first that things were going so slowly here, but now that it's become something I'm used to, it's no longer a challenge for me.

Participant 16: What I find interesting is that the more you master the language, the better you understand the culture. Explaining oneself and one's life in one's native language is not the same as telling it in a language one has learned later. As I learn this new language, I understand myself and the way I understand and live my own culture better. The difficult thing is to adapt to different gender roles, especially when living in a conservative culture.

CONCLUSION

Considering that out of the 16 expatriate teachers living in Oman, a country with a culture different from their own, seven had worked in other countries for one to five years, and six had more than five years of work experience abroad before moving to Oman, it is evident that previous expatriate experience, multicultural identity, cultural awareness, social networks, and intercultural competence facilitated their adjustment to and understanding of the culture. Detailed examples of the three aspects of expatriate adjustment—work role, interaction with host country national employees, and daily life—were gathered based on Black's (1988) daily life adjustment scale.

All paticipants tried to speak English, the common language used to facilitate communication and understanding, more straightforwardly, slowly, and comprehensively, adjusting their language level according to the person with whom they were communicating.

They also mentioned adapting their non-verbal behaviors to align with the culture, using gestures and expressions considered appropriate in Omani culture. Specifically, they avoided shaking hands with the opposite gender and ensured sufficient personal space. Additionally, they modified behaviors natural in their own cultures, such as speaking loudly in public and honking in traffic when angry, as these are not well received in Omani culture.Participants initially felt uncomfortable due to a lack of knowledge about unwritten cultural rules, such as not refusing offers of food or drink, non-verbal behavior norms like not shaking hands with the opposite gender, dress codes, and different work practices. However, over time, they understood and adapted to these aspects, feeling more comfortable as they interpreted them as part of the culture.

Aligned with the view that familiarity, comfort, and expertise regarding expected behaviors and assumptions in the new culture led to cultural adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1990, p. 118), participants stated that understanding unique cultural aspects, such as the importance of politeness and respect, the slower pace of life and work, and avoiding taboo topics, facilitated their adjustment and made life easier in Oman.

Notably, a significant number of participants, 13 to be precise, expressed satisfaction with their lives in Oman, with 12 being content with their jobs. What's more, all of them had been working in Oman for more than four years. This data lends support to the idea that the longer expatriates spend in a new culture, the better they adjust to their jobs (Caligiuri 2000). Furthermore, the participants' responses echo Lueke and Svyantek's (2000) assertion that job and responsibility adjustment, comfort in interactions with managers and colleagues, and ease in various aspects of Omani culture are all positively linked to their satisfaction with their stay in the country.

The fact that 13 participants had one to five years or more of work experience in a culture other than their own is a significant finding. It supports the view that those with prior experience in similar or different cultures tend to exhibit similar levels of satisfaction with their current assignments (Palthe, 2004). This underscores the importance of pre-departure training and preparation for expatriates, as it equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate new cultural environments.

In line with the final stage of Oberg's (1960) theory, as the expatriates in the study spent more time living in the new culture, their initial anxiety levels decreased, and they began to accept the rules and traditions of Omani culture as part of a different way of life. Considering that the 16 expatriate teachers in the study had been living in the country for more than four years, it is observed that they moved beyond merely tolerating the traditions and started enjoying the food, customs, and traditions of the new culture.

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