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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Intercultural Workplace Interactions of Indonesian Expatriates in a Multicultural and Multinational Environment in Qatar

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ABSTRACT
This study explores the intercultural workplace adaptation experiences of Indonesian professional expatriates in Qatar, focusing on the challenges encountered during their first year of employment and the perceived factors supporting adjustment in a multinational work environment. The study employed a qualitative approach using open-ended questionnaires completed by 35 Indonesian professional expatriates working across different industries in Qatar. Responses were examined through thematic coding and interpreted with reference to intercultural communication and expatriate adjustment literature. Hofstede's, Hall's, and Lewis's cultural frameworks were used as supplementary interpretive perspectives. The findings indicate that participants reported challenges involving workplace communication, language proficiency, unfamiliar interaction norms, and psychological adjustment. Previous intercultural exposure was frequently reported among participants who described relatively easier adjustment. Social relationships, professional experience, and access to practical information also emerged as relevant adjustment resources. Although cultural frameworks provided contextual insights, the findings suggest that shared national-level cultural characteristics do not necessarily translate into similar workplace experiences within multinational settings. The study provides context-specific qualitative insights into Indonesian professional expatriates' workplace adaptation in Qatar. It highlights the relevance of prior intercultural exposure and accessible support resources while identifying areas for further investigation into expatriate adjustment and institutionally supported orientation initiatives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

International labour mobility has increased the importance of intercultural competence and workplace adjustment in contemporary multinational organizations. Professionals undertaking international assignments frequently encounter unfamiliar communication practices, organizational expectations, social relationships, and working environments. These differences may create adjustment challenges, particularly during the initial period of employment in a host country. Expatriate adjustment therefore involves more than adapting to national cultural differences; it also requires individuals to develop effective working relationships, understand organizational practices, and respond to the demands of culturally diverse workplaces (Black et al., 1991).

Qatar provides a relevant context for examining these challenges because its labour market comprises employees from diverse national, linguistic, and professional backgrounds. Indonesian professional expatriates working in Qatar interact not only with Qatari nationals but also with colleagues, supervisors, clients, and other stakeholders representing different cultural and organizational environments. Such interactions require expatriates to negotiate differences in communication styles, professional expectations, workplace relationships, and social practices. Consequently, adjustment difficulties cannot be understood solely through comparisons between Indonesian and Qatari national cultures. They must also be examined within the broader multinational and organizational contexts in which expatriates perform their professional responsibilities.

Previous research has established that international adjustment involves interconnected dimensions of work adjustment, interaction adjustment, and general adjustment (Black et al., 1991). These dimensions are influenced by individual capabilities and contextual resources. Cross-cultural preparation can facilitate adjustment by improving individuals' understanding of unfamiliar environments and expectations (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Intercultural competence, including openness, adaptability, communication skills, and the ability to interpret unfamiliar cultural practices, also provides an important foundation for effective interactions across cultural boundaries (Deardorff, 2006). Moreover, language proficiency and social support have been identified as relevant factors in expatriate adjustment (Filipič Sterle et al., 2018; Selmer & Lauring, 2015). Recent research further highlights the relationships among language proficiency, host-country-national support, and expatriate adjustment (Bayraktar et al., 2026).

Despite these contributions, expatriate adjustment remains context-dependent because professionals encounter different combinations of individual, organizational, and social conditions across international assignments. Existing theoretical perspectives provide useful explanations of adjustment processes, but their application requires attention to how expatriates experience and interpret specific workplace situations. In particular, the experiences of Indonesian professional expatriates operating within Qatar's multinational workplaces provide an opportunity to examine how prior intercultural exposure, communication capabilities, and support relationships are perceived to shape early workplace adjustment. Rather than treating national cultural characteristics as sufficient explanations, this study focuses on participants' reported experiences and the resources they identify as relevant to adaptation.

The relevance of this issue was initially explored through an exploratory questionnaire administered to 12 Indonesian professional expatriates in Qatar between April 28 and May 7, 2025. The questionnaire contained eight open-ended questions designed to identify experiences related to culture shock and early workplace adaptation. Participants described varying degrees of discomfort, stress, communication difficulties, misunderstandings, and changes in interaction patterns during their first year of employment. Some respondents also identified colleagues,

friends, family members, and experienced Indonesian expatriates as important sources of assistance. Although these preliminary observations cannot establish the prevalence of adjustment difficulties among all Indonesian expatriates in Qatar, they provided an empirical basis for investigating the experiences and perceived challenges of this particular professional group.

Intercultural communication theories offer additional perspectives for interpreting these experiences. Hofstede et al. (2010) emphasize differences in cultural values, Hall (1989) examines the role of contextual information in communication, and Lewis (2006) discusses variations in interpersonal communication and interaction practices. These frameworks can provide background for understanding culturally diverse encounters. However, national-level cultural characteristics should not be interpreted as direct measures of individual behaviour. Accordingly, the present study uses these perspectives as contextual interpretive resources while emphasizing expatriate adjustment, intercultural competence, and social support as more directly relevant concepts for understanding participants' reported experiences.

From an international human resource management perspective, understanding early expatriate adjustment is relevant to the management of international assignments and employee support. Difficulties in workplace communication, understanding organizational expectations, and establishing professional relationships may complicate expatriates' initial integration into multinational organizations. Conversely, previous intercultural experience, effective communication capabilities, and access to trusted professional or community networks may provide resources for managing unfamiliar working conditions. Examining these experiences can inform discussions about expatriate preparation, organizational orientation, and employee support practices. However, the present study does not directly measure employee productivity, retention, or organizational performance, and therefore does not seek to establish the effects of intercultural adjustment on these outcomes.

Against this background, the study addresses two research questions:

RQ1: What intercultural workplace adjustment challenges do Indonesian professional expatriates report during their first year of employment in Qatar, and what factors do they perceive as contributing to these challenges?

RQ2: What coping strategies and sources of individual, organizational, and community support do Indonesian professional expatriates identify as relevant to managing these adjustment challenges?

To address these questions, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on open-ended questionnaire responses from 35 Indonesian professional expatriates working in different industries in Qatar. The analysis explores participants' accounts of intercultural workplace interaction, adjustment difficulties, previous intercultural experiences, communication practices, coping strategies, and perceived support needs.

The study aims to contribute to expatriate adjustment research in three ways. First, it provides context-specific qualitative evidence concerning the early workplace experiences of Indonesian professional expatriates in Qatar's multinational employment

environment. Second, it examines how participants perceive the relevance of previous intercultural exposure, communication capabilities, and social relationships to their adjustment experiences. Third, it identifies practical support needs that may inform the development of expatriate orientation and diaspora-based assistance initiatives. These contributions are exploratory and interpretive rather than causal, and the proposed support initiatives are presented as potential areas for future development and evaluation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Expatriate Adjustment in Multinational Workplaces

Expatriate adjustment is an important aspect of international human resource management, particularly in multinational organizations where employees encounter unfamiliar professional, social, and cultural environments. Black et al. (1991) conceptualized expatriate adjustment through three interrelated dimensions: work adjustment, interaction adjustment, and general adjustment. These dimensions explain how expatriates adapt to job responsibilities, interpersonal relationships, and everyday living conditions in host countries.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that expatriate adjustment is shaped by multiple individual and contextual factors. Baneviciene et al. (2024), through a systematic review of 222 studies, identified the importance of individual, organizational, and country-related conditions in international employee adjustment. Similarly, Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al. (2024) highlighted the relevance of person–environment fit in explaining expatriate adjustment across different institutional contexts. Cross-cultural preparation may also facilitate adjustment by helping expatriates understand unfamiliar workplace expectations (Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

In Qatar, Indonesian professional expatriates interact with colleagues representing different nationalities, organizational practices, and occupational backgrounds. Consequently, adjustment cannot be explained exclusively through differences between Indonesian and Qatari national cultures. A multidimensional perspective is necessary to understand the professional, interpersonal, and environmental challenges experienced during their first year of employment.

2.2. Intercultural Competence and Previous International Experience

Intercultural competence refers to the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Deardorff (2006) conceptualized intercultural competence through attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behavioral outcomes, including openness, adaptability, cultural awareness, and effective communication.

Cultural intelligence provides a related perspective on individuals' capabilities in culturally diverse environments. Toumi and Su (2025), in a systematic review of 102 studies, identified expatriate adjustment, knowledge transfer, satisfaction, and

performance as major research themes associated with cultural intelligence. Furthermore, Lei et al. (2025) demonstrated the relevance of examining configurations of individual and contextual conditions when assessing cultural intelligence and cross-cultural work adjustment.

Previous international experience may provide opportunities for developing intercultural awareness and familiarity with different professional practices. However, previous exposure should not automatically be equated with intercultural competence, as its value may depend on the nature and quality of earlier interactions (Deardorff, 2006; Toumi & Su, 2025).

For Indonesian expatriates in Qatar, previous intercultural experience represents a potentially relevant resource for navigating unfamiliar workplace interactions. This study therefore examines how participants perceive the role of earlier international or intercultural experiences in their adjustment, rather than assuming a predetermined causal relationship.

2.3. Language Proficiency and Workplace Communication

Language proficiency is an important resource in expatriate adjustment because communication supports understanding of workplace expectations, professional collaboration, and interpersonal relationships. Selmer and Lauring (2015) identified host-country language ability as relevant to expatriate adjustment, while Varma et al. (2023) examined how language-related experiences, coping mechanisms, and support resources influence expatriate professionals' adjustment.

Bayraktar et al. (2026) further demonstrated that host-country language proficiency was positively associated with work, interaction, and general adjustment through social support from host-country nationals. Their findings highlight the interrelationship between language capabilities and interpersonal networks.

Communication challenges in multinational workplaces are not necessarily limited to differences in national languages. They may also involve varying English proficiency, professional terminology, communication expectations, and organizational practices (Varma et al., 2023; Bayraktar et al., 2026). Consequently, language-related difficulties should not automatically be attributed to national cultural characteristics.

In Qatar's multicultural workplace environment, Indonesian expatriates may interact with supervisors and colleagues from numerous linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Language proficiency and intercultural communication capabilities therefore provide relevant perspectives for interpreting reported misunderstandings, communication difficulties, and adjustment experiences.

2.4. Social and Organizational Support

Social and organizational support represent important resources during international assignments. Expatriates may obtain professional guidance, practical information, and emotional assistance from supervisors, colleagues, family members, and expatriate communities.

Carraher et al. (2008) identified relationships between mentoring and expatriate career outcomes, while Filipič Sterle et al. (2018) examined the relevance of social support to adjustment and psychological distress. More recently, Mahajan and Hassan (2024) demonstrated that expatriate advice-seeking from host-country nationals interacts with perceived organizational support and the social costs associated with seeking assistance. Similarly, Bayraktar et al. (2026) highlighted the role of host-country-national support in expatriate adjustment.

These studies suggest that adjustment resources depend not only on the availability of social relationships but also on their accessibility and perceived usefulness. Furthermore, organizational support, host-country-national support, and diaspora-based assistance should be distinguished because they originate from different relationships and institutional contexts.

For Indonesian expatriates in Qatar, professional colleagues, experienced expatriates, Indonesian community networks, and institutional actors may represent potential sources of support. However, their effectiveness cannot be assumed without empirical evidence. Accordingly, this study examines participants' reported support experiences and perceived needs rather than evaluating the effectiveness of particular institutions.

2.5. Cultural Frameworks as Supplementary Perspectives

Traditional cultural frameworks provide useful contextual perspectives for understanding intercultural interactions. Hofstede et al. (2010) proposed cultural dimensions such as power distance, long-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. Hall (1989) emphasized differences between high-context and low-context communication, while Lewis (2006) distinguished linear-active, multi-active, and reactive interaction orientations.

Although these frameworks offer insights into cultural values and communication practices, national-level cultural characteristics should not be interpreted as direct explanations of individual behavior. For example, expatriates' persistence, communication hesitation, or reliance on interpersonal networks may also reflect personal experience, organizational expectations, and professional circumstances.

Contemporary research increasingly emphasizes individual competencies and contextual influences rather than relying exclusively on national cultural classifications (Baneviciene et al., 2024; Toumi & Su, 2025; Lei et al., 2025). Accordingly, Hofstede's, Hall's, and Lewis's frameworks are retained as supplementary interpretive perspectives. Their application is limited to situations where participants' responses provide relevant evidence of cultural or communication-related experiences.

2.6. Conceptual Framework and Research Gap

The literature indicates that expatriate adjustment involves interactions among individual capabilities, interpersonal resources, and workplace conditions. Black et al. (1991) provide the foundational multidimensional adjustment framework, while recent research

highlights the relevance of intercultural competence, language proficiency, and social support (Baneviciene et al., 2024; Toumi & Su, 2025; Bayraktar et al., 2026).

Based on these perspectives, the present study considers three interconnected domains: (1) individual experiential resources, including previous intercultural exposure and competence; (2) communication capabilities, including language proficiency and workplace interaction; and (3) social and organizational resources, including professional relationships, diaspora networks, and institutional support.

Although these factors have been examined in expatriate research, understanding their perceived relevance within specific multinational workplace environments remains important. Existing studies also demonstrate opportunities for further context-sensitive qualitative investigations that complement predominantly quantitative adjustment research (Baneviciene et al., 2024; Toumi & Su, 2025).

This study addresses these issues by examining Indonesian professional expatriates' reported experiences during their first year of employment in Qatar. It focuses on adjustment challenges, previous intercultural experiences, communication practices, coping strategies, and perceived support needs. The proposed framework guides qualitative interpretation without assuming causal relationships or treating national cultural classifications as determinants of individual adjustment.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the intercultural workplace adjustment experiences of Indonesian professional expatriates in Qatar, particularly during their first year of employment. An exploratory questionnaire involving 12 Indonesian expatriates was initially conducted between April 28 and May 7, 2025, to identify preliminary adjustment challenges and inform the research objectives. The main data collection was subsequently conducted between November 19 and 26, 2025, involving 35 Indonesian professional expatriates from various industries, including oil and gas, aviation, telecommunications, banking, hospitality, and government-related organizations. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling based on their Indonesian nationality, professional employment, and experience working in Qatar. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires administered in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate participants' understanding and expression of their experiences. The questionnaire examined workplace interactions, communication challenges, adaptation experiences, coping strategies, and perceived support needs. Follow-up probing was conducted when responses required clarification. The participants represented different occupational levels and professional backgrounds, although the sampling approach was not intended to produce statistically representative findings.

The collected responses were examined through thematic coding involving familiarization with the data, identification of initial codes, grouping of related codes into themes, and interpretation of recurring patterns in relation to the research objectives. The original analysis mapped identified themes to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's communication framework, and Lewis's cultural model, while expatriate adjustment and

intercultural competence literature provided additional conceptual perspectives (Black et al., 1991; Deardorff, 2006). SWOT analysis was subsequently employed to organize perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with expatriate adjustment and support needs. The emergence of new themes was monitored across successive respondent batches, with the original analysis reporting no additional themes from the final two participants. However, verification of thematic saturation requires transparent documentation of the base size, run length, and new-information threshold (Guest et al., 2020). Follow-up probing and within-participant comparisons were used to clarify responses rather than establish independent-source triangulation. Findings were interpreted within the limitations of self-reported data and retrospective accounts. Ethical reporting, including informed consent, confidentiality safeguards, and researcher reflexivity, requires confirmation of the procedures implemented during data collection.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Participant Characteristics and Workplace Adjustment Experiences

The study examined the intercultural workplace adjustment experiences of 35 Indonesian professional expatriates working across several industries in Qatar, including oil and gas, aviation, telecommunications, banking, hospitality, and government-related organizations. Participants represented different occupational levels, although the sample was concentrated in the oil and gas sector. This composition is relevant because expatriate adjustment may vary according to organizational practices, professional responsibilities, and workplace conditions. Baneviciene et al. (2024) emphasized the multidimensional nature of international employee adjustment, while Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of person–environment fit.

The findings revealed varying adjustment experiences during participants' first year of employment. Reported challenges included unfamiliar communication practices, language barriers, psychological pressure, differences in professional expectations, and limited access to practical information. These experiences indicate that expatriate adjustment cannot be explained exclusively through national cultural differences.

Table 1. Descriptive Summary of Selected Empirical Findings

Empirical indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Participants in the main study	35	100%
Participants reporting relatively easy first-year adjustment	15	42.9%
Participants within the easy-adjustment subgroup reporting prior overseas work experience	11/15	73.3%
Participants within that subgroup reporting prior experience with foreigners or living abroad	2/15	13.3%
Participants reporting adaptation without external assistance	3/35	8.6%
Participants reporting negative workplace perceptions	3/35	8.6%

As shown in Table 1, 15 participants described their first-year adjustment as relatively easy. This demonstrates variation in adjustment experiences and suggests that international assignments may involve different combinations of individual and

contextual challenges. The remaining participants should not automatically be categorized as experiencing unsuccessful adjustment.

These observations are consistent with Black et al.'s (1991) multidimensional framework, which distinguishes work, interaction, and general adjustment. Recent research similarly indicates that expatriate adjustment involves complex combinations of personal capabilities and environmental conditions rather than uniform adaptation patterns (Lei et al., 2025). The present findings therefore support a context-sensitive interpretation of early expatriate adjustment.

An important observation from the descriptive findings is the variation in participants' reported adjustment experiences. Although the study initially focused on culture shock during the first year of employment, the responses indicate that adjustment difficulties were not experienced uniformly. The 15 participants who described relatively easy adaptation demonstrate that first-year international employment does not necessarily involve severe adjustment challenges for every expatriate. Nevertheless, the remaining participants cannot be classified into a single category of unsuccessful adjustment without further examination of their individual responses.

This variation is theoretically relevant because expatriate adjustment involves multiple dimensions that may develop differently within the same individual. Black et al. (1991) distinguished between work adjustment, interaction adjustment, and general adjustment, suggesting that familiarity with professional responsibilities does not necessarily imply comparable familiarity with interpersonal relationships or everyday living conditions. Similarly, Baneviciene et al. (2024) identified the continuing importance of multidimensional and context-sensitive approaches in international employee adjustment research.

In the present study, this distinction provides a useful basis for understanding why professional competence and adjustment difficulties may coexist. Indonesian expatriates may possess the technical expertise required for international employment while still encountering unfamiliar communication practices, organizational expectations, or social environments. Accordingly, the analysis suggests that adjustment should be approached as a multidimensional experience rather than a single indicator of successful or unsuccessful adaptation.

This interpretation also requires consideration of the occupational composition of the sample. Participants worked across several industries, but their concentration in oil and gas may have influenced the professional experiences represented. Since organizational procedures and workplace expectations differ across sectors, the findings should be interpreted within the sampled professional contexts rather than generalized to all Indonesian workers in Qatar.

4.2. Major Themes of Intercultural Workplace Adjustment

The thematic analysis identified several interconnected dimensions of intercultural adjustment. These included communication challenges, previous intercultural exposure,

psychological and behavioral adjustment, social support, and access to practical information. Table 2 summarizes these themes and their relationships with the conceptual framework.

Table 2. Major Themes Identified in Indonesian Expatriates' Adjustment Experiences

Theme	Empirical evidence reported in the manuscript	Conceptual interpretation
Communication challenges	Language barriers, misunderstandings, and difficulties interpreting workplace interactions	Language proficiency and interaction adjustment
Previous intercultural exposure	Prior overseas employment or interaction with foreigners among respondents reporting easier adjustment	Intercultural experience and competence
Psychological adjustment	Reported challenges involving confidence, mental resilience, and emotional responses	Individual adjustment resources
Social and community support	Assistance from colleagues, family, friends, and expatriate networks	Social support and expatriate adjustment
Workplace perceptions	Reports of positive professional attributes alongside minority experiences of negative perceptions	Organizational context and workplace inclusion
Institutional information needs	Reported expectations concerning accessible information and orientation	Practical and institutional support resources

Communication challenges constituted an important dimension of participants' experiences. Working within multinational organizations required expatriates to interpret unfamiliar professional expectations and interact with colleagues possessing different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Such differences may complicate communication, particularly when employees have varying language proficiency or expectations concerning directness and clarification.

Varma et al. (2023) identified language nuances, coping mechanisms, and support as important dimensions of expatriate adjustment. Bayraktar et al. (2026) further demonstrated that host-country language proficiency was positively associated with adjustment through social support from host-country nationals. Their findings suggest that communication capabilities and interpersonal relationships are interconnected aspects of international workplace adaptation.

These studies provide a useful basis for interpreting the reported communication challenges among Indonesian expatriates in Qatar. However, Qatar's multinational workplaces involve individuals from multiple national backgrounds, meaning that communication difficulties should not be attributed solely to differences between Indonesian and Qatari cultures.

Hall's (1989) high-context communication framework offers a supplementary perspective on implicit meanings and contextual expectations. Nevertheless, national cultural characteristics cannot independently explain individual behavior. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes the importance of individual competencies, contextual conditions, and workplace interactions in understanding expatriate adjustment (Baneviciene et al., 2024; Lei et al., 2025).

The communication-related findings also raise an important analytical distinction between national cultural differences and the everyday communication practices of multinational workplaces. Although the original study compared Indonesian and Qatari cultural characteristics, the participants' working environments involved interactions

among employees from various nationalities. Consequently, communication difficulties may emerge even when employees share similar national-level cultural orientations, because they do not necessarily share the same organizational expectations, professional experiences, or linguistic capabilities.

Hall's (1989) high-context communication framework offers a perspective on the importance of implicit meanings, interpersonal relationships, and contextual information. However, interpreting reported misunderstandings exclusively through high-context communication may overlook other explanations. For example, hesitation to request clarification may reflect uncertainty about professional hierarchy, limited confidence in the working language, or unfamiliarity with organizational communication procedures. These explanations cannot be distinguished conclusively without more detailed participant-level evidence.

The findings therefore warrant interpretation alongside contemporary language-related expatriate research. Varma et al. (2023) examined how language-related experiences influence expatriate professionals' adjustment, while Bayraktar et al. (2026) demonstrated the relationship between host-country language proficiency, host-country-national support, and expatriate adjustment. These studies highlight the importance of understanding communication as both an individual capability and an interpersonal process.

For Indonesian professionals in Qatar, the implications extend beyond knowledge of national cultural practices. Effective workplace interaction may require the ability to interpret instructions, communicate uncertainty, understand professional expectations, and maintain relationships across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The reported challenges thus support examining communication readiness within the broader organizational setting.

This perspective also reduces the risk of attributing individual behavior to fixed national cultural characteristics. Hofstede's dimensions and Lewis's cultural orientations remain useful contextual references, but the observed experiences require explanations that acknowledge professional diversity and individual variation.

4.3. Previous Intercultural Experience and Psychological Adjustment

Previous intercultural exposure emerged as a potentially important resource among participants who reported relatively easier adjustment. Of the 15 respondents in this subgroup, 11 reported previous overseas working experience, while two described earlier experience working with foreigners or living abroad.

These findings suggest that prior exposure to multicultural environments may provide opportunities to develop familiarity with unfamiliar professional expectations, communication practices, and interpersonal situations. However, the descriptive results do not establish that previous experience directly caused successful adjustment.

Deardorff (2006) conceptualized intercultural competence through attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behavioral outcomes, including openness, adaptability, and effective communication. Previous international experience may provide opportunities

to develop these capabilities, although exposure itself does not necessarily indicate competence.

Recent research reinforces the importance of distinguishing experience from individual capability. Toumi and Su (2025), in their systematic review of cultural intelligence research, identified expatriate adjustment as a major theme while highlighting the complexity of relationships between cultural intelligence and expatriate outcomes. Lei et al. (2025) similarly emphasized that effective adjustment may depend on combinations of individual and environmental conditions.

The present findings therefore contribute context-specific insights by suggesting that previous intercultural exposure was frequently reported among participants describing relatively easier first-year adjustment. This observation is consistent with contemporary approaches that consider multiple resources rather than single predictors of adjustment.

From a practical perspective, the finding suggests that international assignment preparation may benefit from considering differences in employees' prior intercultural experiences. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of experience-based preparation strategies requires further investigation.

4.4. Psychological Adjustment, Workplace Perceptions, and Social Support

Psychological and behavioral adjustment represented another important dimension of participants' experiences. The original analysis identified confidence, mental resilience, communication skills, and adaptability as relevant considerations during early employment.

An interesting pattern concerned mental resilience, which was described both as a perceived professional strength and as an area requiring development. This apparent contrast suggests that professional persistence may coexist with psychological discomfort and uncertainty during intercultural interactions.

Such an interpretation is compatible with the distinction between different dimensions of expatriate adjustment proposed by Black et al. (1991). More recent person-centered research also highlights variation in expatriate adjustment profiles and the relevance of combinations of personal resources (Lei et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the present study cannot establish a developmental progression in resilience because it relies on retrospective accounts rather than longitudinal measurements.

The study additionally identified three participants reporting negative workplace perceptions, including adjustment difficulties and perceived nationality-based occupational status. Although these findings represented a minority, they indicate that workplace adjustment may involve organizational relationships and perceived professional standing.

Social support also emerged as a recurring resource. Participants referred to colleagues, friends, family members, and experienced Indonesian expatriates as sources of practical guidance and interpersonal assistance. However, three respondents

reported adapting without external support, indicating variation in available or utilized resources.

Carraher et al. (2008) established the relevance of mentoring relationships to expatriate career outcomes, while Filipič Sterle et al. (2018) examined relationships among social support, adjustment, and psychological distress. Mahajan and Hassan (2024) further demonstrated that advice-seeking from host-country nationals depends partly on perceived organizational support and the social costs associated with requesting assistance.

These findings suggest that the existence of professional or community relationships does not necessarily guarantee effective support. Expatriates' willingness to seek assistance and the conditions under which assistance is provided may also matter. Bayraktar et al. (2026) similarly highlighted the relevance of social networks in relationships between language proficiency and adjustment.

Consequently, the present study supports considering social support as a multidimensional resource involving accessibility, interpersonal relationships, and organizational context rather than simply the presence or absence of assistance.

The findings concerning previous intercultural experience and social support may also be considered together. While earlier international exposure represents an experiential resource, workplace relationships may provide opportunities to apply and develop the capabilities associated with that experience. These resources should not be regarded as interchangeable. Previous experience concerns an individual's earlier encounters with unfamiliar environments, whereas social support concerns access to interpersonal assistance during the current assignment.

Deardorff's (2006) intercultural competence framework emphasizes the relevance of openness, adaptability, and communication skills. However, these individual capabilities may be exercised under different organizational conditions. For instance, an expatriate may be willing to seek clarification but encounter limited opportunities for supportive interaction. Conversely, supportive colleagues may help individuals manage unfamiliar situations even when they have limited previous international experience.

Mahajan and Hassan (2024) highlighted the relevance of perceived organizational support and the interpersonal costs of seeking advice from host-country nationals. Bayraktar et al. (2026) similarly identified the importance of social support in relationships between language capability and adjustment. Together, these studies suggest that individual resources and social relationships should be considered jointly when examining international workplace experiences.

The present study's findings are compatible with this perspective. Participants reported different sources of assistance, including professional colleagues, personal relationships, and Indonesian expatriate networks. At the same time, three respondents reported adapting without external support. These accounts indicate variation in support experiences but do not establish whether independent adjustment was more or less effective than adjustment involving assistance.

An important implication is that access to social resources should not be interpreted simply through the number of available contacts. The relevance of professional and community networks may also depend on trust, accessibility, practical knowledge, and opportunities to discuss workplace challenges. Further research would be necessary to examine these relationships more systematically.

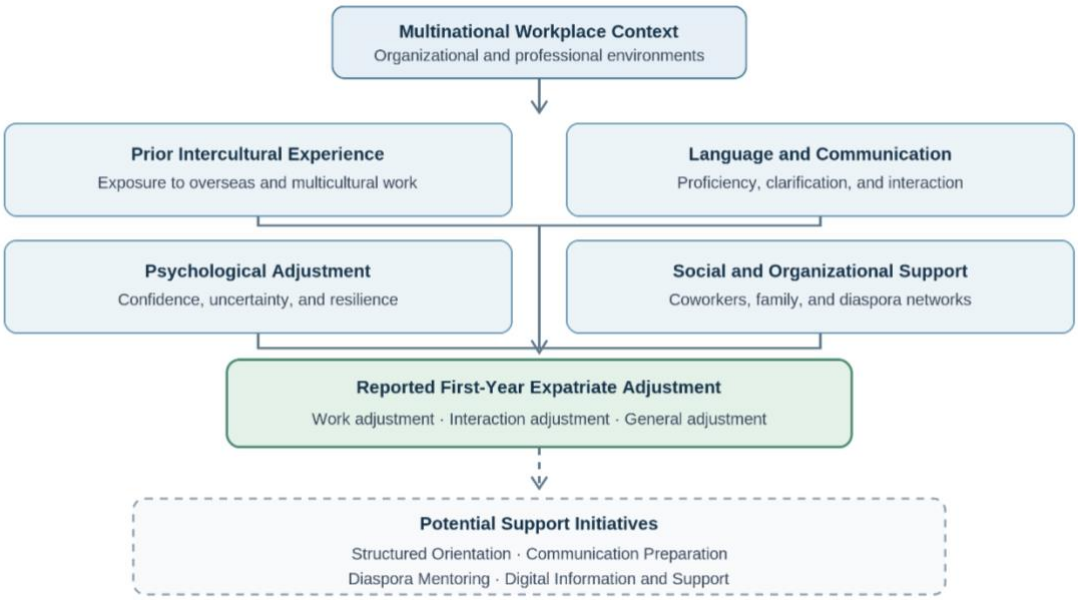


Figure 1. Conceptual Synthesis of Reported Adjustment Factors

4.5. Implications for Expatriate Support

The identified challenges provide a basis for considering several complementary support strategies, including structured familiarization, intercultural readiness and language development, and diaspora-based mentoring.

Structured orientation may provide expatriates with practical information concerning workplace expectations, local administrative procedures, and everyday living conditions. This proposal is consistent with the established role of cross-cultural preparation in international assignments (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Contemporary research further indicates that adjustment involves both individual capabilities and contextual resources, suggesting that preparation should address more than national cultural differences (Baneviciene et al., 2024; Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2024).

Language and communication preparation represents another potential intervention. Varma et al. (2023) demonstrated the importance of language-related coping strategies in expatriate adjustment, while Bayraktar et al. (2026) highlighted the relationships among language proficiency, interpersonal support, and adjustment. These findings support considering workplace communication preparation as a potential element of expatriate orientation.

Diaspora-based mentoring may also provide opportunities for information sharing and professional guidance. Carraher et al. (2008) identified mentoring as relevant to international career outcomes, while Mahajan and Hassan (2024) highlighted the importance of organizational and interpersonal conditions in advice-seeking.

Accordingly, mentoring initiatives should consider both the availability of experienced individuals and the accessibility of their assistance.

Table 3. Proposed Support Strategies Based on Reported Adjustment Challenges

Reported challenge	Proposed support strategy	Potential supporting stakeholders
Unfamiliar workplace expectations	Structured pre-departure and arrival orientation	Employers and professional networks
Language and communication difficulties	Workplace communication and clarification training	Employers and training providers
Limited intercultural exposure	Intercultural readiness and scenario-based learning	Employers and experienced expatriates
Inconsistent access to assistance	Diaspora-based mentoring	Indonesian expatriate communities
Fragmented practical information	Accessible digital orientation resources	Diaspora organizations and potential institutional partners

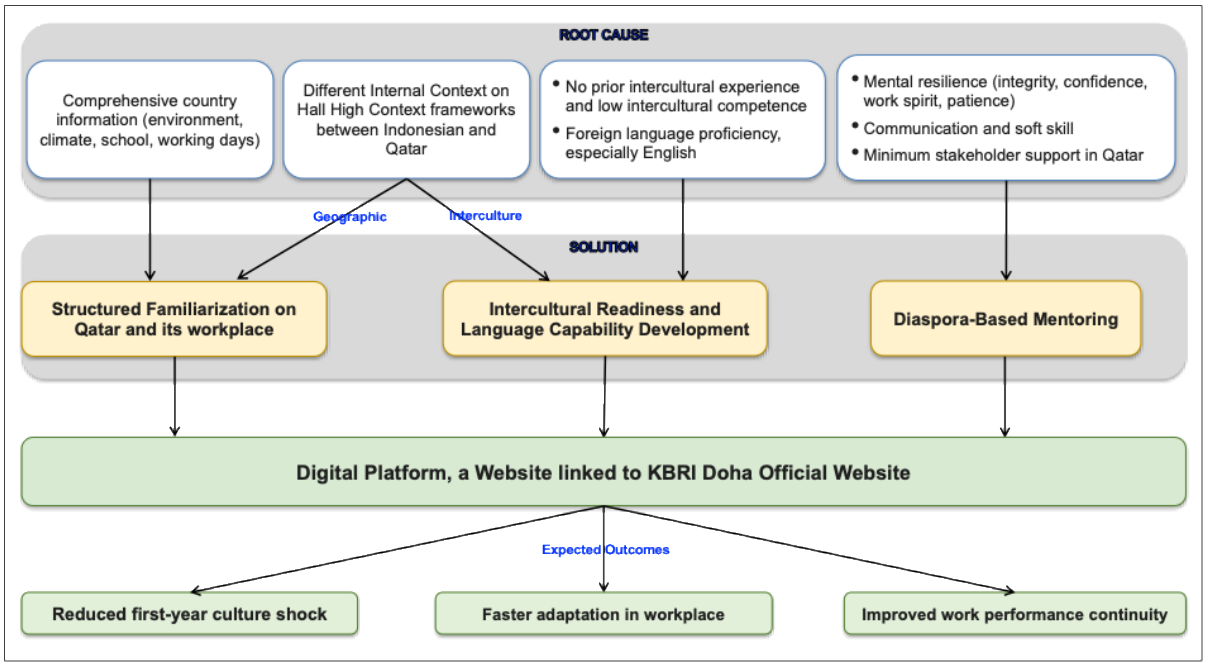


Figure 2. Proposed Support Framework for Indonesian Expatriates' Workplace Adjustment in Qatar

The proposed strategies may be consolidated through an accessible digital information platform. Such a platform could organize orientation materials, facilitate access to practical guidance, and connect newly arrived expatriates with experienced community members.

The original study identified the Indonesian Embassy in Doha and Indonesian diaspora organizations as potential stakeholders. However, the study did not directly investigate institutional readiness, implementation costs, or the effectiveness of digital support mechanisms.

Therefore, the proposed platform should be treated as a conceptual intervention requiring stakeholder consultation and empirical evaluation. This distinction is essential because the effectiveness of workplace adjustment support may depend on organizational conditions, individual needs, and the accessibility of interpersonal resources (Mahajan & Hassan, 2024; Bayraktar et al., 2026).

Figure 2 presents a conceptual connection between reported adjustment challenges and proposed support initiatives. Structured familiarization, communication preparation, and mentoring could potentially strengthen expatriates' access to relevant resources. Nevertheless, reduced culture shock, faster adaptation, and improved work performance remain anticipated outcomes rather than demonstrated effects.

4.6. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The study contributes context-specific qualitative insights to expatriate adjustment research by examining the perceived relevance of previous intercultural exposure, communication capabilities, psychological adjustment, and interpersonal support within Qatar's multinational workplace environment.

The findings are consistent with Black et al.'s (1991) multidimensional framework and recent scholarship emphasizing individual and contextual resources in expatriate adjustment (Baneviciene et al., 2024; Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2024). They also complement research examining cultural intelligence, language proficiency, and social networks (Toumi & Su, 2025; Lei et al., 2025; Bayraktar et al., 2026).

The principal theoretical implication is the importance of interpreting expatriate adjustment beyond national cultural classifications. Hofstede's (2010), Hall's (1989), and Lewis's (2006) frameworks may provide contextual insights, but the participants' reported experiences also reflect individual histories, communication capabilities, professional expectations, and interpersonal resources.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest potential opportunities to tailor expatriate preparation to individual experience and workplace conditions. Communication training, accessible organizational guidance, and mentoring could represent complementary approaches to early adjustment, although their effectiveness requires evaluation.

The findings also have implications for how organizations approach the preparation and support of internationally mobile professionals. International assignment preparation is often discussed in relation to cultural awareness, but the present results suggest that expatriates' perceived needs may extend to workplace communication, access to practical information, and opportunities to establish supportive professional relationships. These areas are relevant to international human resource management because they concern how employees become familiar with organizational expectations and navigate unfamiliar working environments.

Black and Mendenhall (1990) established a theoretical foundation for cross-cultural training, while more recent research has emphasized the role of language capabilities, organizational conditions, and interpersonal relationships in expatriate adjustment (Mahajan & Hassan, 2024; Bayraktar et al., 2026). Drawing on this literature, employers could consider differentiating orientation resources according to employees' previous international experience and anticipated workplace interaction requirements.

However, the study does not demonstrate that a particular orientation program improves productivity, employee retention, or assignment success. These outcomes

were not directly measured. The managerial implications should therefore be understood as potential areas for organizational development rather than evidence of intervention effectiveness.

The proposed digital information platform provides an example of how practical support resources might be coordinated. Its possible functions include organizing country-specific information, providing communication guidance, and facilitating connections with experienced expatriates. Nevertheless, the institutional feasibility of such an initiative remains uncertain without consultation with employers, diaspora organizations, and relevant authorities.

The study's transferability should also be assessed cautiously. Its participants were Indonesian professionals working in Qatar, with substantial representation from particular industries. Their circumstances may differ from those of lower-skilled migrant workers, professionals in other countries, or employees operating under different employment arrangements. Consequently, the value of the findings lies primarily in their analytical relevance to comparable multinational workplace settings rather than statistical generalizability.

Future studies could build on these insights by comparing sectors, examining adjustment longitudinally, and incorporating employer and coworker perspectives. Such research would help determine whether the patterns identified in the present study are also evident across different organizational environments.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. Purposive and snowball sampling restrict the transferability of findings, while self-reported retrospective questionnaires may introduce recall limitations. The study also lacks direct employer, host-country colleague, and institutional perspectives. Future research could employ longitudinal and multisource approaches to examine adjustment processes and evaluate proposed support initiatives more systematically.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the intercultural workplace adjustment experiences of Indonesian professional expatriates in Qatar, particularly during their first year of employment in a multinational environment. Based on qualitative responses from 35 participants, the findings identified several adjustment challenges involving workplace communication, language proficiency, unfamiliar professional expectations, psychological adjustment, and access to social support. Previous intercultural experience was frequently reported among participants who described relatively easier adjustment, while professional relationships and expatriate networks emerged as relevant sources of practical and interpersonal assistance.

The study contributes to expatriate adjustment literature by providing context-specific insights into how individual experiences, communication capabilities, and support resources are perceived within multinational workplace environments. The findings reinforce the importance of examining expatriate adjustment beyond national

cultural comparisons, emphasizing the relevance of individual and organizational contexts. Hofstede's, Hall's, and Lewis's cultural frameworks provide supplementary perspectives, but do not independently explain individual adjustment experiences.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest potential opportunities for structured intercultural orientation, workplace communication preparation, and diaspora-based mentoring. An accessible digital information platform, potentially developed through collaboration among relevant institutions and expatriate communities, may provide an additional support mechanism. However, the effectiveness of these proposed initiatives remains to be empirically evaluated.

The study is limited by its relatively small, non-probability sample, reliance on retrospective self-reported questionnaire responses, and absence of employer and host-country colleague perspectives. Future research should incorporate longitudinal approaches and multiple stakeholder perspectives to examine adjustment processes and evaluate the effectiveness of proposed support initiatives. Such investigations may provide stronger evidence for developing expatriate support practices in multinational workplaces.

Author Contributions

S.: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Funding Acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project Administration, Validation, Resources, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing.
A. P. P.: Conceptualization, Supervision.

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