

## **REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK AMONG INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION EXCHANGE STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

Reverse Culture Shock (RCS) is concerned with the readaptation process to the home country the expatriates go through upon their return after leaving the host country. This research aims to understand whether the respondents faced reverse culture shock upon reentry and establish the relationship between RCS and demographic factors of the respondents. A cross-sectional survey design is used to fulfill the objectives of the study. Primary data were collected from 136 respondents by completing an online questionnaire adapted from Seiter and Waddell (1989). The data is analyzed by the use of SPSS 25 using independent t-test and one-way ANOVA. The results indicate that the Business Administration/ MBA international students who participated in exchange programs and went back home do not differ significantly in their RCS regarding gender, age, education degree level, length of trip, and time since returning home. Finally, the results related to the CQ and RCS show that there is a medium significant positive relationship between RCS and total CQ, motivational, behavioral, and cognitive CQ, while there is a weak non-significant positive relationship between RCS and metacognitive CQ.

**Keywords:** Reverse culture shock, Business Administration/MBA, Exchange programs, Cultural intelligence, and Demographic factors.

## **1. Introduction**

Exchange programs have become more frequent nowadays. Simmons (2014) argues that the changing marketplace is one factor that encourages people to join such programs to gain new skills to adapt to globalization. Many exchange students experience difficulties during the re-entry period when they go back home. However, they are not aware of the reentry period they are going through and how to discuss and share their experience with their friends and family without affecting their relationships. Adler (1981) refers to the reverse culture adaptation as at any stage an expatriate goes through some changes, transformations when leaving the host country. Thomas's (2009) argument goes in line with Adler's as he mentioned that some people think going back home is an easy process as the person is going back to the most intimate place to him/her. However, it is a challenging period full of adaptation stages to get familiar with the home country again. Raschio (1987) mentioned that when some students who returned home were asked about the readaptation period, they answered that their home seemed to be a weird world. In this study, the researcher is interested in measuring whether some Business Administration/MBA international students faced reverse culture shock after returning home after finishing their studies abroad. —also testing whether there is a relationship between the reverse culture shock and the demographic factors of those students.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Cross-Cultural Adaptation***

According to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, cross-cultural means "involving or containing ideas from two or more different countries or cultures". Black (1992) states, adjustment refers to a person's comfort, adaptation, and acceptance of a new culture, environment, or place. Cross-cultural adjustment can be explained as a process of a person trying to adapt to living in a new country with a different culture and varied environment from their own country. Thus, the exchange students may face the cross-cultural adjustment process when moving to another country as it is a point when they find themselves in a new school, new friendships, new

languages, and a new way of thinking. Then, they start to push themselves, trying to cope with the changes and adaptation challenges they would face. Several researchers were interested in this area, and they defined and mentioned this concept in the same general way. Kim (2001, p.31) defines cross-cultural adaptation as a “dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationships with those environments”. The time of moving to a new country and trying to adapt is considered as a continuous period. It takes some time, but this does not necessarily mean that it may reach an endpoint, but rather than that, it changes its shape by experience and the passage of time to make it easy for the person to come to a stage that he/she can endure the challenges (Kim, 2001). Moreover, Li, Sano, and Ahn (2013) define it in the same manner as the other researchers as “the process of adaptation to living and working in a foreign culture” (p. 156).

### ***2.1.1 U-curve Model of Cultural Adaptation***

Several studies are conducted to clarify and understand the stages of cross-cultural adjustment in which an expatriate or employee who moves from his/her country to a country with a different culture and environment goes through. It was identified that the U-curve model that Lysgaard (1955) presented is one of the models used to explain the stages of cross-cultural adjustment that people go through in the host country. Lysgaard (1955) came up with this model by conducting a study on Norwegian students who got accepted to study under the American Fulbright program to spend time studying in the U.S. in which he assumed that the process of intercultural adaptation and its stages has the form of “U”. As Lysgaard (1955) points out, this model consists of several stages that a person who is in the host country goes through.

The first phase, “Honeymoon”, begins with a high level of happiness, adventures, and enthusiasm at the beginning of their existence when getting to know a new culture. Then gradually, the person begins to go through the next stage, “Culture Shock”, which includes

trauma from the environment, people, food, and language. They may feel lonely and find it challenging to have the opportunity to make new friendships; as a result, they may face some challenges and struggles regarding communicating with national people or misunderstanding because of the differences of some of the verbal or non-verbal communication ways. Also, they may begin to make comparisons between their country and the host country at this stage.

There may be a possibility for them to experience the feeling that the national people are superior to them, such as the Norwegian people in America, which causes tension, anxiety, and anger. Moving to the third period, “Recovery”, when they try to get to know people and try to be more open to learning more about this new culture and environment and try to know more about the methods of dealing with and understanding the national people, so this stage is entirely different and a turning point after the stage of culture shock. The fourth and final stage is very comfortable for the sojourners as they reach a high level of harmony and integration into the host country's culture.



**Figure 1 The U-curve Model of Cross-Cultural Adaptation (Lysgaard, 1955)**

Some researchers support the U- curve model and its gradual stages; however, other researchers do not support the idea of this model. Church (1982) mentioned that he considers this model "weak, inconclusive and overgeneralized" (p.542). Therefore, it cannot be applied to all students staying in the host country; for example, there may be some students going through the honeymoon phase with the enthusiasm and adventures at the beginning of their movement abroad while they may not go through the other stages, or there could be other students who do not go through the first phase in the first place at all. On the other hand, Black and Mindenhall (1991) have a neutral view about the U-curve model. The authors state that Lysgaard referred to the means and the percentages in his model but did not refer to statistically testing the data and did not refer to samples that are used continuously. They consider it as this model has no "consistent methodological rigors" (p.231) in which the results can't be generalized. Both Black and Mindenhall (1991) believe that future researchers are suggested to have a theoretical plan to focus on the details and description of cross-cultural adjustment and learning nature.

## ***2.2 Cross-Cultural Readaptation***

Researchers are interested in studying culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation when moving abroad. Also, there is an apparent interest in the reverse culture shock and the challenges and difficulties the returnees face during the re-entry period. Thus, this readjustment process that these people go through is very similar or considered thoroughly the same as the process of cross-cultural adaptation (Shibuya, 2003). Mooradian (2004) indicated two types of adaptation upon entry into a new country with a new culture other than the home country, including psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. The psychological one is concerned with the extent of personal satisfaction and satisfaction with the surrounding environment. It has to do with the personality when trying to be accustomed to a different culture. For socio-cultural adaptation, it is all about identifying and adapting the people

moving to a new place with the host country's culture and its people. Thus, as these two types represent cross cultural adaptation, researchers also used these two types to describe and express the expatriates' adaptation. When expatriates return to their home countries, they start to seem unfamiliar to them after being accustomed to the host country.

Researchers have defined reverse culture adaptation in several ways. Adler (1981) considered cross-cultural adjustment as any process of shift that people go through and reverse culture adaptation as any phase where expatriates go through a change or transition, but when leaving a host country and returning to the home country (p. 343). Thomas (2009) illustrated that the reverse culture adaptation might appear to some people as an immediate return to the intimate domestic culture. However, reverse culture adjustment is a stage of adaptation and getting familiar with the home country's culture again. It is quite similar to the cross-cultural adjustment the expatriates go through when they leave their country.

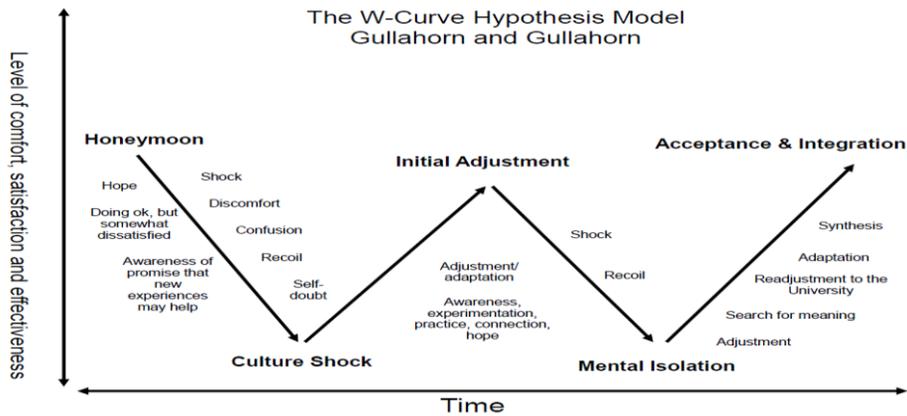
Additionally, Butcher (2002) describes that this period is considered "grieving" because it not only requires the expatriates to be concerned with getting used to their home country and culture but also focusing on the process of getting used to losing their friendships which took them time to make in the host country after some time of getting used to this culture with its all differences. Also, they are supposed to get used to the loss of their memories, culture, routines, and experiences, as they know that it has completely ended. Thus, it would take time to get used to their previous home culture.

### ***2.2.1 W-Curve Model of Cultural Adaptation***

As we mentioned earlier, Lysgaard (1955) represented the process of cultural adaptation that expatriates go through in the host country with a U-curve model; moving to Gullahorn & Gullahorn's (1963) studies, they added a new U to this model by surveying students from America who received scholarships to study in France. Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) analyzed the stages the students went through when they returned to the U.S. It was evident

that the American students went through stages similar to the ones faced in France. This also confirms what the researcher Martin (1984) referred to, that the phases of cultural adjustment during the presence in the host country are very similar to the periods of re-adaptation upon return to the home country. Thus, they came with a W-curve theory to describe the period of cultural readjustment that expatriates are going through after returning to their home country.

Tohyama (2008) mentioned that the W shape consists of two parts. The first part is the same as the U represented in Lysgaard’s model, which shows the cross-cultural adaptation process, while the second part shows the reverse cultural readjustment process. In addition, the researchers modified these stages, as it was previously mentioned that the stages of the U-curve model consisted of four stages; later on, Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) modified the stages of that model from four to three stages and added two more stages to make the stages five stages as shown below: “Honeymoon, Culture Shock, Initial Adjustment, and Mental Isolation and Integration” (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).



Source: Hoffenburger, K., Mosier, R., & Stokes, B. (1999). Transition experience. In J.H. Schuh (Ed.), Educational programming and student learning in college and university residence halls. Columbus, OH: ACUHO-I

**Figure 2 The W-Curve Model of Cultural Re-adaptation (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963)**

### ***2.2.2 Reverse Culture Shock***

Gaw (2000) refers to it as “the process of readjusting, re-aculturating, and re-assimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time.” (p. 83) Mooradian (2004) indicates that the reverse culture shock affects the returnees negatively and may cause tension, pressure, and anxiety. This is because the returnees are not aware of the changes in their personality, behaviors, and beliefs during their stay in the host country.

Thus, if they insist on sticking to these changes, this will negatively affect them and their interaction with others. Additionally, the returnees’ relatives, friends, and family are also not aware of the changes they went through. They think that no change has occurred, and the returnees are entirely the same as before. Thus, a preparation period is needed for this stage for the returnees and their families and other relatives. Adler (1975) illustrates that there are not many differences between culture shock and reverse culture shock that the expatriates face while some of the differences between them may have to do with what the expatriates who return to the homeland expect, and whether they are aware of the change they went through or not.

There are several studies on the reverse culture shock and the difficulties that expatriates face; for example, the researchers Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) indicate that these people do not expect to face difficulty upon their return to their home country. Also, they are not aware that there may be a tangible change in their relations with family, friends, and others. Martin (1984) adds they do not feel the extent of the change that this experience has on them during their time being away from their countries, such as changes in their behaviors, way of thinking, lifestyle, and personality, but upon their arrival to their country, they begin to feel this difference and they feel that it is not their country anymore or there was a significant change occurred during their absence from it; as a result, this affects the way they communicate and their interaction with people in their country (Black, 1992).

### ***2.3 Cultural Intelligence***

Ang and Van Dyne (2008) refer to cultural intelligence as the ability of an individual in a multi-cultural context with different ethnic and national identities to function effectively. Earley and Ang (2003) go in line with Van Dyne's (2008) definition by confirming that it refers to the person's ability to function well in different situations with cultural diversity. Earley and Ang (2003) define cultural intelligence as a multidimensional construct which is divided into four dimensions: Cognitive, Metacognitive, Motivational, and Behavioral.

#### ***2.3.1 Motivational Cultural Intelligence***

It refers to the extent to which an individual is interested, motivated, and confident to experience and to acquire new cultural behaviors in diverse situations. It also refers to how much they are into the different cultural interactions (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).

#### ***2.3.2 Behavioral Cultural Intelligence***

It refers to the individual ability to appropriately interact with people from different cultures, either verbally and non-verbally (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).

#### ***2.3.3 Cognitive Cultural Intelligence***

It refers to the individual's knowledge he/she has about the norms and values of two different cultures. It is also about knowing and being aware of the similarities and differences between the systems of different cultures such as the legal, economic, educational, and sociocultural systems (Ng, Van Dyne, Ang & Ryan, 2012; Earley & Ang, 2003).

#### ***2.3.4 Meta-cognitive Cultural Intelligence***

Ang and Van Dyne (2008) refer to it as the awareness and the executive mental processes an individual has for successful interactions in cross-cultural situations.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### ***3.1 The Purpose and Research Design***

The main objective of the study is to investigate the reverse culture shock (RCS) of Business Administration/MBA international exchange students who went back home and to also establish the relationship between RCS and the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Therefore, a cross-sectional survey design is used. One questionnaire is used which is divided into three sections to measure the Reverse culture shock (dependent variable) and the demographic factors (independent variable). Additionally, a correlational research design is used to test the five hypotheses (i.e., to measure if the RCS and demographic factors are related or not).

#### ***3.2 Data Collection Process***

In the present study, primary data is collected. The data were collected by an online questionnaire method from Business Administration international students who participated in an exchange program and already returned home.

#### ***3.3 Sampling technique***

After finding suitable participants to participate in the online survey in this research, snowball sampling was used. It is one of the sampling techniques in which the survey respondents are asked to forward the study to other potential respondents who may be part of their networks, and they have to meet the exact requirements (Sedgwick, 2013). In this study, the snowball sampling technique was used by reaching other BA or MBA students who shared

the same experience with those participants or traveled and went back home later. As a result, 136 participants were contacted online.

### ***3.4 Instrument for Data Collection***

The instrument used for primary data collection is a structured self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire is in English. It's divided into three sections. The first section consists of questions related to personal and demographic variables such as (Gender, age, degree level while in the host country, length of trip, and time since returning home). The data in this section were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Section two consists of a 16-item reentry scale to measure reverse culture shock adapted from the research of Seiter and Waddell (1989). The questions in this section were close-ended questions designed with 5 points Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree "1" to strongly agree "5". Section three consists of a 20-item cultural intelligence scale which was adapted from Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Koh, C. (2009).

### ***3.5 Research Questions and Hypotheses***

After reviewing the literature in the previous chapter and fulfilling the present study's objectives, the following hypotheses have been outlined.

- **Research question 1:** Is there any relationship between RCS and demographic variables such as gender, age, degree level, trip length, and time since returning to the home country of Business Administration/ MBA international students who studied abroad & went back home.

To answer the research question, the following hypotheses have been drawn:

**H1:** There is a significant difference between the men and women regarding their RCS.

$$H1: \mu_w \neq \mu_m$$

Where:  $\mu_w$  is the RCS faced by women and  $\mu_m$  is the RCS faced by men.

**H2:** There is a significant difference between the students with different levels of degree with respect to their RCS.

$$H2: \mu u \neq \mu g$$

Where:  $\mu u$ ,  $\mu g$  represent the RCS of students on the different levels of education: undergraduate and graduate.

**H3:** There is a significant difference between students' RCS based on their trip length.

$$H3: \mu s \neq \mu y$$

Where:  $\mu s$ ,  $\mu y$  present the RCS of students on the different trip lengths: One semester, one year & above.

**H4:** There is a significant difference between the students' RCS based on the different periods of time the students have since returning home.

$$H4: \mu t1 \neq \mu t2$$

Where:  $\mu t1$ ,  $\mu t2$  present the RCS of students on the different periods of time the students have since returning home: One year or less, over a year.

**H5:** There is a significant difference between the students in different age categories with regard to their RCS.

$$\mu a1 \neq \mu a2 \neq \mu a3$$

Where:  $\mu a1$ ,  $\mu a2$ ,  $\mu a3$  represent the RCS of students in different age categories: 18-24 years, 25-35 years, and 36-45 years.

- **Research question 2:** Is there any relationship between RCS and each dimension of cultural intelligence and the total cultural intelligence of Business Administration/ MBA international students who studied abroad & went back home.

To answer the research question, five hypotheses were highlighted:

**H6:** There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the total cultural intelligence of the participants.

**H6a:** There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the motivational cultural intelligence of the participants.

**H6b:** There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the behavioral cultural intelligence of the participants.

**H6c:** There is a significant difference between the RCS and the metacognitive cultural intelligence of the participants.

**H6d:** There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the cognitive cultural intelligence of the participants.

### ***3.6 Validity and Reliability Analysis***

Bhattacharjee (2012) mentioned that asking a panel of experts can be one of the ways to test the content validity. In the present study, this has been done when the RCS scale was developed and validated by Seiter and Waddell (1989). Furthermore, the researcher sought professors' points of view and the research participants before conducting the questionnaire. As a result, it can be clearly shown that the instrument is valid in terms of content validity. It was also done when the CQS scale was developed and validated by Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Koh, C. (2009). Bhattacharjee (2012) argues that criterion-related validity is sometimes not assessed in social sciences research.

Thus, in the present study, the criterion-related validity is ignored. In addition, the instrument is valid in terms of construct validity because the current research used the same method which is factor analysis during its development by Seiter and Waddell (1989). The same method was used in the CQS by Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Koh, C. (2009). Moreover, in the present study alpha coefficient was obtained by the researcher by using SPSS 25. As shown below in the

table, the alpha coefficient for the RCS is 0.830, indicating a high level of reliability. Also, alpha coefficient for the CQS is 0.877, which shows a high level of reliability.

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics for RCS Scale And Cultural Intelligence Scale**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>RCS scale</b>	0.830	0.827	16
<b>CQ scale</b>	0.877	0.881	20

#### **4. Data Analysis and Results**

The data will be analyzed with the help of SPSS 25 using descriptive statistics, independent t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The demographic factors will be assessed using descriptive statistics. First, in the 1st research question, hypotheses 1 to 4 will be tested using an independent t-test because it tests whether the means of two groups are statically different or not (Bhattacharjee, 2012). ANOVA test will be used for the remaining hypothesis (5) because the age has more than two groups and RCS is measured on an interval scale. In hypothesis 5, if the result shows a significant difference, a post-hoc test should be used to show in which groups the exact difference lies by using the "Hochberg's GT2 procedures". However, if the result in hypothesis 5 shows no significant difference, there is no need to do the post-hoc test.

In the second research question, H6 to H6d will be tested using Pearson's Coefficient Correlation. To find the strength of the correlation between the variables, the Pearson Correlation states that 0.8 or above= very strong, 0.5 or above = strong, 0.3 or above = medium, less than 0.3 = weak. It can be shown in the correlations table whether the correlations are significant or not. If the significance level is less than 0.05, this means the correlation is significant ( $P>0.05$ )

#### ***4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents***

The demographic profiles of the respondents include gender, age, degree level, trip length, and time since return. In total, 136 participants responded to the questionnaire. Additionally, there are no missing values for the demographic variables. Most respondents 104 (76.5%) are females, while 32 (23.5 %) are males. Additionally, the majority of respondents, 107 (78.7%) have a Bachelor's degree, while 29 (21.3%) have a Master's degree or higher. Among the respondents, 86 (63.2%) are aged between 18-24 years, 47 (34.6%) are between 25-35 years, and 3 (2.2%) are aged between 36-45 years. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the participants' age range is youth age. In addition, 111 (81.6%) of the respondents stayed for one semester in the host country while 25 (18.4%) stayed for one year & above. Moreover, most respondents, 80 (58.8%) have returned to their home countries over a year while it's been one year or less for 56 (41.2%) of the respondents who went back home.

#### ***4.2 Relationship Between RCS and Demographic Factors***

Is there any relationship between RCS of Business Administration/ MBA international students who studied abroad and returned home and their demographic variables? In order to answer the research question, five different hypotheses were highlighted:

***4.2.1 H1: There is a significant difference between men and women with regard to their RCS.***

An independent t-test is conducted to test this hypothesis. The results of the t-test reveal that on average, females ( $M = 3.5841$ ,  $SD = 0.64910$ ) faced more RCS than their male counterparts ( $M = 3.5664$ ,  $SD = 0.60657$ ). However, this difference,  $-0.01773$ , at 95% confidence interval  $(-0.27342, 0.23796)$ , is not statistically significant,  $t(134) = -0.137$ ,  $p = 0.891$ . Thus, we can conclude that there is no significant difference between genders based on RCS. As a result, hypothesis one is not supported. The present study replicates the findings of Akhtar, Kamal, Abdul Hayee & Imtiaz (2018) whose results also indicate no significant mean difference in RCS between males and females who are holders of foreign degrees in Pakistan. Additionally, Sussman (2001) highlighted no significant connection between males and females regarding RCS and difficulties upon reentry. (cited in Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 5). In contrast, Brabant et al. (1990) mentioned a significant connection between gender differences and RCS as the authors highlighted women are more sensitive and get more affected differently by reentry difficulties than men.

***4.2.2 H2: There is a significant difference between the students with different levels of degree with respect to their RCS.***

An independent t-test is conducted to test this hypothesis, and the results are shown in Tables 8.1, 8.2. The results of the t-test as shown in Table 8.1, reveals that, on average, participants who were doing Bachelor's degree ( $M = 3.6203$ ,  $SD = 0.59029$ ) faced RCS more than the students who were doing their Master's ( $M = 3.4310$ ,  $SD = 0.78051$ ). Moreover, this difference,  $0.18929$ , at 95% confidence interval  $(-.12629, .50487)$ , is statistically non significant,  $t(37.119) = 1.215$ ,  $p = .232$ . Thus, we can say that there is no significant difference between Bachelor's degree holders and Master's degree holders with respect to their RCS.

Thus, hypothesis two is not supported. This present research does not replicate the findings of Paige (2001) whose research indicates a significant mean difference between different degree holders with regard to the RCS and reentry challenges. Paige (2001) confirms that the more

mature the person is and the higher education degree he holds, the easier his staying abroad will be, and the fewer reentry challenges will be faced.

***4.2.3 H3: There is a significant difference between students' RCS based on their trip length***

An independent t-test is conducted to test this hypothesis. The results of the t-test revealed that, on average, the participants whose trip length was one semester ( $M = 3.5991$ ,  $SD = 0.64273$ ) faced more RCS than the ones whose trip length was one year or above ( $M = 3.4950$ ,  $SD = 0.61738$ ). However, this difference, 0.10410, at 95% confidence interval (-0.17537, 0.38356), is not statistically significant,  $t(134) = 0.737$ ,  $p = 0.463$ . Thus, we can say that there is no significant trip length difference with regard to RCS. As a result, hypothesis three is not supported. The present study confirms what Suutari and Vålímaa (2002) mentioned that there is no relationship between the length of the trip in the host country and the readjustment challenges. (as cited in Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 7) while it is not in line with the findings of Paige (2001), who found that there is a significant difference between returnees' trip length with respect to their RCS. He illustrates that the more the expatriate stays abroad, the more possibility for them to face challenges and unexpected RCS upon their return.

***4.2.4 H4: There is a significant difference between students' RCS based on the length time since their return***

An independent t-test is conducted to test this hypothesis. The results revealed that on average, the participants whose time since the return to home was over a year ( $M = 3.6008$ ,  $SD = 0.66267$ ) faced RCS more than the ones whose time since the return to home was one year or less ( $M = 3.5502$ ,  $SD = 0.60354$ ). However, this difference, -0.05056, at 95% confidence interval (-0.27078, 0.16966), is not statistically significant,  $t(134) = -0.454$ ,  $p = 0.651$ . Thus, we can say that there is no significant difference between students whose time since return differs with regard to RCS. As a result, hypothesis four is not supported. The present study

contradicts what Szkudlarek (2009) referred to. Szkudlarek (2009) illustrates that some authors such as (Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Sánchez Vidal et al., 2007) highlighted a significant connection between the time since going back home and the RCS and reentry readaptation challenges. However, this present research goes in line with Cox's (2004, p.211) research.

***4.2.5 H5: There is a significant difference between the students in different age categories with regard to their RCS.***

To test this hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA is conducted. The age categories used are 18-24, 25-35, and 36-45. Levene's test is not significant. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. The results of the ANOVA test indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between students in different age categories with respect to their RCS ( $F = 1.787$ ;  $p = 0.172$ ). Hence, hypothesis five is not supported. These results replicate the findings of (Hammer et al., 1998; Uehara, 1986) as referred to and cited in Szkudlarek (2009). On the other hand, this present research's results are not in line with Skudlarek's study (2009) as he illustrates that some authors such as (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Cox, 2004; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Hyder & Lovblad, 2007) concluded that there is a negative relationship between the age and reentry challenges. When the returnees get older, the possibility of facing the RCS and reentry adaptation problems decreases.

#### ***4.3 The Relationship Between RCS and Cultural Intelligence***

Is there any relationship between RCS and each dimension of CQ and the total CQ of Business Administration/ MBA international students who studied abroad & went back home? To answer the research question, five hypotheses were highlighted:

***4.3.1 H6: There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the total cultural intelligence of the participants.***

The results show a medium significant positive relationship between RCS and cultural intelligence.

1. The direction of the correlation between the variables (from the Pearson correlation): it's a positive correlation between RCS and *cultural intelligence*.
2. The correlation is 0.3 or above so the correlation is medium, and ( $r=0.470$ ).
3. The correlation is significant. it is concluded that Sig. = 0.000 which is less than 5 percent ( $P<0.05$ ).

***4.3.2 H6a: There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the motivational cultural intelligence of the participants.***

The results show a medium significant positive relationship between RCS and motivational cultural intelligence.

1. The direction of the correlation between the variables (from the Pearson correlation): it's a positive correlation between RCS and motivational CQ.
2. The correlation is 0.3 or above so the correlation is medium, and ( $r=0.444$ ).
3. The correlation is significant. It is concluded that Sig. = 0.000 which is less than 5 percent ( $P<0.05$ ). Ang, Soon, et al. (2007) confirmed that motivational cultural intelligence is positively related to cultural adaptation.

***4.3.3 H6b: There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the behavioral cultural intelligence of the participants.***

The results show a medium significant positive relationship between RCS and behavioral cultural intelligence.

1. The direction of the correlation between the variables (from the Pearson correlation): it's a positive correlation between RCS and behavioral CQ.
2. The correlation is 0.3 or above so the correlation is medium, and ( $r=0.402$ ).

3. The correlation is significant. It is concluded that Sig. = 0.000 which is less than 5 percent ( $P < 0.05$ ). Ang, Soon, et al. (2007) confirmed that behavioral cultural intelligence is positively related to cultural adaptation.

***4.3.4 H6c: There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the metacognitive cultural intelligence of the participants.***

The results show a weak non significant positive relationship between RCS and metacognitive cultural intelligence.

1. The direction of the correlation between the variables (from the Pearson correlation): it's a positive correlation between RCS and metacognitive CQ. This study goes in line with Jyoti & Kour (2015) and Jyoti et al. (2015). Their study revealed no significant relationship between the meta-cognitive cultural intelligence and cultural adaptation.

2. The correlation is less than 0.3, so the correlation is weak, and ( $r = 0.140$ ).

3. The correlation is non significant. It is concluded that Sig. = 0.104 which is more than 5 percent ( $P > 0.05$ ).

***4.3.5 H6d: There is a significant relationship between the RCS and the cognitive cultural intelligence of the participants.***

The results show a medium significant positive relationship between RCS and cognitive CQ.

1. The direction of the correlation between the variables (from the Pearson correlation): it's a positive correlation between RCS and cognitive CQ.

2. The correlation is higher than 0.3, and less than 0.5 so the correlation is medium, and ( $r = 0.351$ ).

3. The correlation is significant. It is concluded that Sig. = 0.000 which is less than 5 percent ( $P < 0.05$ ).

## **5. Conclusion and Discussion**

Returning home after being done with an exchange program is a challenging experience. This study is in line with other previous studies which show that students who return from abroad suffer from RCS. The objective of this study is to find out whether there are significant mean differences in RCS among the participants in terms of their demographic factors such as gender, age, degree level, trip length, time since return. To achieve this, a cross-sectional survey method of data collection was used.

The participants in this study were Business Administration/ MBA international students who joined the Erasmus exchange program for six months, one year or above, and others pursued full degrees abroad. Students who participated were from different countries and went to different host countries. Data were analyzed using SPSS 25, and various tests were conducted which were descriptive analyses to determine the overall RCS. The independent T-test indicates no significant mean differences in RCS between male and female respondents. Additionally, their RCS doesn't differ significantly based on their trip length, time since return and education degree level. Also, the ANOVA results revealed no significant difference between the students in different age categories with regard to their RCS. As a result, there was no need to conduct a post-hoc test. Finally, the results related to the CQ and RCS show that there is a medium significant positive relationship between RCS and total CQ, motivational, behavioral and cognitive CQ while there is a weak non-significant positive relationship between RCS and metacognitive CQ. These results replicate some previous studies while contradicting other previous studies.

## **6. Limitations**

Due to the time constraints, the researcher couldn't reach several returnees from different nationalities to compare the RCS in terms of cultural differences. Thus, most of the respondents were Jordanian students, and there was no balance between the differences in nationalities. The researcher was also unable to reach a wide range of sources such as families

and friends of the returnees to explore more details about the returnees' adjustment process. Additionally, asking the participants for extra interviews in order to be able to elaborate more about the stages of the readaptation process. Moreover, since some of the returnees went back home longer than 2-3 years ago, those returnees must have found it difficult to remember their exact initial readjustment process.

## **7. Recommendations for Future Research**

This study suggests that to better understand RCS and readjustment difficulties, it is necessary to include various areas for future research. Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions have been developed for researchers studying with exchange students. First, reverse culture shock is a long process that requires a long time to expand more analytical frameworks for RCS and to understand the long different stages of the re-adjustment process. Second, instead of a cross-sectional study, qualitative longitudinal interviews are suggested to be used for testing the reverse culture shock of future studies about Business students returnees. Additionally, it is suggested to conduct more than one interview with returnees. For instance, three interviews can be conducted during three different periods of the exchange program such as: before the mobility interview, during the mobility interview, and after the mobility interview. Thus, this can give a wide range of results to compare between the three stages.

Third, since this study is about Business Administration/ MBA students who faced reverse culture shock, it is suggested that the administrative staff in the universities have some counselors for the returnees to guide the students about the readjustment period. Having guidance teachers or helping staff in universities will minimize the RCS the returnees will face as they will be aware of what they might go through. Additionally, it can be beneficial for the student's success, especially the ones writing their thesis. They can be helped to see the academic differences between the two countries from different perspectives. In a nutshell, having a good administrative staff caring about the returnees can help promote the coming

exchange programs and enhance intercultural awareness among students. Finally, everyone who is involved in the exchange program should be part of this experience to encourage the returnees to reach their goals without having their home academics get affected

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## **Appendix 1: The Questionnaire**

### **1. Demographic factors**

#### **1. Gender**

- Female

- Male
2. Age
    - 18-24 years
    - 25-35 years
    - 36-45 years
    - +46 years
  3. Nationality .....
  4. Where have you studied abroad ? (Host Country) .....
  5. The degree level in the host country
    - Bachelor's degree
    - Master's degree
    - PhD degree
  6. Length of Trip
    - One semester
    - One year & above
  7. Length of Time Since Return
    - One year or less
    - Over a year

## **2. The Challenges Faced When Returning Home ( RCS)**

In relation to the challenges of returning home, please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements by ticking an appropriate number. ( 1 =Strongly Disagree (Very Dissatisfied) ; 5 = Strongly Agree (Very Satisfied) ). Tick “3” if you are uncertain.

1- When I returned, people did not seem that interested in my experiences abroad.

2- Life was more exciting in the host culture.

3- My friends seem to have changed since I have been gone.

- 4- When I returned home, I felt really depressed.
- 5- I had difficulty adjusting to my home culture after returning from abroad.
- 6- Since I have been abroad I have become more critical of my home culture's values.
- 7- I miss the foreign culture where I stayed.
- 8- I had a lot of contact with members of the host culture.
- 9- I feel like I have changed a lot because of my experience abroad.
- 10- When I returned home, I felt generally alienated.
- 11- My friends and I have grown in separate directions since I have returned.
- 12- Life in my home culture is boring after the excitement of living abroad.
- 13- I miss the friends that I made in the host culture.
- 14- Since I have been abroad, I have become more critical of my home culture's government.
- 15- My friends and family have pressured me to "fit in" upon returning home.
- 16- The values and beliefs of the host culture are very different from those of my home culture.

### **3. The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS)**

Read each statement and select the response that best describes your capabilities. Select the answer that best describes you as you really are (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

CQ dimensions	Questionnaire items
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<b>MC1</b>	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.
<b>MC2</b>	I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
<b>MC3</b>	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.
<b>MC4</b>	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures
<b>COG1</b>	I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.
<b>COG2</b>	I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.
<b>COG3</b>	I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.
<b>COG4</b>	I know the marriage systems of other cultures.
<b>COG5</b>	I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.
<b>COG6</b>	I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures.
<b>MOT1</b>	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
<b>MOT2</b>	I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.

<b>MOT3</b>	I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.
<b>MOT4</b>	I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.
<b>MOT5</b>	I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture.
<b>BEH1</b>	I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
<b>BEH2</b>	I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.
<b>BEH3</b>	I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
<b>BEH4</b>	I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
<b>BEH5</b>	I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.