The Impact of Cultural Intelligence on Team Performance: An Analysis of the Mediating Effects of Intercultural Communicative Competence and Team Cohesion among Chinese Automotive Enterprises in Thailand

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of cultural intelligence (CQ) on team performance among Chinese automotive enterprises operating in Thailand. Drawing on a structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, the research explores the mediating roles of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and team cohesion (TC). A survey was conducted among Chinese expatriate managers and Thai local employees in joint ventures and wholly foreign-owned enterprises. The findings reveal that CQ has a significant positive effect on team performance both directly and indirectly through enhanced communication and team cohesion. This study contributes to the international business and cross-cultural management literature by providing empirical evidence on how CQ functions as a strategic asset in multicultural team contexts, particularly in the automotive industry in Southeast Asia. Limitations of the Study. One limitation pertains to the sampling method. The study employed a convenience sampling method, with participants primarily being Chinese employees working in Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand. This sampling approach may introduce bias, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research could employ more robust sampling techniques, such as random or stratified sampling, to enhance the representativeness of the sample and the reliability of the results.Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the study. With data collected at a single point in time, the ability to infer causality is restricted. Future research could adopt a longitudinal design, collecting data at multiple time points to more accurately assess the dynamic relationships between CQ, ICC, TC, and TP. Lastly, focusing on Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand, this study\'s findings may not be readily applicable to other industries or regions. Future research could explore different industry and geographical contexts to validate the universality of the results.

Keywords: Cultural Intelligence, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Team Cohesion, Team Performance, Chinese Automotive Enterprises, Thailand, PLS-SEM

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized economic landscape, effective cross-cultural collaboration has become critical to organizational success (Earley & Ang, 2003). The rise of multinational corporations and culturally diverse teams calls for a deeper understanding of the key factors influencing team performance in diverse settings. This need is particularly salient in emerging markets, where the pace of economic integration often surpasses that of cultural adaptation.
Thailand, as a major automotive manufacturing hub in Southeast Asia, has recently witnessed a surge of Chinese automobile enterprises entering its market. Driven by strategic policy incentives and the rapid growth of Thailand’s electric vehicle sector, this expansion presents both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges in cross-cultural team management. The integration between Chinese expatriate managers and Thai local employees hinges on effective communication and collaboration, yet such integration is frequently constrained by cultural norms and managerial differences.

While Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is widely recognized as a critical facilitator of individual cross-cultural adaptation (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008), its broader impact on team-level outcomes—especially within specific industrial and regional contexts—remains underexplored. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the interrelationships among Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Team Cohesion (TC), and Team Performance (TP), focusing specifically on the context of Chinese automobile enterprises operating in Thailand.

Although prior studies have extensively examined CQ, several nuanced areas merit further exploration, particularly in relation to how CQ is operationalized and influences outcomes in complex international business environments. While the antecedents and direct consequences of CQ are well documented (Ang et al., 2007; Leung et al., 2014), few studies have explored the intricate mediating pathways through which CQ impacts team-level outcomes such as performance—especially within non-Western, industry-specific contexts such as Chinese automotive firms in Thailand. Existing literature often positions CQ as a direct predictor of success, potentially overlooking the mediating roles of mechanisms like ICC and collaborative capacity (Jerinic-Ivic et al., 2024). Furthermore, although the value of cross-cultural experiences in developing CQ has been acknowledged (Pidduck et al., 2022), the specific nature and quality of these experiences, and how they interact with power dynamics and cultural-industrial interlinkages (e.g., among Chinese, Thai, and other embedded cultures within automotive supply chains), remain insufficiently examined. Most CQ studies have focused on the individual level; conceptualization and empirical investigation of team-level or collective CQ, and its dynamic evolution—particularly through longitudinal research—are still in their infancy (Djatmika et al., 2024). This gap is critical, as team performance in multinational corporations is inherently a collective endeavor.

To address these issues, this study proposes and tests a structural equation model that outlines the impact of CQ on team performance, mediated by ICC and team collaboration. By situating the research within the operational context of Chinese automotive companies in Thailand, this study offers context-specific insights into how CQ functions in manufacturing environments. It contributes to the literature in three key ways: (1) by clarifying the mediating roles of ICC and collaborative capacity in the CQ–team performance relationship, thus deepening our understanding of the causal mechanism; (2) by exploring the conceptualization and development of collective CQ within industrial and cross-cultural contexts; and (3) by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western emerging market, thereby enhancing the universality and applicability of CQ theory. Ultimately, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding and leveraging CQ to enhance team performance in complex international joint ventures and collaborations—an increasingly critical issue for firms participating in initiatives such as the Belt and Road. The findings will not only enrich the theoretical discourse in cross-cultural management but also offer practical strategies for multinational firms seeking to navigate complex cultural dynamics and enhance team effectiveness within the global automotive industry.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ), defined as an individual's capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity (Earley & Ang, 2003), is a critical construct in cross-cultural management. Unlike general intelligence or emotional intelligence, CQ specifically addresses adaptation and successful interaction in new cultural settings (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). CQ is a multi-dimensional construct with four interrelated facets: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Metacognitive CQ involves mental capacity to acquire and understand cultural

knowledge, including strategizing and revising mental models of cultural norms (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Cognitive CQ represents knowledge of cultures, their norms, practices, and conventions (Earley & Ang, 2003). Motivational CQ reflects interest, drive, and confidence in cross-cultural interactions (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Behavioral CQ is the capacity to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions in diverse cultural contexts (Earley & Ang, 2003).
CQ development is influenced by individual and contextual factors. Individual differences like personality traits (e.g., openness to experience), language ability, and cognitive flexibility predict CQ (Ang et al., 2006; Bernardo & Presbitero, 2018). Cross-cultural training and direct experiences, such as work or personal encounters in diverse cultural contexts, are crucial for fostering CQ (Maddux et al., 2021). However, the relationship between experience and CQ is complex, requiring deeper investigation (Michailova & Ott, 2018).

CQ is consistently linked to positive outcomes at individual, group, and organizational levels. Individually, higher CQ correlates with improved psychological and intercultural adjustment, reduced culture shock, and enhanced well-being (Jurásek & Wawrosz, 2023). Crucially, CQ impacts team performance, especially in multicultural settings like Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand. In such teams, CQ fosters trust and cohesion, facilitating smoother interactions and reducing conflicts (Schreiber, Van Dijk, & Drory, 2025). High-CQ managers effectively lead diverse teams, manage cross-cultural conflicts, and promote communication and collaboration (Yari et al., 2020). This enhanced collaboration and communication, mediated by CQ, significantly contributes to overall team performance, knowledge sharing, and innovativeness (Ratasuk & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Studies show a positive correlation between CQ and managerial effectiveness and overall performance (Chenyang, 2022).

Although existing research has established the positive impact of cultural intelligence (CQ) on team performance in general cross-cultural management contexts, empirical studies focusing on specific national settings (e.g., Thailand) and particular industries (e.g., automotive manufacturing) remain limited—especially within cross-cultural teams led or heavily comprised of Chinese employees. For instance, Li et al. (2017) found that in highly structured manufacturing organizations, CQ plays a critical role in mitigating conflicts and misunderstandings arising from divergent role expectations between Chinese and Thai employees, thereby enhancing team collaboration efficiency. Therefore, examining how CQ among Chinese automotive industry employees in Thailand influences overall team performance—through the mediating effects of intercultural communication competence and team cohesion—not only contributes theoretical insights but also offers practical implications for improving the effectiveness of Chinese enterprises' overseas team management.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has emerged as a vital capability for effective interaction across diverse cultural landscapes in an increasingly interconnected world. Defined as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, ICC encompasses a blend of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Wang & Teo, 2024; Sarwari et al., 2024). Its significance spans various fields, from global leadership to international business, highlighting its crucial role in navigating the complexities of a globalized society. The core criteria of ICC—effectiveness in achieving shared goals and appropriateness in adhering to cultural norms—underscore its practical importance in fostering successful cross-cultural engagements (Wang & Teo, 2024).

The theoretical understanding of ICC has evolved, with Byram's (1997) model serving as a foundational framework. This model delineates ICC into five key components: attitudes (curiosity, openness), knowledge (cultural understanding), skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Wang & Teo, 2024). Recent

empirical studies, such as Wang and Teo (2024), have validated these relationships, emphasizing that while knowledge is foundational, attitudes and practical skills directly contribute to critical cultural awareness (Wang & Teo, 2024). Furthermore, the conceptualization of ICC has expanded beyond individual attributes to include collective and dynamic perspectives, recognizing that ICC is also a team-level capability that adapts and develops through social interaction and negotiation within diverse groups (Jerinic-Ivic et al., 2024).

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is identified as a significant antecedent to ICC, with its motivational and knowledge dimensions fostering the development of intercultural capabilities (Wang & Teo, 2024). The positive outcomes of ICC are extensive, notably enhancing team collaboration quality and mitigating job burnout in multicultural environments by reducing work-related stress (Xie et al., 2024; Sarwari et al., 2024). For instance, Xie, Tu, and Huang (2024) demonstrated that higher ICC levels correlate with reduced job burnout, mediated by lower job stress (Xie et al., 2024). In service contexts, ICC improves customer experiences by fostering interaction comfort (Jerinic-Ivic et al., 2024). However, the efficacy of ICC can be influenced by external factors, as negative emotions, for example, can attenuate its positive impact on employee engagement, underscoring the need for holistic support in challenging intercultural settings (David et al., 2025).

Despite its recognized importance, existing ICC research exhibits several limitations. A predominant reliance on Western multinational enterprise samples often overlooks the unique dynamics of South-South cooperation contexts, where cultural interactions may differ significantly (Jerinic-Ivic et al., 2024). Moreover, there is a notable gap in examining the cultural embeddedness within manufacturing supply chains, particularly in complex tripartite collaborations involving Chinese, Japanese, and Thai entities, which present distinct ICC demands (Jerinic-Ivic et al., 2024).

Team Cohesion

Team cohesion, a multifaceted construct within organizational behavior, refers to the bonds that exist between team members and between members and the team as a whole (Kim & Ko, 2021). It is crucial for enhancing team performance, fostering a positive team climate, and driving collaborative efforts (Huo et al., 2020). Team cohesion is often conceptualized in terms of two dimensions: social cohesion, which involves interpersonal relationships and a sense of camaraderie, and task cohesion, which pertains to the team's joint commitment to achieving its goals (Grossman, Nolan, Rosch, Mazer, & Salas, 2022). These dimensions are intricately linked to team dynamics and performance outcomes. Social cohesion is associated with mutual trust, liking, and a sense of belonging among team members (Sarwari et al., 2024). Task cohesion, on the other hand, is tied to the team's shared vision, goals, and the pursuit of these objectives (Beal et al., 2003). Both dimensions are vital for creating an environment conducive to effective teamwork and high team performance (Huo et al., 2021).

The formation of team cohesion is shaped by a variety of contributing factors. Leadership style, particularly transformational leadership, has been shown to enhance team cohesion by fostering a sense of purpose and shared values (Aga et al., 2016). Additionally, team composition, including the personality traits and goal orientations of team members, can significantly impact initial cohesion levels and its trajectory over time (Acton et al., 2019). Intercultural communication competence (ICC) and cultural intelligence (CQ) are also recognized as antecedents that can strengthen team cohesion by facilitating better understanding and cooperation among diverse team members (Wang & Teo, 2024). Self-efficacy and emotional intelligence have also been identified as key antecedents, with higher levels leading to increased team cohesion and improved team performance (Black et al., 2019). The consequences of team cohesion extend to various performance-related outcomes. Cohesive

teams tend to exhibit higher levels of innovation, adaptability, and overall effectiveness (Huo et al., 2021). They are also more resilient to stress and challenges, better equipped to handle conflicts, and more likely to achieve their goals (Aga et al., 2016). Furthermore, team cohesion has been linked to lower turnover rates and higher job satisfaction among team members, underscoring its importance in maintaining a stable and motivated workforce (Black, Kim, Rhee, Wang, & Sakchutchawan, 2019). Research also indicates a reciprocal relationship between team cohesion and performance, where cohesion predicts subsequent performance, and performance, in turn, predicts subsequent cohesion (Braun et al., 2020). Despite extensive research, there remain specific gaps, particularly concerning the unique dynamics of team cohesion within the context of Chinese automotive enterprises operating in Thailand. Existing literature often focuses on Western contexts or general multinational corporations, overlooking the nuanced cultural and operational challenges faced by Chinese firms expanding into Southeast Asian markets. The interplay of cultural intelligence, intercultural communicative competence, and team collaboration competence in fostering team cohesion within such a specific industry and geographical setting warrants further investigation.

Team Performance

Team performance is a central construct in organizational behavior and management research, reflecting the effectiveness and efficiency with which a team achieves its objectives (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). It is a multifaceted concept, encompassing not only the quantitative output or quality of work but also the processes and emergent states that contribute to these outcomes (Marks et al., 2001). Key dimensions of team performance often include task performance (e.g., goal achievement, quality, efficiency), adaptive performance (the ability to adjust to changing circumstances), and relational performance (the quality of team interactions and collaboration) (Steegh et al., 2025; Uhlemann et al., 2025). Adaptive performance, in particular, has gained prominence in dynamic and uncertain environments, highlighting a team's capacity for flexibility and responsiveness to novel demands (Steegh et al., 2025).

Numerous factors have been identified as antecedents to team performance. Team composition, including diversity in knowledge, skills, and abilities, can significantly influence performance, though its effects are often moderated by team processes (Bell et al., 2011). Leadership, particularly transformational and empowering styles, plays a crucial role in fostering team effectiveness by shaping team climate, promoting psychological safety, and facilitating goal achievement (Aga et al., 2016; Steegh et al., 2025). Team processes, such as communication, coordination, conflict management, and decision-making, are direct drivers of performance, mediating the relationship between team inputs and outputs (Marks et al., 2001). Furthermore, emergent states like team cohesion, trust, and shared mental models contribute significantly to team performance by enhancing collaboration and reducing process losses (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Uhlemann et al., 2025). In the context of agile teams, goal-setting processes, including goal specificity and continuous refinement, have been shown to positively influence adaptive performance (Steegh et al., 2025).

The impact of team performance extends beyond immediate task completion to broader organizational outcomes. High-performing teams contribute to organizational innovation, competitive advantage, and overall success (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Effective team performance is also linked to increased employee satisfaction, reduced turnover, and a more positive organizational culture (Uhlemann et al., 2025). In complex, cross-cultural settings, team performance is particularly critical, as it directly impacts the success of international ventures and the effective integration of diverse workforces. The ability of teams to perform adaptively in such environments is paramount for navigating cultural differences, unexpected challenges, and evolving market demands (Steegh et al., 2025).

Hypotheses Development

Relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Team Performance (TP), Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), and Team Cohesion (TC)

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is increasingly recognized as a pivotal capability for individuals and teams operating in diverse cultural environments. Its multifaceted nature, encompassing metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions, enables individuals to effectively adapt and interact across cultural boundaries (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). This adaptability is not merely an individual trait but extends its influence to collective outcomes, particularly within multicultural teams. Research consistently demonstrates that higher CQ among team members and leaders fosters an environment conducive to enhanced team performance. This is achieved through improved psychological and intercultural adjustment, reduced cultural friction, and increased well-being, all of which contribute to better task and contextual performance at the individual level (Davaei et al., 2022; Setti et al., 2022). Extending this to the team level, it is posited that a team\'s collective cultural intelligence directly and positively impacts its overall performance, especially in complex cross-cultural settings such as Chinese automotive enterprises operating in Thailand.

Beyond its direct impact on team performance, Cultural Intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping two critical mediating factors: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Team Cohesion (TC). High CQ facilitates more effective communication among team members from diverse backgrounds by enhancing their ability to understand, interpret, and respond appropriately to cultural nuances in verbal and nonverbal cues (Earley & Ang, 2003). This improved understanding and adaptability are fundamental to developing strong Intercultural Communicative Competence within the team. Furthermore, CQ contributes significantly to Team Cohesion by fostering trust and reducing potential conflicts arising from cultural differences (Kim & Ko, 2021; Zhang & Hao, 2022). When team members possess higher CQ, they are more likely to navigate cultural misunderstandings constructively, build stronger interpersonal relationships, and develop a shared sense of identity and purpose. This enhanced communication and reduced friction, driven by CQ, directly strengthens team bonds and collective efficacy. Therefore, we hypothesize that Cultural Intelligence positively influences both Intercultural Communicative Competence and Team Cohesion, which in turn are expected to contribute to superior team performance. Based on the above, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Cultural Intelligence (CQ) positively influences Team Performance (TP).

H2: Cultural Intelligence (CQ) positively influences Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

H3: Cultural Intelligence (CQ) positively influences Team Cohesion (TC).

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Team Cohesion (TC) and Team Performance (TP)

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is a critical capability for effective interaction in culturally diverse environments, enabling individuals to navigate cultural differences, understand varied communication styles, and build meaningful relationships (Byram, 2021). In a team context, high ICC among members is paramount for fostering strong team cohesion. When team members possess strong ICC, they are better equipped to interpret verbal and non-verbal cues accurately, empathize with different cultural perspectives, and adapt their communication strategies to suit the diverse backgrounds within the team. This leads to fewer misunderstandings, reduced communication breakdowns, and a greater sense of mutual respect and understanding. Such an environment naturally enhances interpersonal bonds and a shared sense of identity, which are fundamental components of team cohesion. Research indicates that effective communication, particularly across cultural boundaries,

directly contributes to the development of trust and solidarity within a team, thereby strengthening its overall cohesiveness (Wang & Teo, 2024).

Furthermore, Intercultural Communicative Competence directly impacts Team Performance. Effective communication is the lifeblood of any successful team, and in multicultural settings, ICC ensures that information flows smoothly, ideas are clearly articulated, and decisions are made with a comprehensive understanding of all perspectives. Teams with high ICC can leverage their diverse knowledge bases and problem-solving approaches more effectively, leading to enhanced creativity, innovation, and overall task performance. The ability to bridge cultural gaps in communication allows teams to overcome potential barriers to collaboration, optimize resource utilization, and achieve their objectives more efficiently. This is particularly relevant in international business contexts, where successful project execution often hinges on the seamless integration of diverse cultural inputs and effective cross-cultural collaboration (Djatmika et al., 2024). Therefore, strong ICC not only builds team cohesion but also directly translates into superior team performance. Based on the above, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) positively influences Team Cohesion (TC).

H5: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) positively influences Team Performance (TP).

Team Cohesion (TC) and Team Performance (TP)

Team Cohesion (TC) refers to the degree to which members of a team are attracted to each other and motivated to remain in the group, working collaboratively towards shared goals (Forsyth, 2021). This sense of unity and solidarity is a fundamental determinant of team effectiveness and performance. Cohesive teams typically exhibit higher levels of communication, mutual support, and cooperation, which are all critical for successful task accomplishment. When team members feel a strong sense of belonging and commitment to their group, they are more likely to invest greater effort, share information openly, and resolve conflicts constructively. This positive group dynamic translates into improved coordination, enhanced problem-solving capabilities, and a more efficient allocation of resources, all of which directly contribute to superior team performance (Grossman et al., 2022).

Moreover, the positive impact of team cohesion on performance is particularly evident in challenging or complex environments, such as those faced by multicultural teams in international enterprises. In such settings, high cohesion acts as a buffer against potential stressors and cultural misunderstandings, enabling the team to maintain focus and resilience. Cohesive teams are better equipped to leverage their diverse strengths, as members are more willing to listen to and integrate different perspectives, leading to more innovative solutions and better decision-making. The shared commitment and mutual accountability inherent in cohesive teams drive members to strive for collective success, often exceeding individual contributions. This synergistic effect underscores the vital role of team cohesion in transforming individual efforts into outstanding collective achievements, thereby directly enhancing overall team performance (Tavoletti et al., 2025). Based on the above, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6: Team Cohesion (TC) positively influences Team Performance (TP).

Mediation Effects

The direct relationships proposed between Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Team Cohesion (TC), and Team Performance (TP) suggest a more intricate web of influence, particularly through mediation. It is posited that team cohesion plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between Cultural Intelligence

and Team Performance. While CQ directly enhances an individual\'s ability to function effectively in diverse cultural settings, its impact on team performance is often channeled through the strengthening of team dynamics. Specifically, higher CQ among team members leads to a greater understanding and appreciation of cultural differences, which in turn fosters a more harmonious and collaborative team environment. This improved relational climate, characterized by increased trust and reduced conflict, directly contributes to enhanced team cohesion. A cohesive team, with its strong bonds and shared commitment, is then better positioned to achieve superior performance outcomes. Therefore, team cohesion acts as a crucial bridge, translating the individual and collective cultural intelligence of a team into tangible improvements in its overall effectiveness and output (Kim & Ko, 2021). Based on the above, we propose the following hypotheses:

H7: Team Cohesion (TC) mediates the relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Team Performance (TP).

Extending this mediation, the combined influence of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Team Cohesion (TC) is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Team Performance (TP). Cultural Intelligence serves as the foundational capability, enabling individuals to develop high levels of ICC. This enhanced ICC, characterized by effective cross-cultural communication and understanding, directly contributes to the formation of strong team cohesion by minimizing misunderstandings and fostering mutual respect. As previously discussed, team cohesion then directly drives team performance. Thus, CQ first enhances ICC, which subsequently strengthens TC, and these two factors together collectively lead to improved team performance. This dual mediation pathway suggests a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural intelligence translates into team success, particularly in complex multicultural contexts. It highlights that the benefits of CQ are not solely direct but are amplified through the development of critical interpersonal and group-level competencies, ultimately culminating in superior team outcomes (Jerinic-Ivic et al., 2024). Based on the above, we propose the following hypotheses:

H8: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Team Cohesion (TC) jointly mediate the relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Team Performance (TP).

Following the eight hypotheses outlined above, the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

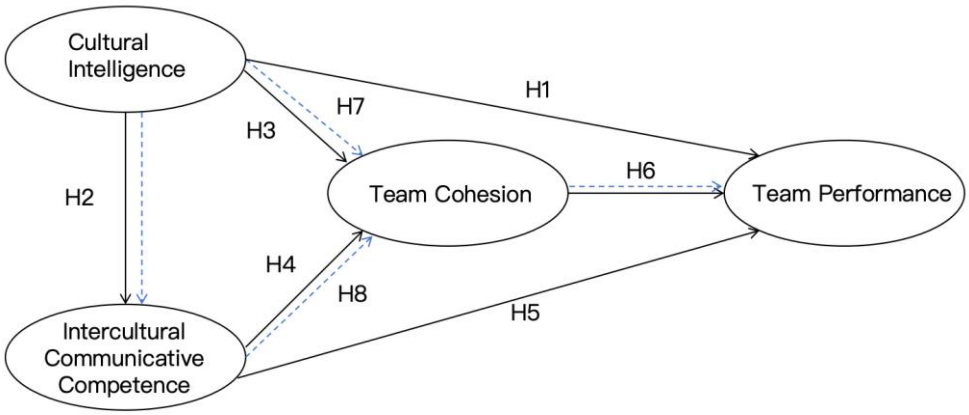

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model

Research Methodology

Sample Design and Data Collection

This study aims to investigate the impact mechanism of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) on team performance among Chinese expatriates working in Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand, with a particular focus on the mediating roles of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Team Cohesion (TC). The research specifically targets Chinese employees working in vehicle manufacturing plants, auto parts suppliers, electric vehicle or battery companies, and dealerships or sales branches operating in Thailand. A convenience sampling method was employed, focusing on Chinese expatriates aged between 20 and 60 who are currently residing and working in Thailand. The survey began by confirming whether the respondent was a Chinese national working in Thailand. Respondents who answered affirmatively were then asked detailed questions about their work status. Individuals outside the specified age range or with no work experience in Thailand were excluded from the study. Data collection was conducted from March to June 2025. A total of 282 questionnaires were collected, of which 263 were deemed valid after removing incomplete or duplicate responses, yielding a valid response rate of 93.26%. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Demographics

		N	%
Gender	Male	132	50.19
	Female	131	49.81
Age	Under 20	0	0
	21-30	88	33.46
	31-40	88	33.46
	41-50	63	23.95
	≥51	24	9.13
Position	Frontline worker	126	47.91
	Technician Engineer	47	17.87
	Manager	75	28.52
	Executive	15	15
Education Level	Middle School	0	0
	College	44	16.73
	Bachelor	149	56.65
	Master	55	20.91
	Doctorate	15	5.7
Organization Type	Chinese vehicle manufacturer	83	31.56
	Auto parts supplier	63	23.95
	EV or battery company	64	24.33
	Dealership or sales company	53	20.15
Years working in this company	Less than 1 year	87	33.08
	1–3 years	86	32.7
	4–6 years	62	23.57
	More than 6 years	28	10.65
Are you involved in a cross-cultural team at your company?	Yes	221	84.03
	No	42	15.97

Research Results

Data Analysis

For data analysis, this study utilized Partial Least Squares (PLS), a statistical technique well-suited for exploratory and predictive research. The PLS approach consists of two main components: the measurement model and the structural model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). To assess the significance of the causal relationships, the bootstrapping method was applied (Efron, 1979), involving 5,000 resamples from 375 valid responses to estimate parameters and perform statistical inference. The measurement model aimed to examine the linkage between observed indicators and their corresponding latent constructs. Its reliability and validity were assessed through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Meanwhile, the structural model analysis evaluated the path strengths and the explanatory capacity of the hypothesized relationships between constructs. All analyses were carried out using SmartPLS 4 software.

Measurement Model

In Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis, the associations between observed indicator variables and their underlying latent constructs are described by the outer model. As summarized in Table 2, each construct demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7, in accordance with the criteria established by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity of Constructs

Constract	Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
CQ	CQ1	3.262	1.105	0.964	0.965	0.597
	CQ2	3.270	1.133			
	CQ3	3.338	1.165			
	CQ4	3.357	1.171			
	CQ5	3.304	1.160			
	CQ6	3.274	1.164			
	CQ7	3.304	1.106			
	CQ8	3.240	1.186			
	CQ9	3.327	1.089			
	CQ10	3.289	1.144			
	CQ11	3.205	1.152			
	CQ12	3.240	1.086			
	CQ13	3.259	1.128			
	CQ14	3.209	1.143			
	CQ15	3.232	1.145			
	CQ16	3.300	1.166			
	CQ17	3.270	1.116			
	CQ18	3.213	1.100			
	CQ19	3.289	1.140			
	CQ20	3.262	1.139			
	ICC1	3.354	1.177			
	ICC2	3.278	1.118			
	ICC3	3.297	1.128			
	ICC4	3.327	1.147			

Constract	Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
ICC	ICC5	3.376	1.130	0.926	0.928	0.628
	ICC6	3.243	1.158			
	ICC7	3.342	1.098			
	ICC8	3.297	1.135			
	ICC9	3.376	1.153			
TC	TC1	3.433	1.101	0.921	0.923	0.643
	TC2	3.407	1.149			
	TC3	3.456	1.142			
	TC4	3.430	1.167			
	TC5	3.414	1.113			
	TC6	3.414	1.143			
	TC7	3.289	1.082			
	TC8	3.338	1.155			
TP	TP1	3.293	1.148	0.934	0.935	0.656
	TP2	3.297	1.145			
	TP3	3.316	1.152			
	TP4	3.323	1.166			
	TP5	3.327	1.214			
	TP6	3.373	1.159			
	TP7	3.338	1.138			
	TP8	3.365	1.142			
	TP9	3.316	1.108			

To evaluate construct validity, this study examined both convergent and discriminant validity. According to the guidelines proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), convergent validity is considered adequate when factor loadings exceed 0.5, average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5, and reliability coefficients surpass 0.7. As presented in Table 3, all constructs meet these thresholds, thereby supporting the convergent validity of the model. Discriminant validity was further assessed by comparing the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with other constructs. The results, also shown in Table 3, reveal that the square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than its corresponding inter-construct correlations, confirming satisfactory discriminant validity.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Latent Constructs

	CQ	ICC	TC	TP
CQ	0.773			
ICC	0.346	0.792		
TC	0.392	0.352	0.802	
TP	0.372	0.405	0.406	0.810

Discriminant reflects the degree to which two conceptually distinct constructs are empirically separate. A low correlation between constructs, as revealed through correlation analysis, typically suggests satisfactory discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Following Hair et al. (2017), one common approach for assessing discriminant validity

involves comparing the square root of each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with its correlations with other constructs. Discriminant validity is supported when the square root of a construct's AVE exceeds its corresponding inter-construct correlations. As illustrated in Table 4, each diagonal AVE square root is greater than the off-diagonal correlation values, indicating adequate discriminant validity. In addition, more recent research recommends using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio to evaluate discriminant validity more robustly. HTMT values below 0.85 suggest strong discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015), and values below 0.90 are also considered acceptable in more lenient thresholds (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). As shown in Table 5, all HTMT ratios in this study fall within the recommended range, further confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix of Latent Constructs

	CQ	ICC	TC	TP
CQ1	0.782	0.260	0.274	0.301
CQ2	0.782	0.250	0.350	0.290
CQ3	0.770	0.278	0.291	0.267
CQ4	0.755	0.264	0.273	0.293
CQ5	0.768	0.263	0.299	0.256
CQ6	0.776	0.305	0.382	0.322
CQ7	0.761	0.278	0.337	0.320
CQ8	0.799	0.235	0.346	0.304
CQ9	0.759	0.269	0.315	0.321
CQ10	0.738	0.260	0.309	0.315
CQ11	0.771	0.280	0.294	0.249
CQ12	0.769	0.250	0.297	0.321
CQ13	0.755	0.216	0.266	0.295
CQ14	0.776	0.305	0.242	0.284
CQ15	0.786	0.303	0.263	0.248
CQ16	0.787	0.248	0.350	0.237
CQ17	0.784	0.280	0.292	0.251
CQ18	0.765	0.245	0.253	0.272
CQ19	0.812	0.261	0.301	0.285
CQ20	0.754	0.287	0.284	0.297
ICC1	0.293	0.840	0.337	0.389
ICC2	0.242	0.777	0.229	0.298
ICC3	0.284	0.805	0.316	0.324
ICC4	0.275	0.778	0.266	0.343
ICC5	0.271	0.803	0.263	0.335
ICC6	0.276	0.785	0.277	0.326
ICC7	0.246	0.780	0.274	0.276
ICC8	0.256	0.772	0.290	0.291
ICC9	0.318	0.788	0.245	0.290
TC1	0.326	0.289	0.800	0.309
TC2	0.320	0.312	0.832	0.325
TC3	0.291	0.254	0.781	0.286
TC4	0.345	0.302	0.826	0.301
TC5	0.308	0.270	0.760	0.313
TC6	0.307	0.299	0.822	0.351
TC7	0.307	0.260	0.800	0.285
TC8	0.307	0.267	0.793	0.295
TP1	0.308	0.279	0.301	0.801
TP2	0.318	0.308	0.334	0.796
TP3	0.281	0.320	0.345	0.812
TP4	0.300	0.323	0.313	0.821
TP5	0.319	0.342	0.365	0.813
TP6	0.311	0.301	0.357	0.811
TP7	0.276	0.304	0.334	0.815
TP8	0.334	0.406	0.323	0.827
TP9	0.258	0.358	0.280	0.791

Table 5. HTMT Ratio Testing Between Constructs

	CQ	ICC	TC
ICC	0.365		
TC	0.413	0.378	
TP	0.389	0.431	0.435

Structural Model Analysis

Based on the proposed theoretical framework, the structural model was constructed and examined using SmartPLS 4 software to evaluate the causal relationships and estimate the

corresponding path coefficients. Table 6 presents the standardized path coefficients, t-values, and outcomes of the hypothesis testing. The results of the structural model are visually depicted in Table 4. Among the proposed hypotheses, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 were acceptted.

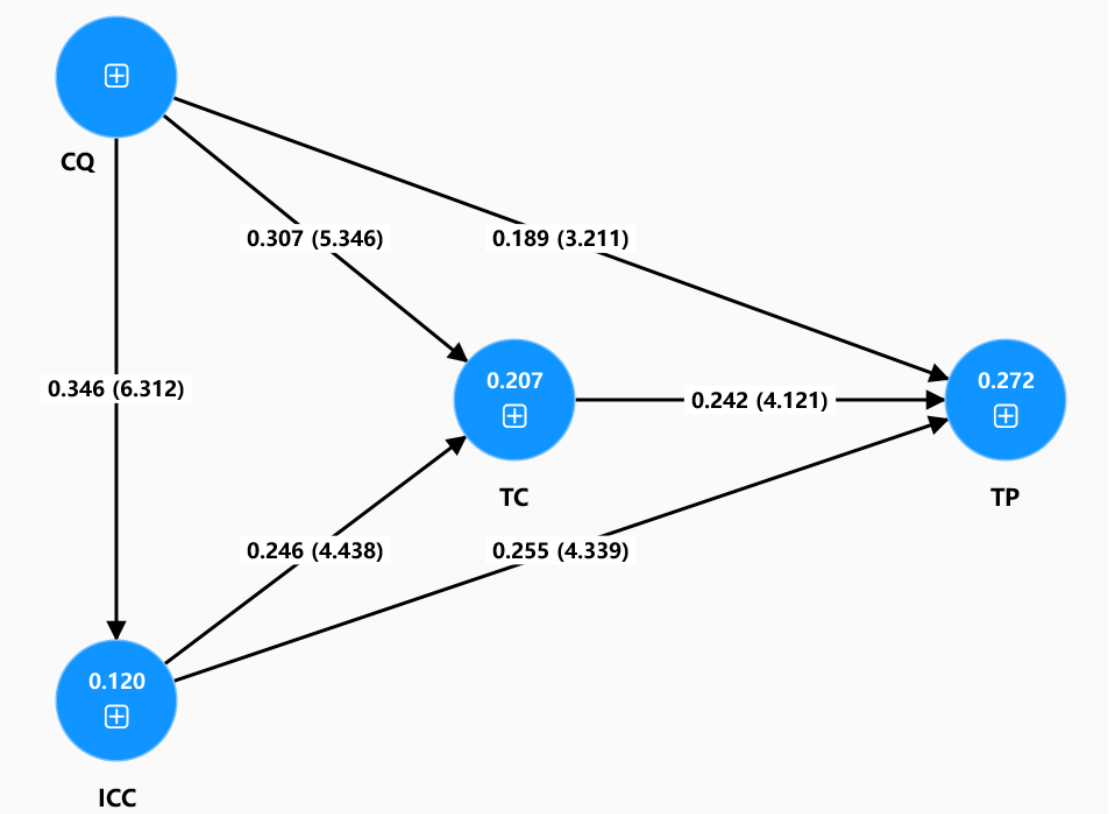

Figure 2. Structural Model Results

Testing of Mediation Effects

To assess the statistical significance of the mediation model proposed in this study, both path analysis and the Sobel test were conducted (Sobel, 1982). The Sobel test was employed to compute Z-values for the indirect effects (see Table 6). A mediator is considered to have a significant effect between the independent and dependent variables if the absolute Z-value exceeds 1.96.

Furthermore, the study utilized the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence intervals to validate the mediating effects (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). A total of 10,000 bootstrap resamples were generated to obtain 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects. Since zero was not contained within the confidence intervals, the mediation effects were deemed statistically significant.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results and Testing of Mediation Effects

Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1	CQ -> ICC	0.346	6.312	0.000	Accepted
H2	CQ -> TC	0.307	5.346	0.000	Accepted
H3	CQ -> TP	0.189	3.211	0.001	Accepted
H4	ICC -> TC	0.246	4.438	0.000	Accepted
H5	ICC -> TP	0.255	4.339	0.000	Accepted
H6	TC -> TP	0.242	4.121	0.000	Accepted
H7	CQ -> TC -> TP	0.074	3.105	0.002	Accepted
H8	CQ -> ICC -> TC -> TP	0.021	2.651	0.008	Accepted

Research Discussion

Summary of Findings and Response to Literature Review

This study set out to explore the impact mechanism of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) on team performance within Chinese automotive enterprises operating in Thailand, with a particular emphasis on the mediating roles of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Team Cohesion (TC). The results reveal that CQ has a significant positive influence on Team Performance (TP), which is partially mediated by ICC and TC. Specifically, CQ not only directly enhances TP but also indirectly boosts team performance through the improvement of ICC and TC. These findings align with existing literature that underscores the crucial role of CQ in multicultural team settings (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Ang, 2003). They further elucidate the pathways through which CQ operates within a particular industry and regional context.

In the literature review, we highlighted the pivotal role of CQ in cross-cultural teams, especially against the backdrop of Chinese automotive enterprises operating in Thailand. Prior research has shown that CQ positively affects individual cross-cultural adaptation and team performance (Ang et al., 2007; Leung et al., 2014). This study empirically corroborates these perspectives and uncovers the mediating mechanisms of ICC and TC in the relationship between CQ and TP. This finding resonates with Jerinic-Ivic et al. (2024), who highlight the significance of ICC in multicultural teams. Moreover, the study\'s results show that CQ significantly impacts both ICC and TC, echoing the findings of Wang & Teo (2024).

Theoretical Contributions

Firstly, by utilizing the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, this study reveals how CQ influences team performance through ICC and TC. This finding enriches CQ theory, particularly in the realm of cross-cultural team management. While existing research predominantly focuses on the impact of CQ on individual cross-cultural adaptation, this study offers a novel perspective by examining the role of CQ at the team level. It provides insights into how CQ functions within organizational contexts, thereby expanding the theoretical understanding of CQ.

Secondly, the results indicate that ICC and TC play a crucial mediating role between CQ and TP. This finding underscores the importance of communication capabilities and team cohesion in cross-cultural teams. It aligns with existing literature highlighting the positive impact of ICC and TC on team performance (Jerinic-Ivic et al., 2024; Sarwari et al., 2024). By empirically validating these theoretical viewpoints, this study offers concrete theoretical support for cross-cultural team management.

Thirdly, focusing on the operational environment of Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand, this study provides empirical evidence in a specific industry and regional context. This helps fill the gap in existing literature regarding the study of CQ in non-Western emerging markets. By analyzing the cross-cultural team management practices of Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand, this study offers new evidence for the universality and applicability of

CQ theory.

Managerial Implications

Firstly, the results show that CQ has a significant positive impact on team performance. Therefore, managers should prioritize enhancing employees\' CQ through cross-cultural training and practical opportunities to help them better adapt to and manage cross-cultural team environments. This not only improves individual cross-cultural adaptability but also boosts overall team performance.

Secondly, the mediating role of ICC and TC between CQ and TP suggests that managers should focus on developing team members\' communication capabilities and team cohesion. By promoting effective communication and trust-building among team members, managers can enhance team cohesion, which in turn improves team performance. This requires managers to incorporate cross-cultural communication skills training into team-building initiatives and take measures to reduce cultural conflicts.

Thirdly, this study offers specific strategic recommendations for cross-cultural team management. Managers should tailor management strategies based on the specific circumstances of their teams to optimize team performance. For example, in the context of Chinese automotive enterprises operating in Thailand, managers can adopt transformational leadership styles to cultivate shared values and a sense of purpose among team members, thereby enhancing team cohesion (Aga et al., 2016). Additionally, managers can provide cross-cultural training and practical opportunities to improve team members\' CQ and ICC, leading to better team performance.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Limitations of the Study

This study, while providing valuable insights, is not without its limitations. One limitation pertains to the sampling method. The study employed a convenience sampling method, with participants primarily being Chinese employees working in Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand. This sampling approach may introduce bias, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research could employ more robust sampling techniques, such as random or stratified sampling, to enhance the representativeness of the sample and the reliability of the results.

Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the study. With data collected at a single point in time, the ability to infer causality is restricted. Future research could adopt a longitudinal design, collecting data at multiple time points to more accurately assess the dynamic relationships between CQ, ICC, TC, and TP.

Lastly, focusing on Chinese automotive enterprises in Thailand, this study\'s findings may not be readily applicable to other industries or regions. Future research could explore different industry and geographical contexts to validate the universality of the results.

Future Research Directions

Future research could address these limitations and expand on the current study\'s findings in several ways. Utilizing a longitudinal research design, future studies could gather data at various time intervals to more precisely evaluate the evolving relationships between CQ, ICC, TC, and TP. This approach would offer deeper insights into the temporal dynamics and potential causality among these variables.

Investigating different industry and geographical contexts could help verify the generalizability of the findings. Conducting research across diverse settings would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how CQ operates within various cultural environments and contribute to the development of more robust cross-cultural team management theories.
Incorporating additional variables, such as leadership style and team composition, into future

research could offer a more holistic view of the factors influencing team performance. This would enable a more nuanced exploration of the complex interplay between CQ and other variables, providing more targeted strategic recommendations for cross-cultural team management.

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