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**FACTORS INFLUENCING EXPATRIATES' INTENTION TO STAY:
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION
AND THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between motivational factors (including hygiene factors) and intelligence factors (cultural intelligence and social intelligence) on expatriates' intention to stay and continue working in Pakistan. Additionally, it investigates the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of social infrastructure in these relationships. A quantitative research approach was adopted, with data gathered through survey questionnaires from a sample of 303 expatriates working in three major Pakistani cities, namely Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi were involved in this study. The findings reveal a significant and positive relationship between motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence, and social intelligence with job satisfaction. Regarding expatriates' intention to stay, all independent variables showed a significant relationship, except for cultural intelligence. Furthermore, job satisfaction was found to be positively associated with expatriates' intention to stay and mediated the relationship between motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence, and social intelligence with expatriates' retention intentions. However, the results indicate that social infrastructure does not moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay. This study contributes to the existing literature on expatriate retention and offers useful insights for firms and policymakers on the key factors that influence expatriates' decision to remain in a country.

Keywords: Motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence, social intelligence, social infrastructure, expatriates' intention to stay.

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has led to a significant increase in the number of expatriates employed globally. According to Ireland (2021), approximately 56.8 million expatriates are currently working across the globe, with the number expected to continue rising in the coming years. Over the past five years, the global expatriate population has grown at a compound annual rate of 4.7 percent. The term "expatriation" originates from the Latin word "ex-patria," which means "out of the country" (Suutari et al., 2018). Historically, this word has been used to describe individuals who leave their home countries to live and work abroad (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). This study focused on expatriates' intention to stay, which refers to their desire and plan to remain in the host country beyond their initial assignment (Nguyen & Andresen, 2023). From the host country's perspective, expatriates are qualified professionals who bring valuable expertise, cultural diversity, and economic benefits. Their intention to stay is influenced not only by personal and professional incentives but also by the host country's ability to provide a favourable environment. Key factors affecting expatriates' intention include social integration, career opportunities, cultural adaptability, and overall life satisfaction. Additionally, expatriates contribute to knowledge transmission and the development of social capital within organisations in the host country (Andresen et al., 2018). As a developing nation, Pakistan is largely dependent on foreign professionals, particularly from developed countries, to undertake high-value projects and key organisational roles. To remain competitive in the global market, companies in Pakistan increasingly recognise expatriates as valuable assets that drive business success (Elahi et al., 2018).

Lately, expatriates have chosen to come to Pakistan due to professional opportunities linked to major projects, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Many view these opportunities as avenues for career advancement while embracing the challenges of working in a different cultural and economic setting (Ahmad, 2016). Additionally, organisational support, especially in high-risk environments, plays a crucial role in facilitating expatriates' adjustment and performance, making Pakistan an attractive work destination (Sarfraz et al., 2023). However, compared to other developing countries, Pakistan faces challenges in attracting and retaining expatriates for extended period of time (Noman et al., 2020). Many expatriates in Pakistan do not extend their stay, highlighting its limited appeal as a long-term destination. This is further underscored by Pakistan's absence from the top 53 preferred expatriate destinations in the Expat Insider Report published by InterNations (2023). This report examines expatriate preferences across various dimensions, including quality of life, leisure options, healthcare, safety and security, as well as environmental conditions. To enhance Pakistan's attractiveness to expatriates, a systematic approach is needed, one that prioritizes personal development, job satisfaction, and friendly surroundings. A well-planned and multifaceted strategy will be essential in cultivating a more positive image of Pakistan and positioning it as a competitive option for expatriates in the global workforce.

Several factors contributing to expatriates' decision to leave their host countries have been identified in previous studies. These include insufficient job satisfaction, unmet job expectations, and challenges related to spouse and family adjustment (Iqbal et al., 2019). Elahi et al. (2018) investigated the challenges expatriates experience in Pakistan, particularly regarding management styles, interactions with colleagues, lifestyles, and knowledge transfer. The findings indicate that expatriates face significant challenges related to management styles, knowledge transfer, and trust building. In addition, cultural differences including verbal and non-verbal communication, values, and societal norms pose further challenges. Jackson (2012) argues that expatriates often struggle with societal norms, market conditions and institutional systems, all of which need to be addressed to facilitate their integration.

Failure to address these challenges may impede expatriates' ability to adapt to the local culture, adversely affecting their performance and in turn, the success of the organisation. Consequently, these factors may prompt expatriates to leave the country upon completing their assignments. Most previous studies on expatriates in Pakistan have specifically focused on Chinese expatriates. For example, Nadeem and Mumtaz (2018) examined the role of work clarity, local support, and adjustment among Chinese expatriates in Pakistan. Harzing and Christensen (2004) suggest that an expatriate's inability to adjust to a foreign environment due to cultural differences, lack of motivation, or subpar performance can lead to assignment failure, often resulting in their premature home. Similarly, Black and Gregersen (1991) highlights the importance of factors such as transportation, food, accommodation, and healthcare in the retention of expatriates. When expatriates are dissatisfied with the host country's social infrastructure and overall environment, their likelihood of leaving increases. This is particularly evident among assigned expatriates who often express dissatisfaction with their postings in developing countries.

Although various factors influencing expatriates' intention to stay have been explored in the literature, a significant gap remains in understanding how these factors interact. While previous studies have acknowledged the role of individual characteristics such as personality traits, cultural intelligence, and social intelligence there is a shortage of studies examining how these factors interact with one another. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the moderating effect of social infrastructure on the relationship between job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay. Understanding how social infrastructure can enhance or reduce the impact of personal factors and job satisfaction on expatriates' retention will contribute valuable insights to the existing literature. Therefore, this study seeks to close these gaps by thoroughly analysing the combined influence of individual factors on expatriates' intention to stay, clarifying the mediating role of job satisfaction, and examining the moderating effects of social infrastructure. In this context, expatriates' intention to stay serves as the dependent variable, while motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence, and social intelligence function as independent variables. Job satisfaction acts as a mediator, while social infrastructure acts as a moderating variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Expatriates, commonly known as expats, are individuals who live and work in a foreign country for an extended period due to employment reasons (Harzing & Pinnington, 2014). They are typically characterised by their intention to return to their home country upon completing their assignment abroad (Dowling et al., 2017). Expatriates play an important role in international organisations by facilitating knowledge transfer, skill development, and management expertise across national boundaries. Their assignments frequently require significant cultural adaptation and adjustment to new work environments, contributing to both personal and organisational growth (Selmer, 2019). There are two main categories of expatriates: self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) and assigned expatriates, each with unique traits and motivations. Assigned expatriates are employees transferred by their employers to foreign offices or subsidiaries to fulfill specific roles. Conversely, self-initiated expatriates are those who willingly choose to live and work abroad for both personal or professional reasons (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). According to Tett and Meyer (1993), an employee's intention to stay with an organisation reflects their commitment and willingness to continue working there, without planning to leave right after their assignment ends. This commitment serves as a key indicator of workforce stability and reflects employees' dedication to their organisation.

Theoretical Underpinning

In order to identify key factors and develop the theoretical framework, this study draws on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the Theory of Social Intelligence, and the Theory of Infrastructure-Led Growth. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between motivators and hygiene factors in explaining job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Motivators such as challenging work and recognition enhance job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. In contrast, hygiene factors including fair pay and job security help prevent dissatisfaction but do not independently improve job satisfaction. For organisations to foster a positive work environment and support employee engagement and retention, they must address both motivators and hygienic factors (Herzberg, 1968). The Theory of Social Intelligence focuses on cognitive and emotional abilities that enable individuals to navigate social situations effectively. This includes understanding and empathising with others, which improves interpersonal relationships and workplace dynamics. High social intelligence contributes to improved leadership, teamwork, and adaptability. Meanwhile, the Theory of Infrastructure-Led Growth suggests that infrastructure investments are crucial for economic growth as they lay the groundwork for productive activities. Social infrastructure, such as healthcare and education, promotes well-being, social cohesion and quality of life. Effective infrastructure development requires strategic planning and strong governance (Björkqvist et al., 2000; Inderst, 2020; Schindler & Kanai, 2021; Yeh, 2013).

Hypothesis Development

Motivational factors refer to elements foster positive attitudes at work, encouraging individuals to work harder and more efficiently (Herzberg et al., 1959). Key motivational factors include the nature of the work, recognition, career growth, progress, sense of accomplishment, and future opportunities, influence employee motivation. When organisations provide these intrinsic motivators, employees tend to exhibit higher levels of commitment towards their jobs. A motivated workforce benefits companies by driving innovation, increasing productivity, and cultivating a favourable work environment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Furthermore, leadership that prioritises motivation fosters a workplace culture that enhances employee engagement, leading to greater levels of organisational commitment and lower turnover rates (Cameron & Pierce, 2002). The impact of motivational factors on employees' intention to stay has been widely studied. A recent study by Chen et al. (2022) explores this relationship and found a positive correlation suggesting that individuals driven by intrinsic motivation are more likely to remain with their current employer. Based on this, the first hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between motivational factors and expatriates' intention to stay.

Additionally, a study by Maican et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between motivational factors and job satisfaction among small-scale farmers in Romania. The study revealed a strong positive link between the two, highlighting the significance of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational elements in improving job satisfaction. Based on these arguments, the second hypothesis of the study is proposed:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between motivational factors and expatriates' job satisfaction.

Hygiene factors are the extrinsic elements of the work environment that, when inadequately managed, may lead to employee dissatisfaction. These factors include compensation and benefits, working

conditions, company policies, interpersonal relationships, job security, and supervision. While hygiene factors help prevent dissatisfaction, they do not necessarily enhance motivation or performance (Cinar et al., 2011). Poor management of these factors can create a negative work environment leading to dissatisfaction and potential turnover (Maidani, 1991). Herzberg Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) underscores the importance of hygiene factors, such as working conditions and organisational policies in preventing dissatisfaction, which in turn influences an employee's intention to stay. Research findings suggest that a supportive work environment and strong interpersonal relationships positively contribute to employees' commitment to their current employer. Therefore, the third hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows:

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between hygiene factors and expatriates' intention to stay.

A study by Rahmatullah et al. (2019) investigated the influence of hygiene factors on job satisfaction among teachers in Indonesian public high schools. The findings indicated that hygiene factors, including working conditions, supervision, and organisational policies, had a significant positive impact on job satisfaction. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: There is a significant positive association between hygiene factors and expatriates' job satisfaction.

Cultural intelligence (CQ), refers to an individual's ability to effectively adapt and navigate different cultural environments. Expatriates with high levels of cultural intelligence are more likely to establish strong social relationships with individuals in the host country (Abdullah et al., 2020). CQ also includes an individual's capacity to work efficiently in intercultural settings and make informed decisions in response to diverse cultural contexts (Ang et al., 2006). Cultural intelligence is expected to influence the employee's intention to stay. For example, Chen et al. (2021) conducted a study exploring the relationship between cultural intelligence and employees' commitment to their organisations. The results indicate a positive association, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of cultural intelligence are more likely to stay in their current jobs. Similarly, Thomas and Inkson (2003) stressed the role of cultural intelligence in foreseeing successful workplace adaptation and performance. These studies highlight the important role of cultural intelligence in nurturing a positive workplace environment, ultimately influencing expatriates' intention to stay. Thus, the next hypothesis is:

H5: There is a significant positive association between cultural intelligence and expatriates' intention to stay.

According to Li et al. (2022), cultural intelligence and job satisfaction are positively correlated, indicating that employees with higher levels of cultural intelligence generally report greater job satisfaction. Similarly, a study by Ashraf and Sahni (2024) on employees in upscale hotels revealed that individuals with enhanced cultural intelligence are better equipped to navigate cross-cultural challenges, leading to increased job satisfaction. Based on these findings, the next hypothesis is:

H6: There is a significant positive association between cultural intelligence and expatriates' job satisfaction

Social intelligence is the ability to effectively understand and navigate social situations. It includes comprehending social cues, demonstrating empathy, engaging in interpersonal communication, and

building and maintaining relationships. Social intelligence also involves an awareness of social dynamics, sensitivity to other's feelings, and the ability to adjust one's behaviour in different cultural environments (Goleman, 2006). Previous research highlights the important role of social intelligence in fostering a healthy work environment and encouraging employees' intention to stay. For example, Eketu and Edeh (2015) studied the link between social intelligence and employees' commitment to their organisations. The results showed a significant positive relationship, suggesting that individuals who possess higher social intelligence are more likely to remain committed in their current jobs. Employees with high social intelligence not only understand cultural nuances, but also contribute to inclusive and culturally aware workplace environments. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is:

H7: There is a significant positive effect of social intelligence on expatriates' intention to stay.

Additionally, studies have highlighted the role of social intelligence in improving job satisfaction. Research by Park and Kim (2023) found a positive correlation between social intelligence and job satisfaction, indicating that individuals with higher social intelligence generally experience greater job satisfaction. Hence, the following hypothesis is:

H8: There is a significant positive effect of social intelligence on expatriates' job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is commonly defined as the extent to which an employee experiences positive feelings or attitudes toward their job and work environment (Meyer et al., 2021). Spector (2012) emphasises the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on job satisfaction. Intrinsic factors include the nature of the work, opportunities for skill development, and a sense of accomplishment. Extrinsic factors include salary, benefits, and interpersonal relationships which are equally influential in shaping employees' job satisfaction.

Empirical studies have explored the effect of job satisfaction on employees' intention to stay. Wunn and Tseng (2023) found a significant positive association between employees' job satisfaction and their intention to remain with their organisation. Employees who are content with their jobs are more likely to continue working with their current organisation. Furthermore, Judge et al. (2001) highlighted that a high level of job satisfaction was found to have a major effect on an employee's commitment to stay in their current employment. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H9: There is a significant relationship between job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay.

Job satisfaction is also considered a key mediating variable in the relationship between the independent variables (motivational factors, hygiene factors, social intelligence, and cultural intelligence) and expatriates' intention to stay. Several studies have demonstrated that job satisfaction serves as a significant mediator in this context. For instance, Hwang et al. (2018) examined the impact of motivational factors—such as career advancement opportunities and recognition—on expatriates' intentions to stay. The results indicated that job satisfaction partially mediated this relationship, suggesting that motivation influences expatriates' intention to stay, both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H10: Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between motivational factors and expatriates' intention to stay.

H11: Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between hygiene factors and expatriates' intention to stay.

H12: Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between social intelligence and expatriates' intention to stay.

H13: Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between cultural intelligence and expatriates' intention to stay.

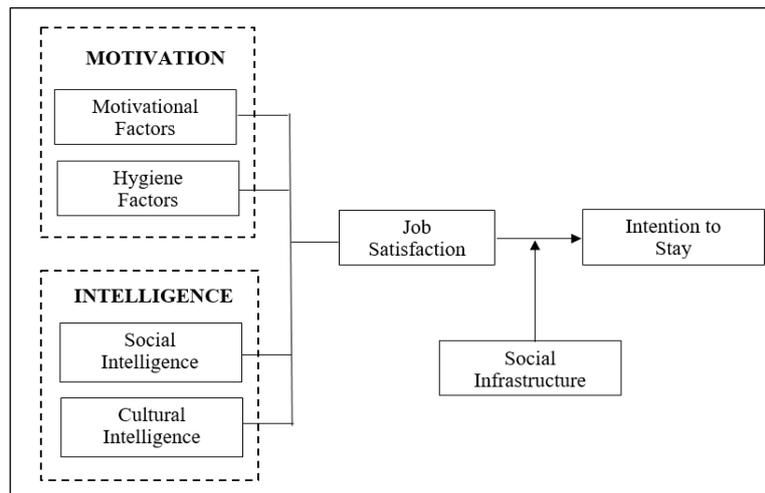
Social infrastructure refers to the facilities and systems provided by a country, city, or region that are essential for economic and social stability (O'Sullivan et al., 2003). This includes transportation, communication, healthcare, and other public services. As a sub-category of the broader infrastructure sector, social infrastructure consists of assets that provide essential social services and support networks. This study proposes that social infrastructure plays a crucial role in influencing expatriates' decisions to continue working in a particular country. Well-developed social infrastructure—such as efficient transportation systems, adequate housing, accessible healthcare services, and robust communication networks—can enhance expatriates' overall quality of life, making it easier for them to adapt and thrive in a new environment. Agada and Zeb-Obipi's (2018) study shows that social infrastructure developments including guesthouses, clubs, housing schemes, and transportation facilities, positively influence employees' commitment to their organisations. In addition, previous studies such as those by Mustafa et al. (2019) and Balarabe (2018), have examined infrastructure as a moderator in their study, demonstrating its impact on the dependent variables studied. These findings provide a strong foundation for considering social infrastructure as a moderator in this study, particularly in the relationship between job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay. By incorporating social infrastructure as a moderating factor, this study aims to provide deeper insights into how external conditions—characterised by the quality of transportation, communication, healthcare, and other essential services—affect the strength and direction of the relationships between job satisfaction (an individual-level factor), and expatriates' intention to stay. Based on these considerations, the final hypothesis of this study is proposed:

H14: Social infrastructure significantly moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay.

Based on the theoretical foundation and existing literature, the theoretical framework of the study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The Theoretical of the Study



METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design, utilising a survey questionnaire to examine relationship among the study variables. The target population for this research comprised all expatriates currently working in Pakistan. According to an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of expatriates in Pakistan in 2020 is 1,346 (Personal communication, October 6, 2021). Since this data is not publicly available through websites or Pakistan's International Chamber of Commerce, the ministry provided a list of expatriates upon personal request. To determine an appropriate sample size, this study referred to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which provides a statistical guideline for minimising sampling error. Based on their sample size table, a population of 1,346 corresponds to an ideal sample size of 297 to 302 respondents. A systematic random sampling technique was employed. To ensure an adequate number of responses, the initial plan was to distribute 600 surveys, which is double the minimum recommended sample size. However, 503 survey questionnaires were successfully distributed.

Survey distribution focused on expatriates working in Pakistan's three major cities, namely Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi as these cities host key businesses and industries and accommodate a majority of the expatriate workforce. A self-administered, in-person approach was chosen to enhance response rates, enable direct interaction with respondents, and improve data reliability and quality. Selected expatriates were first contacted to obtain their consent and schedule an appointment. During the meeting, the survey was personally handed to the them. Some respondents completed and returned the questionnaire on the spot, while others requested to submit it later. In the end, a total of 336 completed survey questionnaires were successfully collected from the expatriates. All survey scales and items utilised in this study were adapted from previous research, with necessary modifications to align them with the specific context of this study. The sources of these survey items are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Sources of Survey Questionnaire Items

Variable	Item	Author
Motivational factors	14	Hong and Waheed 2011
Hygiene factors	16	Hong and Waheed, 2011
Cultural intelligence	10	Afsr et al. 2020
Social intelligence	15	Koopmans et al. 2013
Intent to stay	9	Mayfield et al. 2017
Job satisfaction	10	Hong and Waheed, 2011
Social infrastructure	10	Koopmans et al. 2013

The unit of analysis for this study is individual expatriates currently working in Pakistan. In order to assess the reliability of the survey questionnaire items, a pilot study was conducted on 10 expatriates. This pilot study aimed to ensure content validity, language clarity, question structure, and overall coherence, as well as to verify the internal consistency of the instruments used to measure the study's variables. Following the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each variable and are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Motivational Factors	0.739
Hygiene Factors	0.736
Cultural Intelligence	0.876
Job Satisfaction	0.866
Intention to Stay	0.914
Social Infrastructure	0.723
Social Intelligence	0.960

The results indicate that all variables have Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70, which is the commonly accepted standard for satisfactory reliability. This suggests a high level of internal consistency, meaning that the items within each construct are strongly correlated and measure the intended concepts effectively.

RESULTS

Of the 503 distributed survey questionnaires, 336 were returned, with 303 deemed usable for data analysis. The remaining responses were excluded due to incomplete responses or significant missing data. Table 3 provides the demographic profile of the respondents and key findings of the analysis. To assess the reliability and validity, factor loadings for the reflective constructs were examined to ensure

they met the cut-off point of 0.5, as suggested by Hair et al. (2022). Items with loadings below 0.5 were removed, as shown in Appendix 1. Higher loadings indicate a larger shared variance within the construct, reflecting a stronger relationship, whereas low loadings suggest weaker explanatory power of the model and can affect parameter estimates associated with the construct (Corte-Real et al., 2017). The next step in the analysis involved testing discriminant validity. When two or more unique concepts have little or no relationship with one another, discriminant validity is attained (Hair et al., 2022). This was assessed using: (i) The Fornell-Larcker criterion - The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should exceed its correlation with other constructs. Table 4 highlights these values in bold. (ii) The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) - discriminant validity is confirmed when all HTMT values are below 0.85. Table 4 indicates that all indicators meet this criterion, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

To test the hypothesis, a structural model was developed and analysed using a bootstrapping procedure (Zhao et al., 2010). Before assessing the structural model, it was crucial to ensure that the measurement model met all validity and reliability requirements. During the structural model assessment, the path coefficients (β) were examined, and their significance was tested using bootstrap analysis. Path coefficients provide information about the direction and strength of the relationships between variables. When the standardised values of β are close to +1, it indicates a strong positive association between the constructs, and vice versa (Hair et al., 2022). The path coefficients (β) values are presented in Table 6. The findings from the bootstrapping PLS-SEM output confirmed a significant positive association between all independent variables and expatriates' intention to stay, except for the relationship between cultural intelligence and intention to stay, which was not statistically significant.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	233	76.9%
	Female	70	23.1%
Age	Below 30	69	22.8%
	30 to 39	123	40.6%
	40 to 49	83	27.4%
	Above 50	28	9.2%
Marital Status	Married	139	45.9%
	Not married	164	54.1%
Education	High School	62	20.5%
	Diploma	80	26.4%
	Masters	136	44.9%
	Doctorate	25	8.3%
Origin	America	16	5.3%
	Europe	28	9.2%
	Asia	138	45.5%
	Oceania	61	20.1%
	Africa	60	19.8%

(continued)

Variable	Category	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
Length of Service as an Expatriate	Less than 1 year	69	22.8%
	1 to 3 years	84	27.7%
	4 to 6 years	71	23.4%
	7 to10 years	68	22.4%
	Above 10 years	11	3.6%
Current Position	Non-Managerial	138	45.5%
	Middle Management	111	36.6%
	Senior Management	54	17.8%
Number of Countries of Expatriation	1 to 2	165	54.5%
	3 to 4	81	26.7%
	5 to 6	41	13.5%
	7 to10	16	5.3%
	Above 10	0	0.0%
Length of Service in Pakistan (Year)	Less than 1 year	147	48.5%
	1 to 3 years	88	29.0%
	4 to 6 years	47	15.5%
	7 to10 years	17	5.6%
	Above 10 years	4	1.3%

Table 4

Fornell-Larcker Criterion Analysis for Checking Discriminant Validity

	CI	HF	INF	IS	JS	MOT	SI
Cultural Intelligence (CI)	0.856						
Hygiene Factors (HF)	0.371	0.632					
Social Infrastructure (INF)	0.173	0.133	0.894				
Intention to Stay (IS)	0.237	0.299	0.309	0.819			
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.498	0.307	0.301	0.41	0.831		
Motivational Factors (MOT)	0.114	0.156	0.228	0.363	0.204	0.639	
Social Intelligence (SI)	0.122	0.047	-0.172	0.236	0.355	0.007	0.799

Table 5

HTMT Analysis for Checking Discriminant Validity

	CI	HF	INF	IS	JS	MOT	SI
Cultural Intelligence (CI)							
Hygiene Factors (HF)	0.395						
Social Infrastructure (INF)	0.176	0.142					
Intention to Stay (IS)	0.25	0.329	0.309				
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.53	0.324	0.313	0.426			
Motivational Factors (MOT)	0.127	0.188	0.263	0.39	0.253		
Social Intelligence (SI)	0.126	0.117	0.188	0.239	0.369	0.087	

Table 6

Summary of the Direct Effect

	Variable	Beta	Std. Dev.	T Stat	P Value	Decision
H1	Motivational Factors > Intention to Stay	0.251	0.015	1.482	0.000	Significant
H2	Motivational Factors > Job Satisfaction	0.137	0.049	2.828	0.006	Significant
H3	Hygiene Factors > Intention to Stay	0.170	0.061	2.778	0.006	Significant
H4	Hygiene Factors > Job Satisfaction	0.123	0.049	2.483	0.009	Significant
H5	Cultural Intelligence > Intention to Stay	0.011	0.062	0.122	0.903	Not Significant
H6	Cultural Intelligence > Job Satisfaction	0.400	0.054	7.417	0.000	Significant
H7	Social Intelligence > Intention to Stay	0.191	0.063	3.057	0.002	Significant
H8	Social Intelligence > Job Satisfaction	0.299	0.052	5.744	0.000	Significant
H9	Job Satisfaction > Intention to Stay	0.323	0.066	4.899	0.000	Significant

The next step involved assessing the coefficient of determination (R^2), which measures the proportion of variance in the endogenous variables explained by the exogenous variables (Hair et al., 2022). In this study, the two endogenous variables are: job satisfaction (as mediator) and intention to stay (dependent variable), with R^2 values of 0.37 and 0.21, respectively (Table 7). Furthermore, according to Chin (1998), R^2 values of 0.67 indicate substantial, 0.32 indicate moderate, and 0.19 indicate weak relationships for the dependent variable. Based on Chin's categorisation, the estimated model fit is moderate. Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.37 for job satisfaction indicates that 37% of its variance is explained by exogenous variables, i.e., motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence and social intelligence. Meanwhile, the R^2 value of 0.21 for intention to stay indicates that 21% of its variance is contributed by job satisfaction.

Table 7

R² of Endogenous Latent Variables

Construct	R^2	Results
Job Satisfaction	0.37	Substantial
Intention to Stay	0.21	Substantial

Next, a test was conducted to examine the indirect effects, specifically the mediating and moderating effects of job satisfaction and social infrastructure. Table 8 presents the indirect effects among the variables. The results of the bootstrap analysis confirmed that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between: motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence, and social intelligence, with intention to stay. On the other hand, social infrastructure did not significantly moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to stay.

Table 8

Summary of the Indirect Effect

	Variable	Beta	Std Dev	T Stat	P Value	Decision
H10	Motivational Factors > Job Satisfaction > Intention to Stay	0.044	0.020	2.190	0.029	Significant
H11	Hygiene Factors > Job Satisfaction > Intention to Stay	0.040	0.019	2.124	0.034	Significant
H12	Social Intelligence > Job Satisfaction > Intention to Stay	0.097	0.028	3.403	0.001	Significant
H13	Cultural Intelligence > Job Satisfaction > Intention to Stay	0.129	0.030	4.279	0.000	Significant
H14	Social Infrastructure*Job Satisfaction > Intention to Stay	0.125	0.071	1.749	0.081	Not Significant

Thus, hypotheses H10, H11, H12, and H13 were supported, while hypothesis H14 was not supported. Overall, the hypotheses testing results indicate that 12 hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H6, H7, H8, H9, H10, H11, H12 and H13) were supported, while two hypotheses, H5 and H14 were not significant in this study. Next, the concept of predictive relevance was assessed to evaluate the research model's predictive capability (Chin, 1998). Predictive relevance indicates whether the model can accurately predict each indicator of the endogenous latent constructs. The Stone-Geisser Q² value is commonly used to determine the model's predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2022). To obtain the Q² value, a blindfolding procedure was conducted, which applies only to the endogenous latent variables with reflective measurement in the model specification. According to Hair et al. (2022), a Q² value greater than zero indicates that the model has predictive relevance, whereas a value less than zero suggests a lack of predictive relevance. Additionally, Q² values are interpreted as follows: 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large predictive relevance, respectively, of an exogenous construct for a specific endogenous construct. The analysis examined two reflective variables, namely job satisfaction and intention to stay. As shown in Table 9, the results indicate that both variables exhibit a medium level of predictive relevance.

Table 9

Predictive Relevance for Endogenous Variables

Construct	Q ²	Result of Predictive Relevance
Job Satisfaction	0.23	Medium
Intention to Stay	0.13	Medium

DISCUSSION

The analysis highlights several important findings, which are discussed as follows.

Independent Variables and Job Satisfaction

The findings indicate a significant direct effect of the independent variables, namely motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence, and social intelligence on job satisfaction among expatriates. The positive impact of motivational factors on job satisfaction suggests that expatriates who perceive their work as meaningful and feel appreciated for their efforts tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. This, in turn, may eventually lead to better performance and lower turnover. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory emphasises the importance of motivational factors such as recognition and achievement in enhancing job satisfaction. The results are consistent with recent studies by Maican et al. (2021) and Idrus et al. (2022), which found that employees who find purpose in their work and receive appreciation for their efforts are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction. This study also highlights the importance of addressing hygiene factors to ensure expatriate job satisfaction. Even though these elements may not inherently inspire employees, their absence can lead to dissatisfaction. This finding supports the argument that addressing hygienic factors, such as adequate working conditions, clear corporate regulations, and positive interpersonal relationships is critical for sustaining employee job satisfaction, as demonstrated by Chen et al. (2021) and Alshmemri et al. (2017).

The results of the study also emphasise the crucial role of cultural intelligence in enhancing job satisfaction, consistent with previous studies by Sözbilir and Yesil (2016) and, Ott and Michailova (2018). The findings suggest that expatriates with high cultural intelligence are better equipped at navigating diverse work environments, leading to enhanced job satisfaction. Therefore, organisations should support expatriates in developing cultural intelligence to foster a more inclusive and positive work environment, ultimately leading to increased job satisfaction. Similarly, the study finds a significant, positive relationship between social intelligence and job satisfaction. Expatriates with strong social intelligence and excellent social skills are more likely to be comfortable in their jobs as they can effectively handle difficulties at work and maintain positive relationships. This finding aligns with previous research by Yahyazadeh-Jeloudar and Lotfi-Goodarzi (2012) and Sevikul et al. (2019), which also highlight that social intelligence is crucial for job satisfaction. By enabling expatriates to navigate social complexities and foster positive interactions in the workplace, social intelligence contributes to a more fulfilling work experience.

Independent Variables, Mediating Variable and Intention to Stay

The findings indicate that most independent variables are significantly related to expatriates' intention to stay, except for cultural intelligence, which shows an insignificant relationship. The results suggest that intention to stay is positively and significantly influenced by motivational factors, aligning with previous studies by Gupta and Shaw (2014) and Caringal-Go and Hechanova (2018). Their studies indicate that motivational factors, such as appropriate rewards and recognition, are crucial for enhancing expatriates' commitment and intention to remain working with their current employer. Findings also indicate that hygiene factors play a pivotal role in shaping expatriates' intention to stay. Competitive salaries, favourable working conditions, and clear corporate policies are essential for retaining expatriates. Addressing hygiene-related issues can help reduce discontent and encourage expatriates to remain with the organisation. These results align with previous studies that emphasise the crucial role of hygiene factors in fostering employees' intention to stay (Albrecht et al., 2018; Haslberger & Vaiman,

2013). Therefore, maintaining fair compensation and providing acceptable working conditions are essential strategies for preserving expatriates' commitment and reducing turnover intentions.

The study also finds that expatriates with higher social intelligence are more likely to remain with their company. Those with strong social intelligence are better at building relationships and negotiating workplace social dynamics, which enhances their attachment to the organisation and reduces turnover likelihood. This result is consistent with previous research by Hiller (2018), together with Eketu and Edeh (2015), which also found that social intelligence positively influences expatriates' ability to build meaningful workplace relationships, ultimately strengthening their intention to stay. Moreover, job satisfaction influences expatriates' decision to stay, underscoring its pivotal role in their decision to remain with their current employer. Higher levels of job satisfaction are associated with stronger organisational commitment, making expatriates less likely to seek alternative employment opportunities. This finding reinforces the outcome of previous research, such as studies by Hanum et al. (2023) and Thakur et al. (2022), which demonstrate that job satisfaction is a significant predictor of expatriates' intention to stay. In other words, improving job satisfaction through various organisational strategies can significantly help in expatriate retention. A notable discovery of this study is the insignificant relationship between cultural intelligence and intention to stay. This shows that cultural intelligence does not directly influence expatriates' intention to stay. One possible explanation is that other factors, such as organisational commitment and career development opportunities, may have a greater impact on expatriates' intention to stay, thereby downplaying the role of cultural intelligence. A previous study by An (2022) indicates that cross-cultural conflict, an aspect of cultural intelligence, is negatively related to employees' turnover intentions. Similarly, this study suggests that while cultural intelligence enhances intercultural competence, its direct impact on expatriates' intention to stay is less apparent compared to other factors such as job satisfaction.

Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction significantly influences expatriates' intention to stay and serves as a critical mediator in the relationships between motivational factors, hygiene factors, cultural intelligence, social intelligence, and intention to stay. This finding underscores that when individuals are motivated in their work, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction, which, in turn, strengthens their commitment to remain with the organisation. As a result, expatriates are more likely to continue working with the company in their host country. Moreover, effectively addressing hygiene factors not only prevents dissatisfaction but also contributes to job satisfaction. This enhanced job satisfaction may mediate the relationship between hygiene factors and intention to stay, as found by Judge et al. (2001). They discovered that improving hygiene factors such as working conditions and remuneration, indirectly strengthens the intention to stay by increasing job satisfaction.

A significant relationship is also observed between social intelligence and job satisfaction, which in turn influences intention to stay. Socially intelligent employees are likely to build strong interpersonal relationships and navigate workplace dynamics effectively, leading to greater job satisfaction and a stronger intention to stay with the organisation. This finding aligns with Wong and Law (2002), who found that social intelligence enhances job satisfaction, thereby mediating its effect on job retention. Furthermore, other studies that have examined job satisfaction as a mediator emphasise its critical role in employee retention (Ibrahim, 2019).

Moderating Effect of Social Infrastructure

Data analysis reveals no significant moderating effect of social infrastructure on the relationship between job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay. This indicates that the availability and quality of social infrastructure—such as community amenities, social support networks, and expatriate services—have minimal effect on expatriates' intention to remain in a host country. Job satisfaction is essentially an internal element impacted by job characteristics, work environment, and personal accomplishments. Extrinsic factors such as social infrastructure, may have a limited impact on intrinsic factors, particularly when expatriates are relatively satisfied with their jobs. Previous research supports this notion, demonstrating that internal job satisfaction criteria—such as meaningful work and recognition—are stronger predictors of intention to stay than extrinsic factors (Herzberg, 1968). In addition, expatriates often develop their own social networks and coping strategies, which may mitigate the effects of available social infrastructure, whether provided by the company or local community (Shaffer et al., 1999). Another possible explanation for this finding is the role of personality differences among expatriates. While some expatriates may highly value the social infrastructure in a foreign country, others may not. These individual differences in personality may weaken the moderating effect of social infrastructure, contributing to the observed insignificant relationship.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing expatriates' intention to stay, shedding light on the mediating role of job satisfaction. It provides a more comprehensive model that examines the behavioural factors influencing expatriates' decision on whether to stay or leave their host country. This research also addresses a gap in the existing literature by simultaneously analysing the effects of motivation, hygiene factors, social intelligence, cultural intelligence, and social infrastructure within an integrated framework. By considering these factors collectively rather than in isolation, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of their combined impact on expatriates' retention. Additionally, it introduces social infrastructure as a previously overlooked factor in expatriate retention. This study holds significant implications for firms, government entities, and policymakers. For firms, the findings provide practical insights into the key drivers of expatriates' intentions to stay. By understanding the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating effect of social infrastructure, organisations can develop targeted policies and practices that foster a supportive work environment for expatriate employees.

Although the moderating effect of social infrastructure was found to be statistically insignificant, the study's conclusions remain highly relevant. Organisations and policymakers should acknowledge that the relationship between job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay can exist independently of social infrastructure. Therefore, retention strategies for improving expatriate retention should consider not focus solely on infrastructure development but should incorporate a broader range of factors, including motivational and hygiene factors, social intelligence, and cultural intelligence. By prioritising these aspects, firms can enhance expatriates' job satisfaction, strengthen their intention to stay, and ultimately improve employee retention and overall organisational performance. For government entities and policymakers, this study emphasises the importance of creating an enabling environment for expatriates. Recognising the valuable contributions of expatriate talent, governments can implement policies that facilitate recruitment, retention, and integration of expatriates into the local workforce. This may include implementing supportive immigration policies, investing in social infrastructure development, and fostering a favourable business environment that encourages collaboration and

cultural exchange between expatriates and local employees. Such measures can help attract and retain highly skilled professionals, contributing to economic growth, knowledge transfer, and innovation within the country. In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature on expatriates' intention to stay and provides valuable insights for organisations and policymakers seeking to enhance working conditions and retain expatriate talent.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. First, the data used in this study is cross-sectional, meaning it was collected at a single point in time. To gain a deeper understanding of how the identified variables influence expatriates' intention to stay, future research should consider collecting longitudinal data across multiple time periods. Second, the study's sample was limited to expatriates working in private companies within three major cities in Pakistan. Expanding the sample to include a broader range of industries and geographic locations would enhance the generalisability of the findings. Future research could extend the sample to include expatriates from additional Pakistani cities and sectors, or conduct comparative studies across different countries to provide a more diverse representation of expatriates and organisational contexts. Additionally, the current sample includes both self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) and assigned expatriates (AEs). It is possible that these two groups' decisions to stay working in a country may be influenced by different factors.

Another limitation is that this study focused on hygiene and motivational variables as a single construct rather than examining their individual components. Motivational and hygiene factors encompass diverse elements that may influence job satisfaction and expatriates' intention to stay in distinct ways. By not investigating these elements separately, this study may have overlooked potential variations in their impact. The final limitation is that most respondents had been in Pakistan for less than a year, which may have influenced findings related to intention to stay, cultural intelligence, job satisfaction, and the moderating role of social infrastructure.

To address these limitations, future research should consider the following recommendations. First, to overcome the limitation of using cross-sectional data, future researchers should consider employing longitudinal research designs. This would allow researchers to capture changes in expatriates' job satisfaction, and intention to stay over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of these relationships. This study focused solely on expatriates working in private firms within Pakistan's three largest cities. Future studies should expand the scope of the research by including expatriates from diverse industries, business sectors and geographic regions within Pakistan and beyond, to improve the generalisability of the findings and provide a more complete understanding of the factors influencing expatriate intention to stay.

Future research should also delve into the specific elements of motivation and hygiene factors, and their distinct impact on job satisfaction and intention to stay. A more in-depth investigation of these factors would help identify which elements have the most significant impact on job satisfaction and intention to stay. Future studies could analyse these factors separately to provide more actionable insights for organisations. Apart from these, future research could focus on conducting cross-cultural comparative studies—exploring expatriate retention across different countries or cultural contexts to better understand how cultural and environmental factors influence expatriates' job satisfaction and intention to stay.

Lastly, it is recommended that future studies should categorise expatriates according to their length of stay in the host country to determine how their retention intentions evolve over time. Analysing differences between recent arrivals and long-term expatriates could reveal important patterns in adaptation, job satisfaction and retention.

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Appendix 1

Results for Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Variable	Item	Item's Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Items Deleted Due to Low Loadings
Motivational Factors	Ach1	0.653	0.886	0.905	0.408	
	Ach2	0.647				
	Ach3	0.747				
	Adv1	0.678				
	Adv2	0.682				
	Gro1	0.567				
	Gro2	0.602				
	Gro3	0.610				
	Res1	0.499				
	Res2	0.600				
	Res3	0.671				
	WIS1	0.718				
	WIS2	0.751				
	WIS3	0.435				
Hygiene Factors	CoP1	0.499	0.898	0.913	0.400	
	CoP2	0.595				
	CoP3	0.614				
	RWS1	0.761				
	RWS2	0.713				
	RWS3	0.736				
	Rel1	0.718				
	Rel2	0.702				
	Rel3	0.723				
	Sal1	0.544				
	Sal2	0.582				
	WC1	0.606				
	WC2	0.635				
	WS1	0.546				
	WS2	0.517				
WS3	0.538					
Cultural Intelligence	CI1	0.890	0.939	0.950	0.732	CI3,CI6,CI9
	CI10	0.868				

(continued)

Variable	Item	Item's Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Items Deleted Due to Low Loadings
Intention to Stay	CI2	0.759	0.939	0.949	0.673	
	CI4	0.863				
	CI5	0.870				
	CI7	0.844				
	CI8	0.887				
	ITS1	0.782				
	ITS2	0.824				
	ITS3	0.741				
	ITS4	0.868				
	ITS5	0.852				
	ITS6	0.837				
Social Infrastructure	Inf1	0.892	0.958	0.965	0.798	Inf3,Inf4,Inf6
	Inf10	0.858				
	Inf2	0.909				
	Inf5	0.901				
	Inf7	0.918				
	Inf8	0.905				
	Inf9	0.871				
	Inf9	0.871				
Job Satisfaction	JS10	0.822	0.936	0.947	0.691	JS1,JS2
	JS3	0.858				
	JS4	0.846				
	JS5	0.832				
	JS6	0.840				
	JS7	0.853				
	JS8	0.774				
	JS9	0.820				
Social Intelligence	SI1	0.702	0.943	0.951	0.638	
	SI10	0.852				
	SI12	0.837				
	SI15	0.757				
	SI2	0.743				
	SI3	0.699				
	SI4	0.700				
	SI5	0.876				
	SI6	0.874				
	SI7	0.852				
	SI8	0.859				

Appendix 2

PLS-SEM Measurement Model

