

**UNIVERSITATEA DE VEST DIN TIMIȘOARA**

**DOMENIUL MANAGEMENT**

**Cultural intelligence, sustainability and entrepreneurial intention, under the  
umbrella of globalisation**

**REZUMATUL TEZEI DE ABILITARE**

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## SUMMARY

The starting point of this thesis is connected to phenomenon of Globalization, as a core element that uniformly connects both my professional journey and the major themes I pursued in my doctoral research, and especially after obtaining my PhD title.

On a personal and professional level, I believe that globalization has been and continues to be an important element. I discuss it in and outside of classes because it helps me better understand the complex and interconnected world we live in. It shows us how interconnected all actions and events around us are, whether they are economic, social, cultural, or political: it helps us understand economic developments in society and the functioning mechanisms of multinational companies, it explains the sources of geopolitical conflicts, and it reveals the effects of cultural values on interconnected societies, etc.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon. Only the forms in which it manifests now are much more complex than they were at its origin. As Fareed Zakaria (2025) emphasizes, the Netherlands were pioneers of modern globalization (Globalization 1.0), developing technologies such as ocean-going ships and advanced navigation, as well as business paradigms such as joint-stock companies. These innovations allowed for the creation of the stock market and a sophisticated financial system, transforming the Dutch Republic of that era into the wealthiest state of its time. The Dutch understood as early as the late 1500s the importance of maritime trade and the discovery of new territories as additional sources of wealth and rare resources. Dutch trade began to extend from Asia to America, which led to the creation of global transport networks and international flows of information and capital. The Dutch East India Company was the world's first multinational company, and the Amsterdam Stock Exchange was the first stock exchange. Even then, the state was a partner to small entrepreneurs with innovative ideas. In addition to these economic advantages that led to economic prosperity, the first form of globalization was linked to religious freedom and cultural tolerance. As the author concludes, prosperity came from freedom, acceptance, and openness. It is evident how these variables are also valid in today's globalization, which additionally incorporates current technological developments and the digital explosion.

By emphasizing connections at all levels of interaction, globalization impacts a wide range of fields covered by academic studies. Recent literature focuses on both the determinants of globalization and its effects, especially due to the accentuated multiplication of variables with which it connects, and particularly the speed with which they change. Also, the phenomenon of globalization is not studied only at a macro level, but also at a micro or individual level. A quick review of the basic themes indicates studies focused on the role of globalization from a wide diversity of approaches, ranging from its impact on the environment and ecological sustainability to its impact on poverty and inequalities, passing through the analysis of the global-local relationship and the concept of glocalization. Bibliometric analyses oriented towards the word "Globalization" can generate numerous results, but each is centered on a specific theme

(sustainability, international relations, geopolitics, etc.), depending on the author's interests. A bibliometric study conducted in 2022 shows a grouping of recent research on the topic of globalization into two large clusters: sustainable development and environmental protection. More recently, proposes a keyword-based analysis that emphasizes the financial aspects related to globalization.

From the perspective of the present habilitation thesis, globalization is seen as a phenomenon with a mixed impact at all levels of analysis, from macro aspects to those related to individual behaviors. In addition, we consider that an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to cover the complexity of the variables involved, especially at the individual level. Current research indicates a growing interest in research at this level, such as the role of globalization on career choices or on gender discrimination, or on religious resurgence. In this habilitation thesis, the approach will focus on elements of globalization that have not been previously viewed as parts of an evolving, integrated, and coherent research endeavor. This involves approaching variables studied at the individual level, as well as a shift towards macroeconomic approaches, all under the umbrella of globalization. The variables considered in the habilitation thesis are cultural intelligence, entrepreneurial intention, and sustainability, as key elements of the specific research endeavor presented below.

The evolution of my research activity began with the concept of Globalization at its center, and in a first phase, it expanded to the field of Cultural Intelligence (Cultural Quotient, CQ). Globalization is what promotes intercultural interactions and supports diversity, and understanding and deepening knowledge of the precursors and effects of cultural intelligence is essential for effective complex relationships in global business environments, conflict prevention, and improving collaboration between different cultures. Being a relatively new concept, my research began with comparative studies and analyses of its measurement scale, but continued with much more complex analyses, introducing DNA-type variables into the analysis of the CQ profile and analyzing expatriate work performance based on configurational analyses. The studies I have in mind for the long term will continue on the cultural intelligence line, on various populations and in models with different variables, as will be detailed in the final part of the thesis. Although, as will be seen in Chapter 2 regarding studies conducted on the CQ theme, the literature is abundant, there is no study that verifies the invariance of the measurement scale of the concept in the Romanian-Icelandic-Turkish cultural combination, as was done by the research carried out together with an international group of researchers, in the article "Invariance of the Cultural Intelligence Scale Across Three Countries". Also, the article "Exploring the connections between DNA, cultural intelligence, and knowledge dynamics in multicultural business environments" is the first to analyze the diversity of DNA roots on the cultural intelligence profile. The study "Big Five Personality Traits, Cultural Intelligence, and Expatriate Job Performance: A Configurational Perspective," which is awaiting indexing, is also unique due to the combination of variables and the fact that it studies how the interaction between personality traits and CQ leads to expatriates' intercultural effectiveness, based on a configurational, holistic approach, different from the cause-

and-effect approaches used in previous studies. From this point of view, the studies I have conducted together with colleagues from home and abroad cover a gap in the literature and open new avenues of research on the topic of cultural intelligence.

The research continued with the analysis of entrepreneurial intention, also in comparative approaches and in the logic of an intercultural perspective, in a global context. In this case too, the studies started from simpler approaches (intercultural comparisons), passed through the identification and study of a mix of variables rarely found in the literature (self-efficacy, curiosity, and risk-taking propensity), combined in the global pandemic context, and currently reached the combination of entrepreneurial profile, CQ, and export performance. In this line of research as well, globalization appears as a link, the results of the latest study confirming that it opens new markets and opportunities for entrepreneurs, provides information, know-how transfer, advanced technologies, and business networks, but requires increased flexibility and adaptability from entrepreneurs. Research in this area will also continue (see the end of the thesis).

Similar to the previous topic, the research conducted together with the research teams I am part of covers a gap in the literature regarding entrepreneurial intention from several points of view: the Romanian cultural context was, until then, relatively little studied; combinations of variables are rarely analyzed together; the pandemic context, analyzed through the lens of uncertainty management theory, had not been analyzed before. Also, the study "Cultural intelligence and relationship quality in export market ventures in Ghana" addresses a need for analysis in the specific case of an African economy affected by the context of globalization, concluding that cultural intelligence is one of the key managerial capabilities that contributes to stimulating exports carried out by small entrepreneurs. It is also a research that fills a gap, as the specific context of Ghana has not been represented in academic literature.

The third line of study is also connected to Globalization and focuses on the analysis of sustainability from multiple perspectives. Initially, environmental sustainability was studied in relation to foreign direct investment (the theme of my doctoral thesis), in a single, national context, then moving towards analyzing the interconnections between municipal waste generation and representative socio-economic, technological, and innovation factors at the level of European Union countries. The latest completed research on this topic addresses cultural sustainability, specifically that of symphony orchestras (as a link between my high school music education profile and academic training in management). This approach started from the analysis of the impact of globalization on the environment (through pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and resource consumption) but then shifted to very little-researched application areas (cultural structures such as symphony orchestras, also impacted by globalization, through the international nature of employees and through the diversification and transfer of performances to global audiences by modern recording and transmission means). Research on this pillar does not stop here either, as will be seen at the end of this thesis, in the section dedicated to ongoing and future studies.

The novel elements of these studies are related to the specific context of one of them, namely Pakistan, in "Green finance and foreign direct investment–environmental sustainability nexuses in emerging countries: new insights from the environmental Kuznets curve", but also by the fact that it is one of the first studies to analyze the effects of foreign direct investment on environmental sustainability; also, based on the results obtained, the study offers concrete recommendations regarding national policies for reducing CO2 emissions, recommendations that represent a novelty for the Pakistani context. Also, the study "Orchestrating sustainability: integrated approaches in performing arts management for economic, social, and environmental resilience" is a highly innovative study, representing a reference in the field, as analyses in the musical domain are extremely rare, and the results (obtained based on a representative sample of respondents) support concrete ways of maintaining sustainability in a very little-studied field. From this point of view, the study can be seen as a relevant contribution to the literature in the field of cultural institution management.

**Chapter 1, "Professional Milestones,"** begins with a brief presentation of several essential professional activities, including professional training, teaching activities, and a concise overview of the scientific researcher profile based on articles published in significant databases (SSCI/SCIE) and international recognition through recognized scientometric indices. I presented my high school professional training history, bachelor's studies, master's degrees, and doctoral studies. I continued with a brief presentation of my teaching activity, followed by a table listing the most important ISI-indexed research, Web of Sciences, and a detailed account of my professional achievements as author/co-author, reviewer, and editor.

**Chapter 2, entitled "Main Achievements and Scientific Contributions,"** focuses on presenting in detail the three research pillars integrated into the central concept of globalization, with the aim of explaining the necessity and usefulness of the studies conducted. The three pillars are as follows: i) Intercultural Management, Cultural Intelligence, comparative approaches; ii) Sustainability viewed from various perspectives; iii) Analysis of entrepreneurial motivations, each contributing to supporting the theme of the present endeavor.

**The first sub-chapter, "Intercultural Management, Cultural Intelligence, Comparative Approaches"** emphasizes the need for approaches focused on the analysis of intercultural contacts and cultural diversity from the perspective of globalization. Increasingly, over the last twenty years, we have been living in the context of increasing globalization, which has brought us a whole series of changes in every aspect of daily life. Information travels instantly from one country to another with new technologies; people travel easily to different countries, due to transport liberalization. The intensity of international contacts has increased considerably, and cultural diversity has become a real challenge for individuals and organizations. Although a source of opportunities, globalization creates challenges for individuals and organizations by increasing cultural diversity. Intercultural approaches have thus become a necessity not only for most large contemporary organizations, but also for small and medium-sized enterprises and for every individual. This is where the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) was introduced, defined by

Earley and Ang as "a person's capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings; that is, for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context", in order to answer the question of why some individuals are more effective than others in situations characterized by cultural diversity. After defining the concept of CQ in detail, I showed its increased importance in the literature, the scales used for its measurement, and how I considered it useful to be studied in the Romanian context. I mentioned that, although I initially did not have a research plan in mind, by the end (i.e., at this moment), the studies on the CQ theme followed a logical line, from simple to complex. Thus, I started with the analysis of CQ in the case of students I currently work with (Management students from FEAA), followed by the following studies based on a comparative approach considering two countries, then three countries, including an analysis of the invariance of the CQ measurement scale.

The central objective of the study ("Measurement Invariance of the Cultural Intelligence Scale Across Three Countries") was to evaluate the structure and measure the invariance of the CQ measurement instrument in three different cultural contexts: Romania, Turkey, and Iceland. This study perfectly fits the typology of comparative studies, based on the role of culture in analyzing revealed differences or similarities. Comparative approaches are the basis of intercultural management, and the choice of the three comparison countries was based on their different cultural profiles (from the perspective of Geert Hofstede's cultural model). In this study, we started from the idea that the cultural diversity of the three countries can affect the invariance of the CQ measurement scale. "Measurement invariance" means that, to validly compare results from different countries, the scale must measure the same things consistently across all those countries. Without this invariance, the results obtained are not fully comparable, as there may be a difference in how participants from different countries understand or interpret the questions. Iceland is an egalitarian culture, with equal access to resources and an informal, direct, and participatory communication style (score of 30), while Turkey and Romania show a high level of inequality, unequal access to resources and information, and a formal, indirect, and selective communication style (scores of 66 and 90, respectively). Iceland is an individualistic culture (with a score of 60), with autonomous individuals and self-initiative, but Turkey and Romania are collectivistic cultures (with scores of 37 and 30, respectively), characterized by group responsibility and emphasis on moral relationships within the group. Regarding uncertainty avoidance, Iceland tolerates uncertainty quite well (with a score of 50), taking risks and accepting new ideas. In contrast, individuals in Turkey and Romania are intolerant of uncertainty, accepting numerous laws and rules for individual security (with scores of 86 and 90, respectively). Finally, Iceland, Turkey, and Romania are consensus-oriented societies (the original name was "femininity") (with scores of 10, 45, and 42, respectively), which means that the dominant values in society are care for others and quality of life. A consensus-oriented society is one where the quality of life is predominant. In addition to the cultural differences between the countries studied in this study, Turkey has a higher level of ethnic and cultural diversity than Romania and Iceland. In Turkey, there is a mosaic of different identities, including religious, ethnic, and linguistic communities. For example, Turks represent 70–75% of Turkey's total population. In Romania, the Romanian population represents

90% of the country's total population. Iceland's population is also very homogeneous, with Icelanders representing 93% of the total population. Given the cultural similarities and differences between Romania, Turkey, and Iceland, the current study aimed to contribute to the relevant literature by providing evidence for the psychometric properties of the CQ measurement scale. The study was conducted in three stages, each examining different aspects of CQ measurement, as follows:

- **Configural Invariance:** This involves verifying whether the structure of the scale is the same across all cultures, i.e., whether participants from each country understand the dimensions of the CQ scale in the same way. The results showed that the scale structure is similar across the three cultures, meaning that people conceptualize the four dimensions (metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational) in a similar way.

- **Metric Invariance:** In this stage, we analyzed whether participants from each country respond to the scale questions similarly. The results indicated that there are no significant differences in how participants respond to the scale items across different countries, meaning that the intensity of the relationships between the scale questions and the CQ dimensions is comparable.

- **Scalar Invariance:** This refers to comparing the average scores for each dimension of CQ. The results did not support scalar invariance, meaning that the scores obtained for the scale items differ between the three countries. Our data did not support scalar invariance, which indicates that the understanding of 19 items in the CQS was not the same in the three contexts. Only the understanding of one item from the cognitive CQ subscale was equivalent ("I know the rules, e.g., vocabulary, grammar, of other languages"). Students from Turkey tended to rate 19 items more intensely than students from Romania and Iceland.

The results of this study have implications for the future use of the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) in intercultural research. Firstly, regarding the dimensions, the findings are consistent with previous studies. Configural and metric invariances indicate that individuals from different cultures conceptualize and respond similarly to items, but there are cultural differences at the item level in the latent structure. Secondly, the study demonstrated partial invariance, which means that individuals respond similarly to items, but do not identically associate them with the CQS dimensions. This result draws attention to the fact that, in the absence of scalar invariance, comparing means across cultures can lead to incorrect results.

I then extended the research to analyze the connection between CQ and SME export performance in another cultural context (Ghana). Conducted with a group of researchers, the study starts from the idea that, with increasing globalization and cross-border activities related to the challenges of intercultural management, SME managers must not only know and understand the nature of international business, but also have specialized capabilities to operate successfully in a complex international environment. Cultural intelligence is one of the key managerial capabilities that contributes to the success of SMEs in the international business environment. The study aimed to contribute to the literature in the field by demonstrating how managerial capabilities, such as CQ, can influence the export performance of small firms; by identifying the factors that contribute to the internationalization of small firms in developing economies, especially in African countries;

and by drawing the attention of both researchers and practitioners to these factors that contribute to export performance. The results obtained indicated that: 1. The cultural intelligence of the owner/manager was identified as one of the factors affecting the firm's relationship quality. 2. The quality of external relationships plays a significant role in the export performance of SMEs in Ghana. 3. The quality of local relationships did not have a significant effect on export performance.

Finally, I presented in the habilitation thesis an article that has a niche approach ("Exploring the connections between DNA, cultural intelligence, and knowledge dynamics in multicultural business environments") with an absolutely new theme: the connection between CQ, DNA, and knowledge dynamics as native ingredients of the global mindset of multicultural managers and leaders and their impact on business process management. Research in cognitive science and knowledge management shows that decision-making in business processes is not completely rational, based exclusively on explicit knowledge. It depends on the dynamics of rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge fields, their connections with national cultures, and the ability to integrate this dynamic into cultural intelligence. Most studies on business process management show that managerial competencies depend on native and educational components. The specialized literature usually addresses the process of developing these competencies through educational programs, leaving a knowledge gap regarding their native ingredients. Our research was based on results provided by genetic testing companies that use a process known as "DNA analysis" to examine, understand, and interpret individuals' genetic information. The next step involves genotyping, where specific regions of DNA are analyzed to identify genetic variations. This process was performed using high-throughput genotyping techniques, microarrays, and next-generation sequencing. These techniques allow for the simultaneous examination of thousands to millions of genetic markers, thus providing detailed data on an individual's genetic structure. After genotyping, the genetic data obtained are subjected to quality control measures to ensure accuracy and reliability. Once quality-controlled data are obtained, they are compared to a reference panel or database. This comparison helps identify patterns of genetic variations associated with specific ethnicities, regions, or populations. In the study, we only used geographical areas (geographical locations – related to countries) as a result of DNA tests, as they appear in MyHeritage tests, based on migration, admixture, and diversity patterns. On a large scale, geo-DNA constructs in human populations are used to study gene flow, migration patterns, and genetic adaptations in different regions. This information can provide insights into evolutionary psychology and the dynamics of populations of different human groups. The conclusions of this study indicate that DNA, as a geographical and cultural map of location, is a determinant of CQ and KD. In addition to the fact that DNA analysis can be used to trace the ancestry of individuals and to identify genetic markers specific to certain regions or populations, it is important to note that the examination of DNA, as a unique variable, cannot definitively establish a person's nationality or belonging to a particular country.

The most recent study analyzes the role of CQ in determining expatriate performance. "Big Five Personality Traits, Cultural Intelligence, and Expatriate Job Performance: A Configurational

Perspective" started from the idea that personality traits such as those included in the "Big Five Personality Inventory" play an important role in adapting and functioning in culturally diverse environments. Relatively few studies have examined the interaction between personality traits and CQ, and these few studies offer a limited perspective on how the interaction between personality traits and CQ leads to intercultural effectiveness. In fact, for some time I have identified in the literature the need to examine together the Big Five personality traits and CQ as precursors of an individual's intercultural effectiveness. By integrating the five personality traits and CQ into a single model, I used a fuzzy configurational approach derived from complexity theory to suggest a holistic and complex model for exploring expatriate success. Social behaviors are complex, and can rarely be fully explained by a single factor; instead, a combination of factors seems very likely. According to complexity theory, behavior can be viewed as a "set" of interdependent relationships between conditions (such as personality traits and CQ) that should be considered holistically rather than as isolated attributes. Traditional analytical approaches, such as structural equation modeling (SEM) or multiple regressions, are based on the principles of net effects; where each independent variable is assumed to have its own linear effect on the dependent variable. These symmetrical approaches are unable to explain the reciprocal causality between predictors in explaining outcome variations, as they reduce complex interdependent conditions to independent ones. The configurational approach differs from traditional approaches in terms of causality, especially due to the investigation of multiple conjunctural causal relationships. Multiple conjunctural causality can be understood when at least one of the following situations occurs. Firstly, the outcome is produced by a combination of conditions. Secondly, the situation where there is a combination of several conditions produces the same outcome (equifinality). Thirdly, depending on the context, an outcome occurs both in the presence and absence of the condition. In addition, the principle known as "causal asymmetry" implies that if a certain combination of conditions contributes to the presence of an outcome, it does not mean that its absence will determine the absence of the outcome. Due to these characteristics, the configurational approach overcomes the assumptions of traditional approaches, such as uniform causal effects and causal symmetry, and offers a more suitable approach for understanding the nature of complexity in relationships. Exploring the Big Five personality inventory and CQ and using a configurational approach, we sought to understand how the complex personal characteristics of an expatriate can lead to their success, a crucial topic in research in the field of multicultural management. Being a configurational approach, the central question of this study was: What combination of Big Five personality traits and CQ dimensions are associated with high levels of job performance in expatriates?

Based on the configurational analysis, we obtained three types of configurations. Configurations 1 and 2 include the so-called "Expatriates with high cultural intelligence and high performance".

Configuration 1 represents a combination of extroversion, conscientiousness, openness, and all CQ dimensions. These three characteristics are essential in Configuration 1, while agreeableness and emotional stability have limited roles. In other words, this configuration shows

that an expatriate who has a high profile for all CQ dimensions will also have a high level of performance if they possess the traits of extroversion, conscientiousness, and openness.

Configuration 2 indicates a combination of factors that include the absence of emotional stability, the presence of agreeableness, openness, as well as a high score of cognitive CQ and behavioral CQ as core conditions, combined with extroversion, metacognitive CQ, and motivational CQ as peripheral conditions. Conscientiousness plays a minor role in this configuration, as indicated by the empty space. This configuration demonstrates that an expatriate with a high score in all CQ dimensions achieves high-level performance when possessing a high level of extroversion, agreeableness, and openness, but a low level of emotional stability.

Configuration 3 is identified as the "role model" profile. The profile shows that, although expatriates have high scores in certain dimensions of CQ, they have a high profile in all Big Five personality traits. This profile is labeled as a "role model" because it presents all socially desirable personality traits. Configuration 3 combines the presence of all Big Five personality traits, metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ. Extroversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness are core conditions in this model. Cognitive CQ, however, is irrelevant. This configuration indicates that an expatriate who possesses high levels for all personality traits also has high performance when exhibiting a high score of metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ.

**Subchapter 2 focuses on the second research pillar, namely "Approaches to Ethics and Sustainability,"** starting from the idea that increased attention to ethical considerations is closely linked to globalization, in the sense that it has amplified the need for responsible consumption, where individuals and organizations must consider the social impact of their choices. Supply chain transparency, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and ethical sourcing have become essential for maintaining trust and credibility in an interconnected world. The increase in digital communication has also increased accountability, as unethical practices can be quickly exposed and criticized globally. I considered that management and corporate governance are strongly influenced by globalization, leading companies and institutions to adopt flexible and efficient strategies to face the challenges of an interconnected economy. Corporate governance is becoming increasingly complex, influenced by international regulations, social responsibility, and sustainability. Thus, globalization drives a continuous evolution of management and governance practices, promoting transparency, ethics, and efficiency in decision-making at a global level. As companies expand internationally, the intensified use of natural resources accelerates phenomena such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change mentioned above. However, globalization also contributes to the spread of sustainable technologies, good practices, and the strengthening of international cooperation to address environmental challenges. In this context, more and more governments and organizations around the world are adopting sustainable development goals (SDGs), trying to balance economic progress with environmental protection.

On this research pillar, I contributed to three studies that were then presented in detail in the habilitation thesis. "Green finance and foreign direct investment–environmental sustainability

nexus in emerging countries: new insights from the environmental Kuznets curve" and "Empirical Analysis of the Interplay Between Municipal Waste Generation, Living Standards, and Innovation in The European Union" are two studies that address the interaction between sustainability, economy, and innovation, albeit in distinct but complementary contexts. Firstly, they address environmental sustainability and economic development. The first explores the relationship between green finance, foreign direct investment (FDI), and environmental sustainability through the lens of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC). This curve assumes a link between economic growth and environmental degradation, suggesting that environmental impact initially increases with growth, but decreases after reaching a certain income level due to better technology and policies. The second examines the relationship between municipal waste generation, living standards, and innovation in the EU. It implicitly links to the EKC framework, as municipal waste can be seen as an indicator of environmental stress related to economic development and living standards. Innovation acts as a factor that could reduce this stress, similar to how green finance and FDI function in the first study. Secondly, these two analyses study the role of innovation: if in the first, innovation could be considered an indirect factor, as green finance and FDI often channel resources towards cleaner and more sustainable technologies, reducing environmental degradation, in the second, innovation is directly analyzed as a variable influencing waste management and sustainability. This suggests that both works agree on the critical role of innovation in achieving environmental goals, but explore it from different angles. Finally, both studies offer policy recommendations to enhance sustainability. In the first, we recommended encouraging green financial instruments and sustainable FDI to improve environmental outcomes in emerging markets. Whereas, in the second, we highlighted the role of innovations in waste management and their integration into policies to align economic development with environmental sustainability in developed regions such as the EU.

The article "Green finance and foreign direct investment–environmental sustainability nexus in emerging countries: new insights from the environmental Kuznets curve" studies the impact of macroeconomic variables that have not been studied together before to explain CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Namely, foreign direct investment (FDI), green finance, trade openness, and economic growth. The study started from observing the results of previous studies on the impact of foreign direct investment (FDI) on the environment and, in particular, on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Many studies have highlighted the negative impact of FDI on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, linked to the fact that, in the context of financial globalization, FDI is attracted by unclean industrial processes, especially in poor and emerging countries, where CO<sub>2</sub> levels in host economies are projected to increase. However, after reaching a certain threshold, carbon emissions decrease due to increased FDI flow. These results can be considered divergent but follow the logic of a Kuznets-type environmental curve if we take into account the development level of the analyzed economy. I then presented the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) as a theoretical model illustrating the relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation. It suggests that as a country develops economically, environmental degradation initially increases, but eventually decreases after reaching a certain level of per capita income. This relationship is often described as an inverted U-

shaped curve. In addition, most previous research applied a linear approach to identify relationships between variables. The present study is the first conducted in Pakistan that applies the asymmetric nonlinear approach to examine the effects of FDI on environmental sustainability, using green finance, trade openness, and economic growth as control variables. The choice of the country for analysis was determined by the negative statistical data from this country regarding pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. According to international reports, Pakistan is among the top countries with very high air pollution out of those analyzed in South Asia. Also, according to reports, Pakistan is one of the most polluted countries in the world. The study presents several significant contributions. Firstly, the analysis is conducted in Pakistan, as a specific context, determined by the characteristics presented above. Secondly, the basic objective of the present study is to examine the link between variables that have not been analyzed together before, in an asymmetric nonlinear model. Finally, the present study is important for developing countries facing many challenges related to environmental pollution; thus, the study results can help decision-makers in generating policies oriented towards environmental sustainability. The results highlight the complexity of the relationship between foreign direct investment and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Although investments can stimulate economic growth and lead to increased emissions in the long term, adverse events affecting the economy can reduce these emissions, thus highlighting a negative correlation between economic activity and emission levels under certain conditions. This suggests that mere economic growth does not automatically guarantee environmental improvement, but depends on the specific context and the type of investments made.

"Empirical Analysis of the Interplay Between Municipal Waste Generation, Living Standards, and Innovation in The European Union" examines the global interconnections between municipal waste generation and representative socio-economic, technological, and innovation factors at the level of European Union countries. The article proposes a hierarchical classification of EU member states based on similar characteristics regarding waste generation levels, to propose appropriate solutions for poorer-performing states. The data covers the period 2006-2021, and the research methodology uses network analysis through Gaussian graphical models and cluster analysis through the Ward method. The results emphasize that analyzing only the level of waste generation is not conclusive without considering socio-economic benchmarks. The paper evaluates the global interconnections between municipal waste generation (measured by the municipal waste generation index) and representative socio-economic, technological, and innovation factors (namely, Human Development Index - HDI, poverty risk index, net income, and Global Innovation Index - GII), at the level of European Union (EU) countries. Based on the results obtained, we grouped the EU member states according to similar characteristics regarding municipal waste generation, along with these representative socio-economic and technological factors, in order to propose appropriate solutions in these coordinates for lower-performing states. Data were collected for a period of 16 years (2006-2021), and the methodological research was based on two advanced methods: (i) network analysis, performed using Gaussian graphical models (GGM), estimated by Extended Bayesian Information Criteria (EBICglasso) and partial correlation (PCOR) methods; and (ii) cluster analysis, processed by the Ward method nested in hierarchical

clustering (wardslinkage). We can consider that this research filled a gap in the literature, as previous studies offer only a few fragments regarding the influence of determinants on waste generation levels, but without considering the combined influence of socio-economic and technological factors. Several studies focused on the distinctive analysis of socio-economic factors determining municipal waste generation levels, but these had a delimited perspective regarding technological and innovation factors, or dealt with the correlation between economic growth and municipal waste generation levels. Therefore, the novelty of our research lies in the synergistic analysis of municipal waste generation and representative socio-economic factors, as well as the level of technology and innovation at the EU member state level.

The third study published on this topic ("Orchestrating sustainability: integrated approaches in performing arts management for economic, social, and environmental resilience") addresses cultural sustainability, specifically that of symphony orchestras (as a link between my high school music education profile and academic training in management). It again represents a niche approach, as symphony orchestras are an extremely rarely studied field of activity, and it started from the premise that in the evolving landscape of arts management, symphony orchestras face the challenge of integrating sustainability across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. By adopting a holistic perspective, this research pioneers the application of the TBL (Triple Bottom Line) framework in the specific case of German symphony orchestras, addressing an unexplored research topic and filling a gap in the literature. Through interviews with orchestra managers, the research highlights the importance of financial innovation, community involvement, and eco-conscious programming. These findings offer valuable insights for practitioners worldwide, emphasizing the need to adapt to changing audience expectations and industry trends. By examining practitioners' experiences, researchers can identify future research opportunities that link arts management and sustainability, offering orchestras multiple strategies to achieve economic and social sustainability while promoting more resilient and environmentally conscious practices. Germany was selected for this study due to its prominent role in classical music, hosting a quarter of the world's 560 professional orchestras. This strong musical heritage and commitment to the arts make it an ideal setting for analyzing sustainable management practices in symphony orchestras. The results obtained represent a novelty and can be used as a guide for good practices in the field of sustainable management of symphony orchestras.

**The third sub-chapter presents the third research pillar, "Analysis of Entrepreneurial Intention,"** which started from the idea that entrepreneurship is a fundamental pillar of modern economies that stimulates growth, innovation, job creation, and social change. Its impact extends beyond individual enterprises; it shapes communities and influences national prosperity. Encouraging entrepreneurial activities is essential for promoting resilient economies capable of adapting to the dynamics of ongoing globalization, while also improving the quality of life for all citizens. Thus, supporting entrepreneurship through education, financial opportunities, and favorable policies is vital for sustainable development in the contemporary world. Maintaining the integrative approach of this thesis under the umbrella of globalization, I observed in the literature

an expansion of the scope of CSR from responsibility to social connectivity, and entrepreneurial activity cannot ignore the social dimension of its activity. From this perspective, the first article I published on entrepreneurship is also the most cited on Google Scholar. This refers to the study published in 2014, "The entrepreneurship concept as a subject of social innovation," which emerged from the fact that the international academic debate has revolved around a number of interconnected concepts that intrinsically include two seemingly contradictory dimensions: social and economic. Among these, one of the most visible is the concept of social entrepreneurship. The paper is a conceptual type, which brought contributions related to the following aspects: firstly, social entrepreneurship (SE) is a social innovation in itself; therefore, it innovates the concept of entrepreneurship by adding social value; secondly, social entrepreneurship organizations (SEOs), including social enterprises, are results of SE and, at the same time, are social innovations; thirdly, the specific ways in which social entrepreneurship organizations operate represent a social innovation; fourthly, the management of SEOs is a social innovation based on the management of business organizations, NGOs, and public institutions; fifthly, the use of economic activities to address social needs represents an innovation of traditional (economic) entrepreneurial activities; sixthly, SE generates new types of hybrid organizational forms, which are social innovations, such as public-private partnerships or community partnerships involving public authorities, private companies, and citizens.

Subsequent studies focused on another aspect of entrepreneurial activity, namely, entrepreneurial intention. The thesis further presents the categories of research conducted, in chronological order:

- comparative approach of entrepreneurial intention in the case of 2 countries;
- study of entrepreneurial intention in the case of management students;
- proposal of more complex models, mediation/moderation, and inclusion of variables rarely found in studies;
- analysis of entrepreneurial intention in the case of hybrid entrepreneurs;
- analysis of entrepreneurial intention in a pandemic context.

The first category then details the study "Is culture a moderator of entrepreneurship motivation? A Comparative Study of Romania and Iceland," which sought to identify the link between national culture and entrepreneurial intention in a specific demographic group. We aimed to analyze the differences—influenced by cultural context—on the entrepreneurial intention of business administration students from Romania and Iceland. The study highlights the motivations that can lead students to start their own businesses and evaluates the extent to which these have cultural determinants (Hofstede's classic dimensions model). The method used was a questionnaire applied in both countries, and the independent samples t-test was used to identify significant differences between the two groups of students. According to Hofstede's cultural model, the research calculates a cultural distance indicator for four dimensions: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity, to highlight the cultural

influence on the entrepreneurial process. The results indicate significant differences between Romanian and Icelandic students, but these differences are not explained by the cultural distance calculated for the two groups.

The most recent study, published in 2025, considers the pandemic context in modeling entrepreneurial intention ("Entrepreneurial Intentions in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Psychological and Demographic Factors") and aimed primarily to improve the understanding of the relationship between essential psychological factors influencing entrepreneurial intention and how they were affected during the pandemic, opening new opportunities for potential young entrepreneurs. The study proposes an innovative model that incorporates self-efficacy, curiosity, and willingness to take risks as essential elements in determining EI, in the context of the knowledge-based economy. Also, the analysis of these factors was carried out in relation to the Uncertainty Management Theory (UMT), generating a unique combination of individual characteristics that act on the intention to become an entrepreneur, to maximize the potentially beneficial effects resulting from the pandemic crisis. The thesis also details the results of other studies on entrepreneurial intention, with the aim of presenting the diversity of approaches taken by the author throughout their career, and also to identify the complexity of the results obtained. These results represent good practice ideas for stimulating entrepreneurial intention for both students and the adult population.

**Chapter 3** presents "**Academic, Scientific, and Professional Development Perspectives,**" and the information included here covers proposals and plans related to the development of new courses, as well as a list of research topics already underway. I also included articles undergoing review and those accepted for presentation at international conferences. Finally, I emphasized the central objective of my future activity: to coordinate doctoral theses in the field of Management, both for Romanian students and, through collaboration with other universities, for joint doctoral theses.