

# The Effects of Expatriates' Cross-Cultural Competence, Work-Role Demand on Expatriates' Adjustment and Performance: A Meta-Analysis Approach

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## ABSTRACTS

Along with the tremendous growth of international operations, more and more expatriates have to be dispatched to the overseas market places. However, expatriate's failure still remains in a higher rate. Expatriates' failure not only can incur the loss of company sales and profits, but also negatively influence expatriates' effectiveness. Among others, this study investigated the effects of expatriates' cross-cultural competence, emotional intelligence, and work-role demand on expatriates' adjustment and performance. With an integration of previous studies, this study posits that expatriates' cross-cultural competences (in terms of cultural intelligence, cultural adaptability, and cultural empathy), work-role demand (in terms of role novelty, role ambiguity, role conflict, and overload), and expatriates' emotional intelligence are important factors for the expatriate to adjust in host countries, which can further enhance his/her effectiveness (in terms of innovative work behavior, expatriates' performance; and expatriates' satisfaction).

**Keywords:** *cross-cultural competence; emotional intelligence; work-role demand; expatriate's adjustment; expatriate's performance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

To increase the success of expatriation is one of the most important factors for the performance of multinational operations. A plenty of studies have tried to identify the key success factors for expatriates' cultural adjustment and performance (Black, 1998; Morley & Flynn, 2003). Among others, three issues deserve further clarification. First, the cross-cultural competence, which includes cultural intelligence (CQ), cultural empathy, and cultural adaptability, is regarded as one of the key factors for expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment. It is argued that adjustment may be led by the efforts of expatriates to conceptualize their assignment through their self-concept (cognitive CQ), which is directed by the motivation to adapt to new cultural surroundings (motivational CQ). Early and Ang (2003) proposed that CQ can capture the ability to adapt across cultures, which can encourage expatriates to work effectively across multicultural situations. Cultural adaptability is the process through which the new cultural skills are added to one's own cultural 'repertoire' and includes the ability to experience behaviors and characteristics from a different culture than one's own (Bennet 1993; Olson & Kroeger 2001). Previous studies indicated that when expatriates have high cultural adaptability, they will easily adjust themselves to the new environment in host country. Cultural empathy refers to the

ability and sensitivity to sympathize with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of expatriates from other cultural settings.

The second perspective needs to be considered is work-role demands. Previous studies have confirmed that work-role demands tend to have negative influence on expatriate's adjustment and expatriate's effectiveness. Morley and Flynn (2003) argued that if expatriates are not familiar with the roles of overseas assignments, they may be unable to handle new tasks and it may result in expatriate's failure. Morley and Flynn further argued that role novelty, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload are four of the most important work-role characteristics that may result in the increase of uncertainty, unfamiliarity, unpredictability, and uncontrollability of new work assignments and may inhibit expatriate adjustment. Therefore, this study also identifies work-role demands as the second dimensions that may negatively influence expatriate's adjustment and expatriate's effectiveness (Morley & Flynn, 2003; Selmer & Fenner, 2009; Larazova, et al., 2010; Mahajan & Silva, 2012).

Furthermore, the role of emotional intelligence (EQ) to predict expatriate's performance has also been concerned extensively. It is argued that using their cognitive ability, expatriates can learn easily and rationalize the situation in order to better adjust to the new environment (Lubinski,

2004). Thus, expatriates who are competent in EQ would be able to encourage themselves to do better continuously and direct their emotions in positive and productive direction (Cote & Miner, 2006; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004), which further improve their adjustment and performance. Wu and Bodigerel-Koehler (2013) asserted that, instead of the Big Five Personality, expatriate's EQ may be more powerful to facilitate expatriate's adjustment. Based on organizational learning theory (Senge, 1982), learning is a knowledge sharing and acquiring process that expatriate's social capital becomes a critical factor to enhance adjustment. During the learning process, if the expatriate cannot capture the competence from cross-culture, then the learning and adjustment can be limited.

Based on the above discussion, expatriate's cross-cultural competence, work-role demand, and emotional intelligence are three of the key variables that may influence expatriate's adjustment and performance. However, previous studies never integrate these variables into more comprehensive constructs to identify their simultaneous effects on the success of expatriation. Therefore, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the influence of expatriate's cross-cultural competence on expatriate's adjustment.
2. To identify the influence of work-role demand on expatriate's adjustment
3. To identify the influence of expatriate's emotional intelligence on their adjustment
4. To identify the influence of expatriate's adjustment on expatriate's effectiveness.

## **2. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### ***2.1 The Relationship Between Expatriate's Cross-Cultural Competence and Expatriate Adjustment***

Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar (2006), argued that CQ has significant impact on cross-cultural adjustment. Ang et al., (2006) also indicated that the degree of adjustment could be led by the efforts of expatriates to conceptualize their assignment through their self-concept (cognitive CQ), which was directed by the motivation to adapt to new cultural surrounding (motivation CQ). Thus, the degree of adjustment could be higher when expatriate could acquire or adapt behaviors appropriate for a new culture (Early & Peterson, 2004). Early and Ang (2003) proposed that expatriates with higher cultural intelligence (CQ) capture the ability to adapt across cultures to function effectively across multicultural situations. When the expatriate has less CQ, he/ she will not able to get more relational skill.

According to Amadi et al. (2011), cultural empathy means the sensitivity with other cultures, thoughts, feelings, and/or experience. Expatriates with higher cultural empathy will never use ethnocentrism to have relationship with others. Cultural empathy is also needed to identify the mainstream culture because expatriates have to understand the way host

country feel and think (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). If expatriates have the ability and sensitivity about the host culture, they can identify the mainstream culture well.

Cultural adaptability is the process through which the new cultural skill or way are added to one's own cultural "repertoire" and includes the ability to experience behaviors and characteristics from a different culture than one's own (Bennet, 1993, Olson and Kroeger, 2001). Expatriates having high cultural adaptability easily adjust themselves to new environment in host country (Bell & Harrison, 1996). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H1: Expatriate's cross-cultural competence has positive influence on expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment.*

### ***2.2 The Relationship Between Work-Role Demand and Expatriate Adjustment***

According to Black (1988), role novelty can create expatriate's feelings of uncertainty and unpredictability, because the expatriate is facing the different role from before. This situation will make him/her difficult to understand and adjust to new situation. because moving from one function to another will lead to stressful working (Pinder & Schroeder, 1987). Similarly, role ambiguity will also inhibit expatriate's adjustment. The greater the role ambiguity, the less the expatriate will be able to predict different behaviors in the new environment (Black, 1988). He/she will get difficulties to utilize past successful behaviors or to determine new behaviors. In other words, the expatriate may face upon the problems to adjust to the cross-culture environment. Furthermore, role conflict leads to stress that will make the expatriate perform less effectively (Rizzo, et al, 1970). Therefore, higher role conflict will make the expatriate more difficult in the role transition or to do adjustment (Morley & Flynn, 2003). Finally, when someone faces the overload jobs, he/she will less respond to that job (Black, 1988) and gets more difficulties to adjust to the new environment. Therefore, if parent company is less aware with its employees abroad and give them too much works, adjustment may become more difficult (Morley & Flynn, 2003). Therefore, the higher the work-role demand including role novelty, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload, the lower the expatriate's adjustment will be. Based on that explanation, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H2: Work-role demands, which are role novelty, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload, have negative influence on expatriate's adjustment.*

### ***2.3 The Relationship Between Expatriate's Emotional Intelligence and Expatriate's Adjustment***

Expatriates with higher EQ will be more easily adjust themselves to host country (Early & Ang, 2003). According

to Early and Peterson (2004), the degree of adjustment will be higher when expatriates have higher EQ. It is suggested that EQ can enable expatriates to learn easily and rationalize the situation in order to better adjust to the new environment. EQ can enable expatriates to encourage themselves to do better continuously and direct their emotion in positive and productive direction, which will further facilitate the expatriate's adjustment. (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). Besides, expatriate's EQ is important because it can be used to reduce cultural conflict or even work-related conflict (Ang et al., 2007; Early & Ang, 2003; Early, Ang, & Tan, 2006). Therefore, expatriates with higher intelligence will result in better expatriate's adjustment. Based on that, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H3: EQ has positive influence on expatriate's adjustment*

## **2.4 The Relationship Between Expatriate Adjustment and Expatriate Effectiveness**

When expatriates have the ability to adjust themselves with the new environment, they will be psychologically comfortable with assignment and duties, interaction with others, and general living conditions in host country (Black 1988, Black et al. 1991, Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005; Ramalu et al., 2010; Zhou & Qin, 2009). In other words, expatriates will get more knowledge that can help them create some ideas. Therefore, they can collect such knowledge from host country and make them more innovative in their works. Through this situations, they will be more innovative, because they are already familiar with the new environment and nothing hinder them to do that. Furthermore, expatriates who have good perception of their host attitude will be more innovative, because they feel as if the host country treat them well and encourage them to do more in terms of innovation. Therefore, the higher the expatriate's adjustment, the higher the innovative work behavior will be. Based on that explanation, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H4: Expatriate's adjustment has positive influence on innovative work behavior.*

According to Caliguiri and Larazova (2002), expatriates who can adjust themselves with the new culture will easily receive feedback and emotional, informational, and instrumental support from the host country. Thus, they can perform well during the expatriation. Furthermore, Malek and Budhwar (2013) argued that expatriates who can adjust themselves well will have a greater reserve of personal resources such as time, effort, and emotional investment and these can lead to better behaviors and facilitate job performance. This happens because they can learn and maintain behavior appropriately to the new environment, and then create the secondary outcomes such as performance (Ashford & Taylor, 1990). Thus, Kraimer and Wayne (2004) expected that expatriate's adjustment is positively related to expatriate's performance. Expatriates can confidently do their job and perform well if their cross-cultural adjustment is good. Therefore, the higher

expatriate's adjustment, the higher the expatriate's performance will be. Based on that explanation, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H5: Expatriate's adjustment has positive influence on expatriate's performance.*

According to Pires, et al. (2011), the adjustment also can increase expatriate's satisfaction and performance. Expatriate's satisfaction is based on the situation of political stability, difference of culture, and the duration of expatriation. When expatriates can adapt themselves in different culture, they will be more satisfied with the expatriate's assignment. Kim (2008) and Xu (2009) all argued that communication and adjustment are positively correlated to job satisfaction. Therefore, the higher the expatriate's adjustment, the higher the expatriate's satisfaction will be. Based on that explanation, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H6: Expatriate's adjustment has positive influence on expatriate's satisfaction.*

## **2.5 The Relationship Among Expatriate's Effectiveness Factors**

The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) developed by Dawis, England, and Loftquist (1964) explains the relationship between expatriate's adjustment and expatriate's effectiveness. TWA argued that individuals and environments that impose the requirements on 'successful' work relations are the result of adjustment. Well-adjusted expatriates will have greater reserves of personal resources (time, effort, and emotional investment) available to spend on the behaviors that facilitate their job performance (Haslberger, 2008; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001).

Vernaik, et al. (2005) argued that marketing innovation has positive influence on multinational subsidiary performance, such as stock-price performance and sales growth. Expatriate's innovative work behavior can increase expatriate's performance through organizational learning. According to Senge (1990), learning will acquire more knowledge, and using that knowledge, expatriate can create more innovative work behaviors, which are easier to achieve fundamental requirement for creating and sustaining competitive advantages. Therefore, the higher the expatriate's innovative work behavior, the higher the expatriate's performance will be. Based on that explanation, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H7: Expatriate's innovative work behavior has positive influence on expatriate's performance.*

Many studies have shown that job satisfaction is significantly related to job performance (Eliyana et al., 2019; Dirisu et al., 2018; Kwak et al., 2019, Gul et al., 2018). Job satisfaction is work-related satisfaction, that has positive impact on work performance, because satisfied expatriates tend to demonstrate the ability to manage their stress and use the external resources to reduce work-related issues and conflicts. Therefore, the higher the expatriate's satisfaction,

the higher the expatriate's performance will be. Based on that explanation, the following proposition is developed:  
H8: *Expatriate's satisfaction has positive influence on expatriate's performance.*

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Framework

The main purpose of this study is to identify the antecedent, and consequences of expatriate's adjustment. A conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.

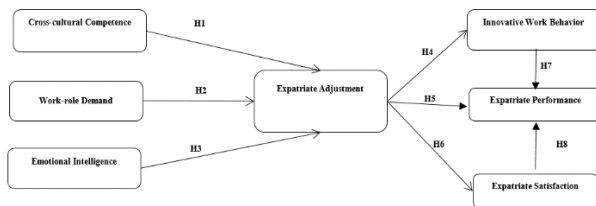


Figure 1: The Research Framework

#### 3.2 Research Design and Research Methodology

##### 3.2.1 Meta-analysis procedure

To have a thorough literature review on each of the research hypotheses, a meta-analysis is adopted. Meta-analysis is a statistical procedure to integrate data and to evaluate the consistency of effect size from previous studies. Meta-analysis is also needed to identify the common effect of certain hypothesis. This meta-analysis searched the empirical studies from different scientific database. The data was collected electronically in the fields of management, psychology, social science, business, marketing, health, and organizational behavior. First of all, this research looked for the coefficient correlations among cross-cultural competences (cultural intelligence, cultural empathy, cultural adaptability), work-role demand (role novelty, role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload), emotional intelligence, expatriate's adjustment, innovative work behaviors, expatriate's satisfaction, and expatriate's performance, by using ProQuest, JSTOR, SAGE, Emerald, Science Direct, Wiley Inter Science, Dissertation Abstract, and Google Scholar. This research used them with multiple keywords to identify relevant journals and papers. The correlations of each research hypothesis were then collected for further analysis. Comprehensive Meta-Analysis software (CMA) was adopted to empirically test these research hypotheses.

##### 3.2.2 Selection of studies

Two criterions were used for the inclusion of this meta-analysis: (1) correlation studies have to present the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) or the standardized regression coefficient for each of the research hypotheses, (2) studies of group contrasts have to present the related statistics ( $t$ -test,  $F$ -ratio with one  $df$  in the numerator) for the above research hypotheses (De Matos, et al., 2007). Then, all of the criteria should be converted to  $r$ -coefficients by using CMA software. Since Byron and Khazanchi (2010), Bhasker-Shrinivas et al. (2005) and Hechanova et al. (2003) had explained that correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was easier to interpret and most of data-analytical review used it as criteria, this research used it for further analysis. All identified studies were then examined in term of the following relevant variables, which are: authors, year, journals, total sample size, variable and effect size. Furthermore, based on the study conducted by Lipsey and Wilson (2001), the magnitude of effect size ( $r$ ) can be categorized as small ( $r < 0.1$ ), medium ( $r = 0.25$ ) and high ( $r > 0.4$ ).

After integrating the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of each study, a confidence interval is presented for each effect size and its significance. Rosenthal (1979) stated that when the mean effect size is significant, a fail  $N$  is calculated. Then, it estimates the number of non-significant and unavailable studies that would be necessary to bring the cumulative effect size to a non-significant value (known as the "file drawer" problems). This statistical analysis is an indication of the difficulty of the result. Confidence interval were also analyzed. The criterion of 95% confidence interval was adopted to prove whether the hypothesis was accepted.

Moreover, Lipsey and Wilson (2001) explained about another  $Q$ -statistics, which is an analysis of homogeneity of the effect size distribution. It is distributed as a Chi-square with degree of freedom =  $n-1$ , where  $n$  = number of studies. This test has assumed that all the effect sizes are estimating the same population mean, which is a reasonable assumption. The criterion is that  $Q$ -statistic should be higher than Chi-square, then the null hypothesis of homogeneity is rejected. If this happens, differences in effect size should be attributed to factor other than sampling, therefore, the heterogeneity between the variance exists.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 The Effects of the Antecedents on Expatriate's Adjustments

Using the mean value of correlation coefficients among previous studies, the results showed that correlation for cross-cultural competence ( $r = 0.272$ , medium effect size), and emotional intelligence ( $r = 0.443$ , high effect size) were also significant, which suggests that these antecedents all had positive influence on expatriate's adjustment. Furthermore, work-role demand ( $r = -0.517$ ) had negative

influence on expatriate's adjustment. Based on the criteria as stated by Lipsey and Wilson (2001), the relationship had medium effect size. The results were supported by 95% confidence interval with non-zero values. Therefore, hypothesis H1, H2, H3 were supported. Furthermore, all Q-values were higher than Chi-Square values, which means that the effect was significantly heterogeneous.

#### ***4.2 The Effects of Expatriate Adjustment on Expatriate Effectiveness***

Using the mean value of correlation coefficients among previous studies, the results showed that expatriate's adjustment had positive influence on innovative work behavior ( $r = 0.487$ , high effect size), performance ( $r = 0.227$ ; medium effect size), and satisfaction ( $r = 0.487$ , high effect size). These results were supported by 95% confidence interval with non-zero values. Therefore, hypothesis H4, H5, H6 were supported. Furthermore, all Q-statistics were higher than Chi-Square values, which means that the effect of expatriate's adjustment in innovative work behavior, expatriate's performance, and expatriate's satisfaction were significantly heterogeneous.

#### ***4.3 The Relationship Among the Expatriate Effectiveness Factors***

Using the mean value of correlation coefficients among previous studies, the results showed that innovative work behavior ( $r = 0.501$ ) and expatriate's satisfaction ( $r = 0.550$ ) had positive influence on expatriate's performance. Based on the criteria as stated by Lipsey and Wilson (2001), the relationship has high effect size. These results were also supported by 95% confidence interval with non-zero values. Therefore, hypothesis 7 and 8 were supported. Furthermore, all Q-values were higher than Chi-Square values, which means that the influence of innovative work behavior and expatriate's satisfaction on expatriate's performance was significantly heterogeneous.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

From the findings, this study concludes as follows: First of all, expatriate with cross-cultural competence will be sensitive with other cultures, thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences in a good way, so that they will not feel that the new culture is worse than their own one (Ahmadi, et al., 2011). It seems to suggest that expatriates with high level of cross-cultural competences tend to have good adjustment in host country. Second, work-role demand is an inhibit factor for expatriate's adjustment. It is argued that high work-role demand will create higher uncertainty and unpredictability, which will result in higher stress and conflict among colleagues, and will further reduce expatriate's adjustment (Takeuchi et al, 2009; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013). On the other hand, work-role demands are also important to be

considered during expatriation because it may reduce expatriate's competences. Expatriates, who feel the role novelty in host country, ambiguity and too much workload, and also face conflicts during the expatriation, will have low self-efficacy (Karve & Nair, 2010; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). It is because when expatriates face the ambiguity of their job, they do not know what they should do, then it will reduce their confidence to do certain jobs. Similarly, expatriates will be less self-efficacy when they feel too many differences in term of job between their previous and current situation, and the cross-cultural adjustment which is reduced.

Secondly, expatriate's emotional intelligence is also an important factor that influence expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment. Expatriates who can manage their emotion, will be easily calm in stressful situation in the new environments (Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1999). Similarly, when they are open-minded, they will have the ability to open towards other group or different cultures. Furthermore, expatriates with cultural-empathy will understand the reason people in host country may act differently towards them. It means that they think positively towards the differences and keep feeling comfortable with host country attitudes towards them (Arman & Aycan, 2013; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000; Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). Thus, expatriate's emotional intelligence tends to make expatriates easy in cross-cultural adjustment.

Thirdly, expatriates with higher cross-cultural adjustment means they have the ability to maintain interpersonal relationship with host country, so that they will be able to gain information that can be new ideas and lead to the innovation related to their works (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). These adjustments tend to make expatriates able in sharing information and ideas with others, and also solving their problems (Spiegelaere, et al., 2013). It can further create innovative work behavior. Besides, expatriates with higher cross-cultural adjustment tend to perform well (Rose, 2010; Ramalu, et al., 2011; Claus et al., 2011). Cross-cultural adjustment is also important to increase expatriate's satisfaction, because it makes them able to deal with intercultural stress which further creates satisfaction (Downes, et al., 2000). Expatriates who have higher cross-cultural adjustment will have good innovative work behavior, performance, and satisfaction. When expatriates can adjust themselves in host country, they will feel more comfortable with their assignments and duties, be able to communicate and interact with people in host country, and enjoy their living during the expatriation (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005; Ramalu et al., 2010; Zhou & Qin, 2009). Those conditions lead expatriates to perform well, because they are already familiar with the environment. Besides, expatriates will also have greater reserve of personal resources, which then creates better behaviors and facilitates job performance (Malek & Budhwar, 2013). Thus, cross-cultural adjustment seems to lead to a better expatriate's performance. Similarly, expatriates who have cross-cultural adjustment will feel satisfied during their expatriation. The reason is that expatriates with those conditions will think positively towards their job and people around them, which will lead them to better satisfaction

(Pires, et al., 2011; Xu, 2009; Kim, 2008). In summary, cross-cultural adjustment will create better expatriate's performance and satisfaction

Finally, expatriates, who feel satisfied with their job, will have positive influence on their performance (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2005; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). It is because they have the ability to manage stress and use external resources to reduce work-related issues and conflicts, which they can further focus on their performance. Furthermore, through organizational learning, expatriates tend to use their innovative work behavior to improve their performance. Therefore, expatriate's satisfaction and innovative work behavior tend to be important factors in order to achieve good performance.

There are also several limitations in this study. First of all, this study applied the meta-analysis approach to test the relationship among research constructs, which integrated different studies under different environmental settings with various samples. The effect size found in this study was based on an empirical distribution that may be affected by sample error. So, future research can be more careful about this issue. Second, this study is primarily theoretical in nature, and future research can be carried out empirically to evaluate the relationship between research constructs. Third, future research may need to use more variables and integrate more studies to identify the influential factors of expatriate's effectiveness.

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