

“THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CROSS-CULTURAL
ADJUSTMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPOUSE
AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG THE SELF-INITIATED
ACADEMIC EXPATRIATES IN MALAYSIA”.

by
SHERZOD GULAMOV

Dissertation Submitted to
Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business,
Universiti Utara Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Science (Management)

January, 2014.

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ABSTRACT

This study contributed to the field of the Human Resource Development by focusing on the following non-work factors. First, this topic focused on community of academics which has not been much studied in job satisfaction, specifically in Malaysia. Second, through this study we have found out that family factor of spousal cross-cultural adjustment abroad has an important relationship with job satisfaction.

This study enriched a vanguard topic of expatriate management literature by investigating the sociocultural adjustment experiences of a little-researched subpopulation of expatriates; those that self-initiate their own foreign work experiences. This study employed a quantitative web survey to generate data about the sociocultural adjustment experiences of academic expatriates teaching at colleges and universities in Malaysia. Three hypotheses were generated and tested regarding the relationship of the antecedent factors of previous overseas work experience and foreign language ability and the in-country factor of culture novelty with cultural adjustment, interaction adjustment, and work adjustment.

Hypotheses regarding foreign language ability were not supported. Hypotheses regarding previous overseas work experience were partially supported. Hypotheses regarding culture novelty were fully supported. Evidence was produced to warrant further examination of the factors of age, education level, and degree of satisfaction with previous overseas work experience, length of employment in current job. Finally, the results of this analysis provided original knowledge about the job satisfaction of self-initiating expatriates, contributed to the understanding of the validity of prior research conducted on traditional expatriates and prompted a reexamination of the dominant

theoretical model of expatriate job satisfaction upon which much of the expatriate job satisfaction research is based.

The key findings of the current study indicated that if spousal adjustment was achieved then it would lead to expatriate's adjustment and job satisfaction eventually. In particular, spousal cross-cultural adjustment had the strongest effect on the general environment of expatriates, followed by host national interaction, and finally, work adjustment. This finding was noteworthy in that it confirmed the findings of previous research and showed that the role of family was stable in changing times.

Key Words: Spouse Cross-Cultural Adjustment, Expatriate Job Satisfaction, and Expatriate Cross-Cultural Adjustment.

DEDICATION

To my mother, wife and children whose patience and understanding have only been surpassed by their love and support throughout this process. It would have been impossible without you. And to my dad, who will never know the man he made me into or how often he is in my thoughts when it comes time to simply get down to work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and the help of many individuals extended their valuable support in completion of this study.

First and foremost, I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Subramaniam A/L Sri Ramalu, my academic advisor whose inspiration and encouragement I will never forget. Dr. Subramaniam has been providing me with great insight and motivation as I proceeded with my study for two semesters at the University Utara Malaysia. Without him I would not have hurdled all the obstacles to the completion of this research work.

It is a pleasure to thank those who helped me to conduct surveys for my research in Malaysia. And, finally, 124 anonymous participants who responded my survey questions deserve recognition for their input and their time.

Last but not least, I thank my family and, the one above all of us, the omnipresent God. I am grateful to my mother, Rano Toychiyeva, who has shown me her unfailing love and support for all my life, my sisters, Iroda Qosimova and Sadoqat Irgasheva and wife Mukhlisa Gulamova who have been patient during my long months of study, and my children, Osiyo, Mubina, Abduaziz who even at a young ages have been understanding and encouraged me as I struggled to overcome the obstacles in my life.

Especially, I give my respect and love to my father, Shamurat Gulyamov, who helped me on everything.

Finally, God responded to my prayers when I asked for strength to carry on life and study and God gave me hope to live for good. I give a glory to you Lord.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalization has changed the way businesses are conducted. Many Multinational Corporations (MNCs) have expanded their business across nations, regions and continents. It is evident that the use of expatriates has become important component of international human resource management practices among MNCs. As a result of this development, the number of expatriates working around the world also has increased, and the demand for people who can live and work successfully in foreign environments regardless of difficulties is growing rapidly (Caligiuri, 2000a). However, not all the expatriates can effectively navigate in the new cultural environment and successfully complete their assignment. Low rates of success in international assignments can result in monetary losses, damaged company reputation, and the potential loss of business. In order to overcome these issues, multinational organizations that employ expatriates are continuously trying to increase expatriate success and understand how best to predict which individuals will be able to function successfully in different countries.

With the aim to become high income nation by year 2020, Malaysia has recognized the need for knowledgeable human capital to become the catalyst to speed up the process. In the area where local expertise is limited, the country aggressively recruits foreign talents to settle down in the country (Harper, 2012). For this reason, the country has set up the Expatriate Division to devise plans and strategies to attract foreign talents in critical areas. The target groups are those highly

skilled to help develop various technology-driven industries in the country. To have smooth relocation, the Immigration services are also provided such as visa application process.

Beside the new Expatriate Services Division (ESD), the Residence Pass-Talent (RP-T) work permit was also launched by the government to attract greater number of foreign talents. Under this scheme, the expatriate and his family will be issued a valid document or pass to reside in this country for a maximum period of ten years. It is the hope of the country that foreign talents will complement local talents and they will not take jobs away from people who live in Malaysia. Foreign best talents are also expected to become part of the nation's economic growth and help the country to move even faster to achieve the vision to become developed nation by 2020.

Malaysia ranked fifth in the Expat Experience Survey (HSBC Expat Explorer Survey, 2012), underlined by 72% of expats reporting a better quality of life. Three quarters (72%) also said they have a more interesting life since moving, and 39% of expats stated that they have a better social life. Other aspects that make Malaysia a top expat destination include the standard of accommodation. More than two thirds (69%) claimed they have better housing and 31% owned a private swimming pool when they didn't before. Life in Malaysia is easier in a number of ways – expats particularly report the ease of organizing schools (39%), finance (78%), accommodation (75%) and healthcare (69%), with almost all interviewed (92%) complimenting Malaysia for the ease of local travel. Moreover, 42% enjoy more domestic help than previously, 44% have more luxurious holidays, and over two thirds (67%) of expats associate Malaysia with pleasant climate and scenery, and as a culturally interesting place to live (69%) with all the sights and sounds that make the country unique.

Despite favorable responses in regards to expatriate experience in the country, the statistics however shows the expatriate failure and premature return from assignment in Malaysia remained high. One of the reasons for premature return is inability of expatriates to adjust to local culture. This has eventually spills over to their level of job satisfaction. Spouse adjustment also found to be significant determinant of expatriates inability to adjust and as a result of this their job satisfaction also affected. A strong correlation between expatriate and spouse cross-cultural adjustment has been reported in many studies across countries and those studies acknowledge that the spouse is playing the important role on the expatriate failure rate (Mendenhall et al., 1987; Black and Stephens, 1989b).

Some studies found failure of the spouse to adjust to the new environment as the number one factor for premature returns of expatriates (Black & Stephens, 1989a; Tung, 1981). Having considered the spouse is playing a major role in an effective adjustment of expatriate to a foreign assignments, the issue of the spouse's cross-cultural adjustment and its effects on expatriate effectiveness in Malaysia has laid the motivation for this study.

1.2 Problem Statement

To date, research on expatriate effectiveness in international assignment has concentrated on identifying the determinants of premature return. Little is known about the effects of spouse adjustment on the expatriates adjustment and effectiveness in the assignment. According to Tung (1986), majority of the study in the cross-cultural management have found spouse to be major factor responsible for expatriate failure abroad. Black (1989) in his study cited spouse's inability

to adjust in host country as a major factor contributing to expatriate employees' adjustment difficulty which causing higher probability of returning prematurely. These studies however have concentrated on organizational expatriates. Least is known whether the same phenomenon is experienced by the self-initiated expatriates. As the world becoming the global village, a significant number of self-initiated expatriates' relocation to other countries is evident. They are not expatriated by the home country organizations like organizational expatriates. Their relocation is on voluntary basis and motivated by monetary rewards and lucrative benefits in other countries. These groups of self-initiated expatriates are employed in various sectors such as higher education, financial services, telecommunications, ICT and other related industries.

With the aim to become world class universities, majority of the institutions of higher educations in the country aggressively recruiting international academicians (self-initiated expatriates) to serve in their institutions. They are highly paid and employed on contractual basis. To retain them longer in the country, some of the institutions even provide spouse scheme and absorb the cost of spouse and children relocation to the country. Despite all the incentives and perks, many found that the attrition of visiting academics still high. This has caused monetary losses and lack of academic experts in various academic fields. Interview among academic heads and administrators revealed that academic self-initiated expatriates premature return potentially motivated by spouse's inability to adjust in the country. However, this needs further investigation and has become motivation of this study.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent family factor namely spousal adjustment affects the adjustment of expatriates, and the spillover effects it has on expatriates' job satisfaction. Many have found premature repatriation was caused by the incapability of spouse to adjust and could result in decreased job satisfaction (Andreasen, 2008; Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010).

1.4 Research Objective

The research objectives of this study as follows:

- i) To examine the relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction.
- ii) To examine the relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate cross-cultural adjustment.
- iii) To examine the relationship between expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction.
- iv) To ascertain the mediating effect of expatriate cross-cultural adjustment on the relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction.

1.5 Research Questions

The research is aimed to answer the following research questions:

- i) Does spouse cross-cultural adjustment related to expatriate job satisfaction?
- ii) Does spouse cross-cultural adjustment related to expatriate cross-cultural adjustment?
- iii) Does expatriate cross-cultural adjustment related to expatriate job satisfaction?
- iv) Does expatriate cross-cultural adjustment mediate relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction?

1.6 Significance of Study

The current study needed to understand the relationship between spousal adjustment and expatriate effectiveness in the country since expatriate spouse continues to be a primary source of premature repatriation (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010). For the past three decades the adjustment of the expatriate spouse has continued to be a topic of research (Andreason, 2008; Braseby, 2010; Cherry, 2010; Kupka & Cathro, 2007; Lauring & Selmer, 2010). In 2009, 65% of assignment failure of expatriate employees was attributed to spousal/partner dissatisfaction (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010). Whereas the majority of studies regarding expatriate spouses are situated within multinational corporations elsewhere (Andreason, 2008; Kupka, Everett, & Cathro, 2008; Lauring & Selmer, 2010), there are few studies focused on the spouses of expatriates working in Malaysia.

By knowing the factors contribute to expatriates job satisfaction in Malaysia, the institutions will be able to address these problems by devising appropriate retaining mechanisms. The expatriates themselves will be fully informed the appropriate coping and adjustment strategies in order to remain working in the country.

1.7 Scope of Study

The present study was limited to academic expatriates and their spouses in whom the expatriate was an English speaking male or female in Malaysia. The present study's participants were self-initiated academic expatriates and their spouses from Northern region of Malaysia. Respondents list are obtained from registrar's office of institutions of higher education from three states namely Penang, Perlis and Kedah. They are carefully selected to ensure they fulfil the criteria of self-initiated expatriates upon recommendation by respective institutions registrar's office.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Spouse: The spouse is defined as an individual who relocates internationally due to the employment of their spouse or partner. For the current study the term spouse encompasses males and females as well as married couples and those who are living together.

Expatriate: An expatriate is a person working and living outside his or her own home country on a non-permanent basis (Baruch & Altman, 2002; Aycan & Kanungo, 1997).

Self-Initiated Expatriates: Instigate and finance their own expatriation and are not transferred by organizations; instead they relocate to a host country of their choice to pursue cultural, personal, and career development opportunities (Harrison et al., 2004; Jokinen et al., 2008; Myers & Pringle, 2005), often with no definite timeframe in mind (Harrison et al., 2004)

Expatriate Adjustment: Expatriate adjustment is defined as “the perceived degree of comfort a person has with his or her environment” (Black et al., 1991, p. 301).

Job Satisfaction: The overall job satisfaction is not a feeling; it is evoked by the interaction of many complex influences, is a perception, a discerning, pervasive sense of the extent of overall well-being (Stebbins, 2008).

1.9 The Study's and Remainder's Organization

The second Chapter of this study presents a review of the previous literature regarding expatriate spouses, factors influencing expatriate cross-cultural adjustment, and expatriate job satisfaction. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology for the current study. Data collection and analysis procedures will also be delineated. In Chapter 4 the results are presented. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results and concludes the chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the findings of previous studies and concentrated on the main variables of the study namely expatriate job satisfaction, expatriate adjustment and adjustment of expatriate spouse. Relevant models/theories are referred in the discussion to lay the foundation for the research.

2.2 Expatriate Job Satisfaction

According to Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), job satisfaction refers to one's evaluation of his or her job. Work events are believed to evoke emotional states that lead to affective reactions which in turn elicit behaviors and attitudes such as job satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Job satisfaction has both an affective and a cognitive/belief component. That is, job satisfaction is believed to be influenced by both objective features of the job and by the emotions an employee feels on the job. It is proposed herein that psychological responses to adaptation will influence the affective component of job satisfaction because psychological adjustment, an outcome of cultural adaptation, is an affective state (Hee et al., 2006). Hence, positive affect and emotional states of well-being should make the individual feel higher levels of contentment considering the fact that affective experiences have been known to have a direct influence on job satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). For instance, an expatriate who feels well-adjusted to the new culture will be

more likely to express feelings of contentment and satisfaction as he/she will experience fewer negative emotional states such as cultural dissonance and feelings of alienation.

Shaffer and Harrison (1998) proposed that satisfaction of job is an outcome of expatriate's adjustment. Furthermore, Fisher and Shaw (1994) advocated that satisfaction of job was an outcome of an expatriate's adjustment. Past research has shown that job satisfaction was not a construct of univariate (Naumann, 1993a; Naumann, 1993b; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). It is popularly defined in terms of one's intrinsic, extrinsic, or total satisfaction (Naumann, 1993b). Intrinsic satisfaction refers to feelings of accomplishment, actualization of oneself, and job tasks identity. The challenge of reducing cultural distance by learning about a new culture can result in higher levels of intrinsic satisfaction, especially when those efforts become successful (Naumann, 1993a). Thus, the host culture can contribute to greater intrinsic satisfaction when the individual is able to adapt and adjust to the cultural differences.

It is therefore proposed that expatriates who have adapted and have become "well-adjusted" to the new culture will experience a sense of fulfillment or a positive emotional state as they are better able to identify with the cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors of the new environment. Furthermore, this study asserts the cognitive components of job satisfaction are also influenced by one's adjustment in cross-cultural contexts. It is believed that the appraisal of work conditions abroad, as well as the feelings and emotions associated with the job could be influenced by cross-cultural adjustment. Thus, it is hypothesized that a culturally well-adjusted expatriate will report higher levels of cognitive and affective job satisfaction as compared to one who is less adjusted.

The motivation to perform well can decrease and the specified length of time is diminished to remain abroad can occur because of an expatriate dissatisfaction during the overseas assignment (Lee, 2006). Thus, it is believed that satisfied expatriates are valuable contributors to the organization's effectiveness and basically to be successful in long-term (Naumann, 1993a). Dissatisfied expatriates on the other hand are more likely to engage in counter productive work behaviors, such as turnover, which badly affects an organization. In fact, job satisfaction plays an integral role in the turnover process (Naumann, 1993a). Therefore, multinational organizations need to consider about the expatriate's job satisfaction level, because, by doing this they can prevent extreme costs caused by the problems. Such as stress and dissatisfaction of home and work conditions of the expatriate's (Lee, 2006).

Scroggins (2008) argued that a key component for minimizing expatriate intention leave is to provide a meaningful job experiences so employees can get a job satisfaction in order to keep best functioning employees in the organization. That what organizations should concern about. While this may be a simplistic view of job satisfaction, given the myriad factors previously discussed, his point is none-the-less an important one, resonating strongly with the research into teacher retention. If universities wish to retain quality lecturers, then job satisfaction needs to be promoted, a task made more challenging when cultural factors may interfere with previous competencies and successes.

Scroggins (2008) focused on meaningful work as the key, but the underlying importance of employee success is determined by the factor of job satisfaction. If the organizations really want to keep their employees, and employees' performance and motivation in order to make sure that

they will behave accordingly, they have to focus on that specific factor. The argument is very clear. If the employees experience better job satisfaction eventually they will be more productive, positive workers. Erez and Judge (1994) advocate, that there is reciprocal relationship between satisfaction of job and subjective wellbeing. In a cyclical fashion, the one depends upon and promotes the other. For lecturers, the USDE (1997) advocates that “a lecturer’s satisfaction with his or her career eventually may cause better quality and firmness of knowledge taught to students. That is why, consider about job satisfaction and comply it within an organization, then their efficacy and commitment to the students learning have to be promoted in order to only retain quality of lecturers.

Although most of the literature in the later part of the 20th century focused specifically on the expatriate, further studies on expatriates’ spouses began to demonstrate that satisfaction of spouse was closely correlated with expatriate satisfaction, cross-cultural adjustment, and job success (Black & Gregerson, 1991; Black & Stephens, 1989). Further research reports mixed results with spouse and family influences, so that the current responsibilities of the family has a significant negative impact on employee satisfaction, it does not play an important role in decision-making, to stop doing her/his work task early (Shaffer & Harrison , 1998). In addition, a number of factors specified for spouses (recruitment, satisfaction and quality of life) positively related to employee satisfaction and satisfaction with the life and the adjustment of spouse affects positively the expatriate to complete the job.

2.3 Expatriate Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Domenici-Lake (2002, p. 3) summarized adjustment as “the perceived degree of comfort a person has with his or her environment.” Lee and Liu (2006a, p. 303) offered a definition of cross-cultural adjustment as “the degree of psychological comfort and familiarity embraced by a person who has it with the new host culture.” Both of these definitions built on the foundation of germinal expatriate adjustment research of Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, Oddou, and Stroh in the 1980s and 1990s. Additionally, the definition avoids the circular use of the word *adjust* in explaining *adjustment*, which is a common shortcoming of the definition of adjustment (Hippler, 2000).

Cross-cultural adjustment is believed to be a crucial outcome of cultural adaptation and, therefore, cross-cultural competence. Cultural adaptation refers to the ability to change one's behaviors in order to achieve goals in a cross-cultural setting (Matsumoto, 2009). It is "the changes that happen with individuals or groups as a response to demand of environment" (Ali et al., 2003, p.565). Adaptation is based on the process of changing one's behavior to fit in with the changed environment. Adjustment refers to the psychological and sociocultural outcomes of adaptation, which results in both subjective and objective outcomes, respectively (Hee et al., 2006). Psychological adjustment refers to subjective outcomes such as emotions and feelings of satisfaction and well-being due to the decreasing of stress of living in a new culture. It includes internal psychological states such as mental health and personal satisfaction (Ali et al., 2003; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2003).

Cross-cultural adjustment includes outcomes such as salary, job performance ratings, and grades (Hee et al., 2006), as well as reduced ambiguity, cultural distance, and amount of life changes experienced (Matsumoto, 2009). Successful adjustment is greatly affected by cultural similarities and differences between the expatriate's home country and the host country. Addressing such differences may involve letting go of the existing home culture, values, and norms in order to enhance psychological and cross-cultural adjustment (Zakaria, 2000). However, the individual has to be open to changes in order to facilitate the adjustment process. This involves the release of home cultural values, norms, and behaviors that do not fit the foreign culture (Zakaria, 2000). Further, adjustment requires that the expatriate is able to switch from one schema to another in new cultural environments in order to achieve cultural adjustment (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2003). Research suggests that psychosocial skills, such as emotion regulation, openness, flexibility, and critical thinking, are integral to the successful adjustment of international employees (Tung, 1981). Study of Tung (1998) showed that having a family or spouse abroad has stabilized the expatriate's overseas assignment.

2.3.1. General Adjustment

General adjustment involves a process through which expatriates become comfortable and establish familiarity with the local surroundings in the host country. For example, general adjustment involves acquiring knowledge about specific shopping places, learning about the most popular local entertainment and exploring living in the new environment (Black, 1988). Thus, mastering knowledge about local living conditions may help expatriates better understand the host culture (Kraimer et al., 2001).

2.3.2. Interaction Adjustment

Interaction adjustment consists of the comfortable accomplishment of interactions with host nationals in both work and non-work situations. It also helps expatriates build relationships with local co-workers and facilitate their task performance in the managerial aspects of the overseas assignment (Kraimer et al., 2001). Interaction adjustment may perhaps be the most fundamental of the three dimensions, as both work adjustment and cultural (general) adjustment are based on interpersonal interactions (Bell & Harrison, 1996). Some researchers argue that interaction adjustment is the most difficult and complex of the three facets to achieve (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992).

2.3.3. Work Adjustment

Work adjustment is defined as job-related which entails a process through which expatriates achieve comfort and familiarity with work values, expectations and standards of the host work environment (Wang & Takeuchi, 2007). During this adjustment process, expatriates learn their new job roles, the new performance standards and expectations and the type of leadership expected of them by their subordinates. This learning process is critical for expatriates to improve their task performance (Kraimer et al., 2001).

2.4 Spouse Cross-Cultural Adjustment

2.4.1. General Adjustment

Solomon (1996) says that spouses are like CEO of corporation, and note that the spouse (usually the wife) is responsible for all aspects of migration and international regulations and is responsible for the smooth functioning of the destination, often with the help of little or no help. The study argues that this novelty of also plays a role in the adaptation of the spouse. A new culture, it is more difficult to adapt. This research, which shows the entire family living situation affects adjustment of the spouses; and the condition at host country equal to or better than those at home, it is going to make adjustment much easier (Black & Gregersen, 1991b).

2.4.2. Interaction Adjustment

The spouses mostly wives, however, usually need to interact with the members of host community every day to get everything like buying groceries and find a suitable school for their children. Lack of pressure relief and help families move and adapt can lead to feeling of spouse isolation (Black et al., 1999) and it will make problems for creating a meaningful life (Adler, 1997). In addition, there is no network of immediate back up, which is creating difficulties for spouse to manage the daily nuisance, which is part of a new culture life, because, there is no one to tell her what to do or how to get things accomplished. There are so many difficulties for expatriate spouses, so what can spouses to do in order to adjust better to a new environment? Some studies show that couples who befriend a member of the host country can better adapt to this host nation as they learn about

the culture and expectations of citizens" (Black & Gregersen, 1991b). Friendship, combined with family support, help spouses adjust to the culture.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The research based on the following theory, namely The International Adjustment Framework proposed by Black, Mendenhall & Oddou (1991). This theory is based on the factors associated with the job and organization. They have divided factors into 'anticipatory adjustment' which is, an adjustment during the period prior to departure, and factors 'adjustment in country', that is, the host country adjustment. The authors have categorized family-spouse adjustment inside the non-work adjustment. They have come to conclusion that the expats overall adjustment is influenced by spouse and family adjustment. Drawing from preceding section, the following theoretical framework is proposed for this study. The spouse cross-cultural adjustment proposed as the independent variable (IV) of the study. Expatriate adjustment proposed as the mediating variable (MV) while expatriate job satisfaction as the dependent variable (DV).

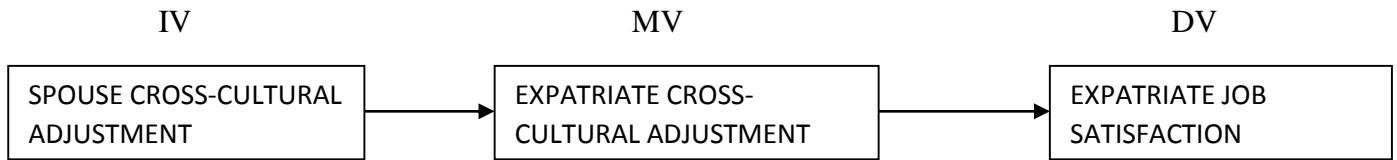


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework

2.6 Research Hypothesis

The literature review in preceding section has laid the foundation for hypotheses development for this study. The following is the research hypotheses for this study:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between spouse's cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between spouse's cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment mediates the relationship between spouse's cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's job satisfaction

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Population

The population of this study consists of self-initiated academic expatriates and their spouses in Northern region of Malaysia. The sampling frame obtained from registrars department of three public universities in northern region of Malaysia. The following universities were chosen for this study: Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). The total population is 354.

3.2 Sample

Participants list was obtained from registrars department of three public universities. The characteristics of the population were self-initiated academic expatriates on assignment in Malaysia. Since the research attempted to study self-initiated academic expatriates and their spouses on assignment in Malaysia, only those candidates responding to the sought criteria of “foreign nationality” were used in the analysis.

3.3 Sample Size

The total 180 respondents were chosen to participate in the study. The sample size was determined using the sample size table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). A total of 124 of the 180

respondents completed the entire survey yielding a response rate of 68%. The final sample consisted of a total of 124 respondents.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis of this study is individual self-initiated academic expatriates.

3.5 Research Design

This study employed cross-sectional design using survey method. This study is quantitative in nature and therefore questionnaire used for data collection with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population. The researcher utilized a quantitative, descriptive, causal-comparative design to examine the relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment, expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction.

3.6 Instrument

The data was collected using self-administered survey method. In addition to demographic profile items, Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, et al., 1985) and Spouse Adjustment Scale (Black & Stephens, 1989) were used. Spouse and expatriate cross-cultural adjustment measured using Black and Stephens's (1989) Spouse Adjustment Scale. Meanwhile expatriate job satisfaction measured using Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Since the researcher adapted the well-established scale, the validity of the instrument is taken care.

3.6.1 Adjustment

Both the spouse and expatriate adjustment measured using Black and Stephens's (1989a) adjustment questionnaire. It consists of 14 items on a seven-point Likert scale ordinal scale using antonymic adjectives (1= *very unadjusted*, 7= *completely adjusted*). These items assess three adjustment dimensions: general, interaction and work. Only 9 of the 14 items in the questionnaire were used to assess spousal adjustment. There are some items concerning work responsibilities or interacting with locals in a work context were dropped in the spouse assessment of adjustment as a result of past evidence which suggests that the most of spouses are not interested in working abroad (Stephens & Black, 1988). That is why, just the non-work items were used to assess the spouse's general and interaction adjustment.

3.6.2 Job Satisfaction

Expatriates were asked to indicate, on a seven-point scale (1- *strongly disagree*, 2-*disagree*, 3-*somewhat disagree*, 4-*neither disagree nor agree*, 5-*somewhat agree*, 6- *agree*, 7-*strongly agree*), the extent to which expats agreed or disagreed with the statement of Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

3.7 Data Collection

The survey was e-mailed to the selected participants and was asked to return them in the same way. A reminder e-mail was sent after two weeks of the first e-mail asking those who had not

returned the questionnaire to do so within a deadline of one week. A total of 180 surveys were e-mailed, and 124 were received, representing a favorable return rate of 68%.

3.8 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version19.0) was the primary tool used for data analyses. Data analysis included both the descriptive and inferential analysis.

3.8.1 Descriptive Analyses

The demographic profiles of the participants involved were analyzed and presented to get clear understanding of the characteristics of respondents involved in the study. Central tendencies such as frequencies, percentages, mean were conducted for all the demographic items, the independent variable, mediating variable, and dependent variable. Further, tests for homoscedasticity and normality were conducted and the data was checked for skewness and kurtosis to examine normality and linearity. Outliers were identified and removed prior to analysis.

3.8.2 Bivariate Analyses

Following the descriptive analyses, bivariate analyses using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were conducted to examine the interrelationships that exist between independent, mediating and dependent variables. The aim of bivariate analysis is to explore the nature of relationship between variables of study. "A Pearson correlation (correlation is used from now on),

guesses that the both variables were assessed on at least interval scales and the extent to which values of the two variables being determined whether they were proportional to each other" (StatSoft, 2010) Further, the data was analyzed with reference to several demographic variables. The goal was to investigate if there was any correlation among the independent, mediating and dependent variables.

3.8.3 Regression Analysis

All the hypotheses were tested using standard linear regression. As for the mediation analysis, hierarchical regression analysis was performed. A series of multiple regression analyses following Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step procedure were conducted. As suggested, three regression equations should satisfy the tests of the linkages of the mediation model. First, the predictor variables must affect the mediator variable; second, the predictor variables should be shown to affect the criterion variable in the second equation; and, third, the mediator variable should be related to the criterion variable, with the predictor variables included in the third equation. If all of these conditions hold in the predicted direction, at least partial mediation is present. If the predictor variables have non-significant beta weights in the third step, then total mediation is present.

3.9 Conclusion

The aim of this study is to provide a deeper understanding on effects of spousal adjustment on expatriate adjustment and job satisfaction. The study is set to examine the mediating effect of expatriate adjustment on the relationship between spouse adjustment and expatriate job

satisfaction. The research design opted for this study will be able to provide answer for research question of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study. Various descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed to test the hypotheses of the study.

4.2 Response rate

A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed via e-mail. Of these, a total of 124 questionnaires were returned back representing 68% response rates.

4.3 Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 4.1 depicts the demographic profile of the respondents. Table 4.1 revealed that the majority of the respondents were male (72.6%). Female represented 27.4%. Table 4.1 also indicated that majority of the respondents were married (56.5%), followed by married with children (38.7%) and others (4.8%). In terms of academic qualification, 77.4% of the respondents hold Doctorate degree, 20.2% with degree of Professional Doctorate and 2.4% of the respondents hold Master degree.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Gender			
<i>Male</i>	90	72.6	72.6
<i>Female</i>	34	27.4	100.0
Age			
<i>21-30</i>	30	24.2	24.2
<i>31-40</i>	44	35.5	59.7
<i>41-50</i>	22	17.7	77.4
<i>51-60</i>	17	13.7	91.1
<i>above 60</i>	11	8.9	100.0
The highest degree			
<i>Doctorate (Ph.D., D.Phil, Ed.D., D.Sc., D.B.A., etc)</i>	96	77.4	77.4
<i>Professional Doctorate (M.D., J.D., etc)</i>	25	20.2	97.6
<i>Master's (M.A., M.Sc., M.Phil., M.Ed., M.B.A., etc)</i>	3	2.4	100.0
The marital status			
<i>Married</i>	70	56.5	56.5
<i>Married with Children</i>	48	38.7	95.2

<i>Other _____ (please state)</i>	6	4.8	100.0
Is your spouse employed?			
<i>My spouse works full time in Malaysia</i>	1	.8	.8
<i>My spouse works part time in Malaysia</i>	23	18.5	19.4
<i>My spouse is not employed</i>	96	77.4	96.8
<i>Not Applicable</i>	4	3.2	100.0
What is your nationality according to your passport?			
<i>North and South America</i>	6	4.8	4.8
<i>Europe</i>	16	12.9	17.7
<i>Asia</i>	73	58.9	76.6
<i>Africa</i>	18	14.5	91.1
<i>Australia and Oceania</i>	11	8.9	100.0
Number of jobs			
<i>0</i>	50	40.3	40.3
<i>1</i>	54	43.5	83.9
<i>2</i>	16	12.9	96.8
<i>3+</i>	4	3.2	100.0

Years of service			
<i>Less than 1 year</i>	48	38.7	38.7
<i>1-5 years</i>	48	38.7	77.4
<i>6-10 years</i>	18	14.5	91.9
<i>Over 10 years</i>	10	8.1	100.0
Cross-cultural training			
<i>Yes</i> _____ (please state)	33	26.6	26.6
<i>no</i>	91	73.4	100.0
English proficiency			
<i>Business conversation</i>	109	87.9	87.9
<i>Native English speaking skill</i>	15	12.1	100.0

4.4 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis allows the researcher to determine the extent to which a scale produces consistent results if the measurements are repeated. In this study, the researcher used *Cronbach's alpha* as a measure for internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. The closer for the reliability coefficient reaches 1.0, the better it is, and 0.8 is considered highly reliable. Besides that, reliability coefficient at range 0.7 to 0.799 is considered as acceptable and those values less than 0.60 are considered to be poor (Sekaran et al, 2003). The reliability

coefficient value for spouse cross-cultural adjustment (the IV) is 0.836, for expatriate job satisfaction (the DV) is 0.838, and for expatriate cross-cultural adjustment (the Mediator) is 0.874. The reliability coefficients are considered as good. The reliability values of all variables shown in the Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Number of items	Items Dropped	Cronbach's Alpha
Expatriate Job Satisfaction	8	0	0.838
Spouse Cross-Cultural Adjustment	14	0	0.836
Expatriate Cross-Cultural Adjustment	9	0	0.874

4.5 Correlation Analysis

The bivariate analysis was conducted using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient as indicated by inter-correlations coefficients (r). According to Cohen (1988), r ranging from 0.10 to 0.29 can be considered as showing a low degree of correlation, r 0.30 to 0.49 can be considered as showing a moderate degree of correlation and r ranging from 0.50 to 1.00 can be considered as a high degree of correlation.

The correlation matrix between the variables is exhibited in Table 4.3. This table depicts spouse cross-cultural adjustment is highly correlated with expatriate cross-cultural adjustment ($r=0.796$,

$p < 0.05$), the spouse cross-cultural adjustment is highly correlated to expatriate job satisfaction ($r=0.661$, $p<0.05$), the expatriate cross-cultural adjustment is also highly correlated to expatriate job satisfaction ($r=0.673$, $p<0.05$).

Table 4.3 Correlations between the variables

	SpoCCAd	ExpCCAd	ExpJobSat
SpoCCAd	1		
ExpCCAd		.796**	1
ExpJobSat		.661**	.673**
			1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

4.6 Testing the Hypotheses

The first hypothesis is: There is a positive relationship between spouse's cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's job satisfaction. A regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis. The results of the regression analysis for this hypothesis are shown in Table 4.4. The regression model was statistically significant, Adjusted $R^2 = .433$, $F(1, 122) = 94.742$, $p < 0.05$. Spouse adjustment is significantly related to expatriate job satisfaction ($\beta = .661$, $p < 0.05$). Hence H1 is supported.

Table 4.4: Regression analysis to examine the relationship between spouse adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction

Variable	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Spouse adjustment	0.661	9.734	.000

Adjusted $R^2 = .433$, $F(1, 122) = 94.742$, $p = .000$

The second hypothesis is: There is a positive relationship between spouse's cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment. A regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis. The results of the regression analysis for this hypothesis are shown in Table 4.5. The regression model was statistically significant, Adjusted $R^2 = .631$, $F(1, 122) = 211.497$, $p < 0.05$. Spouse adjustment is significantly related to expatriate cross-cultural adjustment ($\beta = .796$, $p < 0.05$). Hence H2 is supported.

Table 4.5: Regression analysis to examine the relationship between spouse adjustment and expatriate adjustment

Variable	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Spouse adjustment	0.796	14.543	.000

Adjusted $R^2 = .631$, $F(1, 122) = 211.497$, $p = .000$

The third hypothesis is: There is a positive relationship between expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's job satisfaction. A regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis. The results of the regression analysis for this hypothesis are shown in Table 4.6. The regression model was statistically significant, Adjusted $R^2 = .449$, $F(1, 122) = 101.206$, $p < 0.05$. Expatriate adjustment is significantly related to expatriate job satisfaction ($\beta = .673$, $p < 0.05$). Hence H3 is supported.

Table 4.6: Regression analysis to examine the relationship between expatriate adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction

Variable	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Expatriate adjustment	0.673	10.060	.000

Adjusted $R^2 = .449$, $F(1, 122) = 101.206$, $p = .000$

The forth hypothesis is: Expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment mediates the relationship between spouse's cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate's job satisfaction. The mediating effect of expatriate adjustment on the relationship between spouse adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction was tested based on a procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). Table 4.7 depicts the analyses necessary to examine the mediation hypothesis. Step 1 requires the spouse adjustment (independent variable) to be related to expatriate adjustment (mediator variable). The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.706$) associated with the effect of spouse adjustment on expatriate adjustment is significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there is an evidence of a linear relationship

between spouse adjustment (independent variable) and expatriate adjustment (mediator variable); hence the requirement for mediation in step 1 is met. Step 2 requires the spouse adjustment (independent variable) to be related to expatriate job satisfaction (dependent variable). The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.677$) associated with the effect of spouse adjustment on expatriate job satisfaction is significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there is an evidence of a linear relationship between spouse adjustment (independent variable) and expatriate job satisfaction (dependent variable); hence the requirement for mediation in step 2 is met. Step 3 requires the expatriate adjustment (mediator variable) to be related to expatriate job satisfaction (dependent variable). The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.488$) associated with the effect of expatriate adjustment on expatriate job satisfaction is significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there is an evidence of a linear relationship between expatriate adjustment (mediator variable) and expatriate job satisfaction (dependent variable); hence the requirement for mediation in step 3 is met. Step 4 requires the beta value for spouse adjustment (independent variable) in step 3 become significantly smaller in size relative to beta value for spouse adjustment (independent variable) in step 2. As shown in Table 4.7, the unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.350, p < 0.05$) for spouse adjustment in step 3 (equation 3) is smaller than the unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.677, p < 0.05$) for spouse adjustment in step 2, hence the requirement for step 4 also holds.

Table 4.7: Results of Mediation Effects of Expatriate Cross-Cultural Adjustment on the Relationship between Spouse Adjustment and Expatriate Job Satisfaction

Variable	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1			
Outcome: Expatriate Adjustment			
Predictor: Spouse adjustment	.706	14.543	.000
Adj R ²	.36		
<i>F</i>	211.497, <i>p</i> = .000		
<i>df</i>	1, 122		
Step 2			
Outcome: Job satisfaction			
Predictor: Spouse adjustment	.677	9.734	.000
Adj R ²	.433		
<i>F</i>	95.742, <i>p</i> = .000		
<i>df</i>	1, 122		
Step 3			
Outcome: Job satisfaction			
Predictor: Spouse adjustment	.350	3.200	.002
Mediator: Expatriate Adjustment	.464	3.762	.000
Adj R ²	.488		
<i>F</i>	59.557, <i>p</i> = .000		
<i>df</i>	2, 121		

Since the path from X to Y is reduced in absolute size but is still different from zero when the mediator (M) is controlled for in step 3, there is an evidence for the presence of partial mediation. This means, expatriate adjustment partially mediates the relationship between spouse adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction. Therefore, in this study it can be concluded that spouse adjustment (independent variable) predicts expatriate adjustment (mediator variable), and expatriate

adjustment in turn predicts expatriate job satisfaction (dependent variable) among expatriates in Malaysia. This supports hypothesis 4.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate the relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment, expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction. This study also examines the mediating effect of expatriate cross-cultural adjustment on the relationship between spouse adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction. This chapter discusses these findings in detail, as well as the resultant theoretical and practical implications, and concluded the chapter with useful recommendations for future researchers.

5.1.1 Research question 1: Does spouse cross-cultural adjustment related to expatriate job satisfaction?

The result of this study reveals spouse cross-cultural adjustment has significant positive relationship with expatriate job satisfaction. The positive relationship implies the greater spouse cross-cultural adjustment, greater the expatriate job satisfaction. Studies consistently found that the expatriate spouse is a primary cause of returning premature (Andreason, 2008; Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010). Spouse cross-cultural adjustment expected to have spillover and crossover effects on expatriate job satisfaction (Takeuchi et al, 2002).

5.1.2 Research question 2: Does spouse cross-cultural adjustment related to expatriate cross-cultural adjustment?

In this study, spouse cross-cultural adjustment had significant positive relationship with expatriate cross-cultural adjustment. Therefore, it can be concluded that greater the spousal adjustment, greater the level of cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates. When spouses adjusted to general living conditions such as accommodation, food, climate, shopping, weather, cost of living, health care and recreation facilities, expatriates are also expected to adjust well to new cultural environment. The coping and ability to overcome the adjustment difficulty among spouse will crossover to adjustment effectiveness of expatriates. This finding is in line with many previous studies emphasizing the importance of spousal adjustment to ensure expatriate adjustment. This finding of the strong impact of spousal adjustment on expatriate adjustment in this study indicates that the well-being of the families of expatriates and their adjustment to a new environment as well as their interaction with host nationals in Malaysia definitely needs to be considered in the adjustment process of expatriates.

5.1.3 Research question 3: Does expatriate cross-cultural adjustment related to expatriate job satisfaction?

The result of this study revealed that expatriate cross-cultural adjustment had significant positive relationship with expatriate job satisfaction scales. Therefore, the greater expatriate cross-cultural adjustment, greater the job satisfaction of expatriates. In their research, Fisher and Shaw (1994) advocated that the result of expatriates' adjustment is a satisfaction in various aspects including job satisfaction.

5.1.4 Research question 4: Does expatriate cross-cultural adjustment mediate relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction?

Results of this study indicated expatriate cross-cultural adjustment has partial mediating effect on the relationship between spouse cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate job satisfaction. Partial mediation implies that spouse adjustment can have direct effect on expatriate job satisfaction and the same time mediated by expatriate cross-cultural adjustment based on spillover effect.

5.2 Assumptions and Limitations

This research study was based on the assumption that empirical evidence is needed to help determine the degree to which the research conducted to date on the adjustment experiences of traditional expatriates has validity in describing the cross-cultural adjustment of self-initiating expatriates in Malaysia. Until such evidence is produced, there remain many questions as to which variables will commonly influence the adjustment of both subgroups of expatriates, and indeed if perhaps new or unique variables might come into play for one subgroup and not the other group.

This research study suffered limitations which were inherent in the methodological design chosen. This study employed a quantitative survey instrument to gather information from the targeted population. This research technique only provided a one-time snapshot of the information gathered, precluding any in-depth, longitudinal understanding of how the relationships among the variables might change over time. Furthermore, the scope of this study was limited in focus to a select group of self-initiating expatriates: academics who were currently working at various university and colleges in Malaysia. Although targeting this subpopulation of expatriates provided

new and meaningful data regarding self-initiating expatriates, and so, therefore, provided insights into the adjustment experiences of this subgroup of expatriates, the narrow choice of the target population precluded any totality of generalizability of findings to the subpopulation of self-initiating expatriates as a whole. Despite these limitations, this study filled an important gap in the literature on expatriate adjustment as it initiated the process of further study on a group of expatriates that hitherto have been woefully neglected in academic research. The results of this study provided a foundation upon which further research on the adjustment experiences of self-initiating expatriates may be built.

Instruments of self-report was relied in this study, because of that a measurement problem called common method variance could occur. This happens if respondents, out of their necessity to provide stable information, try to correlate responses when they have the chance in providing information about the independent and of course dependent variables. One way of reducing common method variance problems was to place the measures in parted sections of the self-report instrument. Another way was to ask respondents to start at the beginning of the questionnaire and to answer the questions in order so as to prevent respondents from returning back to previous questions (Black, 1990a). The survey was offered only in English.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher has derived some relatable recommendations for both the management and future researchers.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Organizations and Lecturers

This study offers several practical contributions to international universities, recruiters, and lecturers who are considering entering the international lecturing circuit. First, for lecturers, the outcome of this study indicates that spouse cross-cultural adjustment has an influence over expatriate job satisfaction. Lecturers considering going overseas should evaluate their potential for successful adaptation by first assessing their own cross-cultural adjustment and then their spouses. Second, for recruiters, the ability to identify cross-cultural adjustment levels among lecturing candidates could help them make better decisions regarding the professionals who may better adjust to their new job, organization, and cultural surroundings. Finally, the practical advantages for the universities themselves gained through this research include the ability to both contract and train candidates who are more likely to fit their university and communities, develop stronger links, and find greater job satisfaction.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study are important as they add to the body of knowledge in the field of cross-cultural management particularly among self-initiated expatriates. However, for as much new information was revealed by this study, a next stage of research is needed. Not only will further research be needed to determine to what extent results of this study are applicable for academic expatriate population working in Malaysia but also whether findings of this study should be generalized to expatriates in different geographical locations and in different employment categories and organizations. This would be particularly salient in testing for relationships between

foreign language ability and the three facets of sociocultural adjustment. This factor's influence, or lack thereof, will only be confirmed when examined in a multitude of different linguistic and communication environments. In addition, these results lead to further research questions that should be explored.

5.4 Conclusion

This study set out to enrich the body of expatriate management literature by investigating the cross-cultural adjustment experiences of expatriates, and their spouses, and expatriate job satisfaction. Through a quantitative research design, results that were obtained revealed new information about the adjustment and job satisfaction experiences of expatriates. Regardless of the limitations in this research, the results herein indeed have provided a new lens through which a vanguard topic of expatriate management literature may be examined. These findings lay a foundation upon which broader theoretical study should be built and subsequent practical applications for organizations that seek to hire expatriates may be based. The insights gained from this study could be used in the formulation or improvement of cross-cultural training programs where recommended behaviors can be modeled by trainers to facilitate the international transition process.

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