Correlates of expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment

M. van der Bank
S. Rothmann
North-West University

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to assess whether expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment is related to demographic variables, stress, and personality dispositions. A convenience sample (n = 95) was taken of expatriates of various multinational companies. The Neo-Personality Inventory Revised, Expatriate Stress Inventory, and a biographical questionnaire, including expatriates' motivation for accepting the assignment, and expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment were administered. The results showed that family support was related to less cultural stress, and better adjustment to an international assignment. Cultural stress explained 7% of the variance in expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

The increase in globalisation has led to more employees being sent on international assignments than ever before, with every indication that the use of expatriates will continue to expand into the 21st Century (Hawley, 1999). Thus, for many companies in South Africa and worldwide, sending expatriates abroad to develop global competencies is consistent with their overall strategic Human Resource plan. In addition to professional development for gaining global competency and as a means of fostering the parent corporate culture, multinational companies place domestic employees in key leadership positions abroad (Tung, 1982). Thus, successful expatriate assignments are indispensable to multinational companies for both developmental and functional reasons (Dowling, Welch and Schuler, 1998; Strohl and Caligiuri, 1998; Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991; Tung and Miller, 1990). Given the strategic importance multinational companies attach to global assignments, the damage an unsuccessful expatriate may cause in the host country can be detrimental to the multinational company's future global business (Tung, 1998; Aycan and Kanungo, 1997; Gregersen and Black, 1990). Forster (1997) highlighted several possible implications of poor expatriate cross-cultural adjustment, including inadequate performance, psychological stress, negative effects on the expatriates' families, and long-term career repercussions upon repatriation of failed expatriate assignments. In order to advance the research on expatriate adjustment, information is needed regarding the relationship between personality traits, stress, and cross-cultural adjustment.

EXPATRIATE SUCCESS

Since global assignments are becoming more important for both individuals' careers and companies' global success, having a systematic means to measure expatriate success, likewise, is increasing in importance. To date, the three most common criteria for evaluating expatriate success have been: completion of the foreign assignment, cross-cultural adjustment, and performance on the foreign assignment.

Two of these factors, namely performance and completion of the global assignment, are imperative for multinational companies to improve their understanding of the factors impacting on the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates, and ultimately the success of the expatriate assignment. However, this study focused on the issue of cross-cultural adjustment because various researchers agree that the success of a global assignment is greatly influenced by an expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment to the host country (Kealey and Protheroe, 1996; Black and Mendenhall, 1990).
Psychological adjustment deals with subjective well-being, while socio-cultural adjustment relates to culture-specific skills, the ability to negotiate with the host culture, or general intercultural competence as measured by the amount of difficulty experienced in the management of everyday situations in the host culture (Ward and Chang, 1997; Ward and Kennedy, 1996). According to Searle and Ward (1993), psychological adjustment can best be understood within a framework of stress with depression predicted by life changes, extraversion, satisfaction with relationships with host nationals, and social difficulty. Within a stress framework, it can be expected that personality variables and social support may affect adaptation to a foreign milieu. In addition, Church (1982) suggests that considering both personality and situational variables will be fruitful in the prediction of cross-cultural adjustment. Tung's (1981) seminal article examining the reasons for expatriate premature termination found that spouses' and expatriates' inability to adjust to living in the host country were the most frequently cited reasons for the failure of international assignments.

The premature termination of a global assignment is especially problematic given the high cost of relocating employees overseas (Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi and Bross, 1998). Although cross-cultural maladjustment of expatriates is one predictor of premature termination of their global assignments, in respect of using it as a criterion, it is important to note that not all maladjusted expatriates terminate their cross-cultural assignments. Some, despite their inability to adjust to the host cultures, remain abroad. They are usually motivated to put forth a positive impression to the parent organisation (Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique and Bürgi, 2001). Therefore, poor cross-cultural adjustment leads to a desire to terminate the international assignment (Van der Bank, 2005; Caligiuri et al., 2001).

For those expatriates who experienced cross-cultural adjustment problems, studies have found that spouses' and the expatriates' inability to adjust to living in the host country were the two most frequently cited reasons for the failure (Handler, 1995). Therefore, an expatriate's entire family (spouse and children) may have an impact on the outcome of his/her global assignment (Handler, 1995; Forster, 1992). Consequently, the success of the global assignment is not only a function of the expatriate himself or herself, but also a function of the expatriate's spouse and children (Caligiuri et al., 1998).

The objective of this study was to assess whether expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment is related to demographic variables, stress, and personality dispositions.

A MODEL OF ADJUSTMENT IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

This study offers a model to describe cross-cultural adjustment to an international assignment. The model (see Figure 1) includes two components affecting cross-cultural adjustment, namely the perception of the situation (which could be conceptualised in terms of stress, company support, social support, and language), and personality traits.

FIGURE 1
A MODEL OF THE EXPATRIATE’S CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situational factors</th>
<th>Expatriate’s cross-cultural adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Termination of the assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. cross-cultural training)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate’s social support (from the family and others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate’s and spouse’s ability to speak the same language as host nationals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When formulating the proposed predictors of adjustment to the expatriates' assignment into an overall model, a number of interrelationships among the variables can be proposed. It can be proposed that the characteristics of the situation and the person have effects on adjustment (see Figure 1). Situational variables that could affect the adjustment of expatriates include stressors in the situation, company support, social support (family and others), and the ability to speak the language of the host culture. Personality traits as variables are relatively stable characteristics of expatriates' dispositions and environments, and refer to what is available to them for their cross-cultural adjustment.

Black and Gregersen (1981) have suggested that expatriates who adjust well in overseas postings have certain personality characteristics. According to Caligiuri (2000a, 2000b), personality characteristics relevant to social interactions are very important since they affect the quantity and quality of social interactions, and consequently influence cross-cultural adjustment. However, it is important to note that expatriates will vary on these personality characteristics that are necessary for relating to others; an expatriate who has access to daily interactions with other expatriates or host nationals, yet is not open to the interactions, will have lower cross-cultural adjustment than a person with greater openness (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). Thus, personality characteristics in relation to situational factors, such as access to support, have an effect on expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment.

Researchers (Kraimer, Wayne and Jaworski, 2001; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985) have indicated that expatriation failure should, in fact, be viewed as a consequence of company management practices, which can be changed. In conjunction with careful selection of expatriates, comprehensive pre-departure training, and support provided by the multinational company are associated with successful expatriation (Porter and Tansky, 1999; Kealey and Potheroe, 1996). De Cieri, Dowling and Taylor (1991) found that company assistance was one of the most consistent and powerful predictors of expatriates' adjustment to relocation. Also, a negative relationship between company assistance and culture shock suggests that company assistance helps expatriates prepare for and cope better with the stress associated with relocation.

The initial stages of most expatriate assignments are often associated with stress. Support by family and others can provide expatriates with the emotional support that helps them overcome the negative feelings and experiences that are a natural part of the cross-cultural transition (Shinn, Lehmann and Wong, 1984; Shumaker and Bronwell, 1984). This social support may reduce stress and provide referent groups through which the new environment can be interpreted. Family support can assist expatriates to mobilise their psychological resources to deal with emotional problems and raise their confidence that they can successfully manage the cross-cultural transition (Caligiuri et al., 1998). Many researchers (Dennis and Stroh, 1999; Arthur and Bennet, 1995; De Cieri et al., 1991) claim that expatriates' failure is most frequently due to poor adjustment by their families. Furthermore, the more expatriates are supported by host nationals, the more likely they will be to learn culturally appropriate norms and behaviour (Parker and McEvoy, 1993; Black et al., 1991; Briody and Chrisman, 1991). Expatriates' social support and social interactions with other expatriates are also important for cross-cultural adjustment (Briody and Chrisman, 1991). These interactions can provide not only a sense of affiliation and belonging, but also serve as a source of information about the host environment seen through the lens of the perceptions of other expatriates, or the "comparable others" (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002).

The cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates is influenced by expatriates' motivation for accepting the expatriate assignment and stress experienced on the international assignment. Given that expatriate assignments create large degrees of uncertainty, theories of stress management seem particularly relevant to understanding expatriate adjustment (Black et al., 1991). A basically unchallenged premise in stress research is that the stressful situation is an external force requiring no further explanation, in contrast to a situation that is caused by a person's actions. That is, causality is assumed to flow from stress as a stimulus to the stress reaction as an outcome. However, the merit of transactional stress theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) is that it explicitly challenges this view and recognises the contribution of a person's thoughts and behaviour to the genesis of stress. The pivotal postulate of this theory is that stress is inherent neither to the environment nor to the person alone, but results from the ongoing relationship between them, which they refer to as "transaction". This transaction is mediated by appraisal processes that determine the outcome of the stress process.

Caligiuri and Phillips (2003) have indicated that the expectations raised prior to an expatriate starting on the global assignment would affect his or her cross-cultural adjustment. The more congruent an individual's expectations are with the reality once on the assignment, the better the expatriate's adjustment will be to the international assignment. These expectations will in turn affect the feelings of culture shock while on the global assignment.

According to Furnham (1997), expatriates hold a variety of beliefs and assumptions about how to deal with cultural differences. There are many differences between the factual, the affective, and the axiomatic approaches, and consequent frustration in dealing with individuals who favour a different approach (Hofstede, 1984). In addition, research has shown that not all expatriates experience the same level of anxiety, or experience anxiety for the same length of time (Church, 1982). This implies that the study of cross-cultural adjustment must be approached as the study of an individual difference which could potentially be predicted, rather than as a fixed period of anxiety that all
expatriates will necessarily experience when they enter a new culture (Searle and Ward, 1993; Black, 1990). De Cieri et al. (1991) found that culture shock and perceived cultural distance were not strong predictors of psychological adjustment to expatriation. However, their research did not include an adequately representative sample of culturally and economically diverse countries.

Based on the above literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated for empirical testing:

H1: Cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates is related to the ability to speak the host national language, pre-departure training, and social support

H2: Personality traits are related to expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment

H3: Expatriates' stress is inversely related to cross-cultural adjustment

METHOD
Participants
The study population consisted of 95 expatriates from eight multinational companies based in South Africa. Questionnaires were sent to all expatriates from the multinational companies who had been on an international assignment for a period of longer than three months. These expatriates from South Africa were working in 21 different countries: Australia, Canada, Dubai, Germany, Guinea, Hong Kong, Isle of Man, Iran, Mali, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, Netherlands, Scotland, Singapore, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Forty-two per cent were from African countries. Of this sample, 78.9% expatriates reported that they were married, 15.8% were single, and 5.3% divorced. Of this sample, 48% of the expatriates reported that their national language was the same as that spoken in the host country and 45% indicated that they had had previous foreign experience before accepting the international assignment. A total of 87% were male and 8% female, while 64% of the expatriates were accompanied by their families, and 41% of the expatriates reported that they had received pre-departure training.

Measuring instruments
The measuring instruments used in this study included the NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R), Expatriate Stress Inventory (ESI), Cross-cultural Adjustment Scale (CCAS), and a biographical questionnaire.

The NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R) measures the personality of participants based on the five-factor model of personality (Costa and McCrae, 1992). The internal consistency of the domains varies from 0.86 for Agreeableness to 0.92 for Neuroticism (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Costa and McCrae (1985) as well as Van der Bank (2005) found that when factor-analysed, the five familiar factors emerged as expected, and these results provided strong evidence of convergent and discriminant validity of the NEO PI-R (McCrae, 1990). Van der Bank (2005) found the alpha coefficients of the five scales that were extracted acceptable (α > 0.70) (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), thus indicating the internal consistency of the factors of the NEO-PI-R (alphas for Neuroticism = 0.68; Extraversion = 0.75; Openness = 0.81; Agreeableness = 0.76; Conscientiousness = 0.71).

The Expatriate Stress Inventory (ESI) consists of 38 items and was developed by Van der Bank (2005). The results of studies by Caligiuri (1997), Caligiuri et al. (2001), Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002), Caligiuri and Phillips (2003), and Vollrath (2001) were used as theoretical foundation in the construction of the ESI. In line with recommendations by Biggam et al. (1997:130) the ESI addressed both the severity and frequency of stressors. Firstly, participants rated each of 19 items regarding the intensity of stress on a nine-point scale. The frequency part of the questionnaire asked "How many times in the last six months did you experience the source of stress?"

The ESI was subjected to a principal axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation. Two internally consistent factors were extracted, namely Cultural Stress (α = 0.86) and Organisational Stress (α = 0.84). Sample items for Organisational Stress included "Working overtime", "Lack of recognition for good work", and "Performing tasks not in job description". Sample items for Cultural Stress included "Lack of ability to speak the host national language", "Lack of understanding of the host national culture" and "Difficulty getting along with host nationals".

The Cross-cultural Adjustment Scale (CCAS). Expatriates rated their cross-cultural adjustment on a five-item scale. Each item was rated on a five-point scale varying from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent). Sample items included "Rate your adjustment to your current living conditions." and "Rate your adjustment to living in the country in general." A high score indicated greater cross-cultural adjustment. Caligiuri et al. (2001) reported an alpha coefficient of 0.83 for a similar cross-cultural adjustment scale. Van der Bank (2005) found that cross-cultural adjustment consists of one factor. Van der Bank (2005) found an alpha value of 0.74 for the CCAS, which is considered to be acceptable compared to the guideline of α > 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

A biographical questionnaire was developed to gather information about the demographic characteristics of the participants. This questionnaire gave participants the option of supplying their name and the name of their company. Other information that was gathered covered: age, sex, marital status, length of time on the international assignment, similarity of language spoken between home and host country, satisfaction with pre-departure training (if received), expatriates accompanied by family and the satisfaction with the support received by family, company, host nationals, friends and colleagues, and expatriates'
motivation for accepting the international assignment. Additional information gathered covered the following items: "To what extent did you expect socialising with the host nationals would be difficult?", "To what extent did you expect the host country culture to be different from your country's culture?" and "To what extent did you expect culture shock?" Firstly, participants rated each of the three items on a five-point scale. The frequency part of the questionnaire asked: "Now that you are on the international assignment, is your socialising difficult?", "Now that you are on the international assignment, is the host country culture different from your home country's culture?" and "Now that you are on the international assignment, have you experienced culture shock?"

Principal component analysis of expatriates' Motivation for Accepting the International Assignment data indicated that two factors explained the variance in the data. These factors were labelled Extrinsic Motivation and Intrinsic Motivation. Items relating to the safety for self and family, financial reasons, and status (items 2, 3 and 5) loaded on the first factor, namely Extrinsic Motivation. Items relating to career enhancement and enhancing personal global competence (items 1 and 4) loaded on the second factor, namely Intrinsic Motivation. An acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient for Extrinsic Motivation (α = 0.68) was obtained, but the Cronbach alpha coefficient for Intrinsic Motivation was not acceptable and consequently it was excluded from further analysis.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SPSS program (SPSS Inc., 2003). First, descriptive statistics were used to explore the data. Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed to assess the reliability of the constructs which were measured in this study. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0.30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. The researchers' theoretical model was tested in regression analyses. t-tests for independent samples were used to determine differences between the subgroups in the sample. The practical significance of differences (d) was also computed (Steyn, 1999). A cut-off point of 0.50 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of differences between means.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, reliability and correlations of the scales

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients for the extracted NEO-PI-R, CCAS, ESI (cultural stress and organisational stress) and extrinsic motivational factors. Acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for all the scales (see Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Statistically significant negative correlations are indicated between extrinsic motivation on the one hand and neuroticism and cultural stress on the other hand (indicating that individuals who showed high levels of neuroticism and cultural stress measured lower on extrinsic motivation). A statistically significant negative correlation was shown between cultural stress and cross-

#### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Neuroticism</td>
<td>20.71</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Extraversion</td>
<td>15.15</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Openness</td>
<td>16.38</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agreeableness</td>
<td>15.76</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conscientiousness</td>
<td>13.93</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>-0.29*</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CCAS (Cross-cultural adjustment)</td>
<td>15.59</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cultural stress</td>
<td>48.88</td>
<td>18.63</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.27*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Organisational stress</td>
<td>27.79</td>
<td>12.07</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.24*</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Motivation</td>
<td>9.31</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistically significant correlation: p ≤ 0.05
+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect): r ≤ 0.30
** Practically significant correlation (large effect): r ≤ 0.50
Table 2 reflects the severity of the stressors. The severity of stressors is a product of the intensity and frequency of the specific stressors.

It is clear from Table 2 that the cultural stress items which showed the highest severity were the lack of ability to speak the host national language, poorly motivated co-workers, an inadequate salary, inadequate transfer of technical concepts and expertise. Organisational stressors which showed the highest severity were working overtime, insufficient personnel to handle assignments, and performing tasks that were not in the job description.

**t-tests**

t-tests for independent samples were carried out on the biographical data, cross-cultural adjustment scale, cultural stress and organisational stress. Table 3 indicates results of t-tests for the biographical data, CCAS, and ESI (cultural stress and organisational stress).

The results of t-tests indicated that expatriates measuring high on family support differed statistically and practically significantly (large effect) from those who were not supported by their family with regard to cross-cultural...
Cultural stress
Organisational stress
Cross-cultural adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cultural stress</th>
<th>Organisational stress</th>
<th>Cross-cultural adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speak the same language</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-departure training</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>0.01**</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by parent company</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.00***</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by host company</td>
<td>0.05*</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by host nationals</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by friends/other</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistically significant (p < 0.05)
+ Practically significant  medium effect (d > 0.50)
++ Practically significant  large effect (d > 0.80)

adjustment and cultural stress. In addition, the results showed that expatriates measuring high on parent company support (compared to those who measured low) experienced statistically and practically significantly less organisational stress (large effect). Expatriates measuring high on support from the host company (compared to those who measured low) experienced statistically and practically significantly less cultural stress (medium effect).

Multiple regression analysis

The results of a multiple regression analysis with cross-cultural adjustment (as measured by the CCAS) as dependent variable, and stress (as measured by the ESI), extrinsic motivation (as measured by expatriates' motivation for accepting the assignment), and personality traits (as measured by the NEO-PI-R) as independent variables, are shown in Table 4. A significance level of p < 0.05 was set.

TABLE 4
THE REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AS DEPENDENT VARIABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Unstandardised coefficients</th>
<th>Standardised coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>beta</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>beta</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.47*</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>17.59</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>20.52</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-2.54</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.68*</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>20.77</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-2.27</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-1.66</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.31*</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>21.37</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-2.01</td>
<td>0.05*</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-1.67</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.79</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05
Table 4 shows that 7% of the variance in the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates (as measured by CCAS) is predicted by Cultural stress (as measured by the ESI). When Openness to experience was entered in the second step, an additional 3% of the variance in cross-cultural adjustment was explained by the independent variables. However, the change in the F-value was not statistically significant. When Extrinsic motivation was entered in the third step, an additional 1% of the variance in cross-cultural adjustment was explained by the independent variables, but the change in the F-value was not statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

The aims of this study were to assess the relationships between expatriates’ personality dispositions, background factors, stress, and cross-cultural adjustment. Cronbach alpha coefficients for all instruments indicated acceptable internal consistency of the scales. Given the fact that few variables actually correlated with expatriates' success, the conclusion can be made that the predictors of expatriates' adjustment are complicated and varied.

In general, the results do not provide support for the hypothesis that the Big Five personality traits are related to expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. Contrary to expectations, the results showed that open individuals will not adapt cross-culturally. The reason may be that 42% of the sample represented expatriates from African countries who have conventional values, are realistic and pragmatic, and do not have a need to explore the experience for deeper meanings. In addition, the results showed that personality traits were weakly related to the stress of expatriates. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution because the personality traits of participants did not represent the whole range of specific traits. For example, individuals measuring high on neuroticism and low on conscientiousness might be under-represented in the sample because of selection effects. In addition, the sample size might have been too small to detect even small effects of personality traits on cross-cultural adjustment.

The results showed expatriates who experienced high family support (compared to those who experienced low family support), experienced less cultural stress and showed better cross-cultural adjustment (Handler, 1995; Forster, 1992). This finding provides partial proof for our first hypothesis and confirms the important role of family support, experienced less cultural stress and do not have a need to explore the experience for deeper meanings. In addition, the sample size might have been too small to detect even small effects of personality traits on cross-cultural adjustment.

That being able to speak the host national language and pre-departure training are related to expatriates' adjustment (Caligiuri et al., 2001).

To our knowledge, this is the first study that has investigated the relationship between stressors experienced and expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. Results from the multiple regression analysis indicated that expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment was predicted by their cultural stress (e.g. because of an inability to speak the host national language, poorly motivated co-workers, an inadequate salary, and inadequate transfer of technical concepts and expertise). This finding confirms the third hypothesis.

While this study makes a contribution to expatriate research, it has various limitations. The sample of expatriates was predominantly from South Africa. Future studies should test these hypotheses with samples of expatriates from around the world. In addition, the sample in this study included more than eight South African-based multinational organisations from a wide variety of industries. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct an analysis by industry, given the sizes of the different samples. Future studies should examine the combined effect of industry and nationality to expand the generalisability of the findings.

Care was taken to reduce potential biases in this study. For example, the demographic variables were assessed at the front end of the survey, and the criterion variables such as cross-cultural adjustment were placed at the end. This was done in an effort to reduce the possibility of self-generated validity. In addition to the concern for self-generated validity, attention was paid to the possibility of inflationary bias. Inflationary bias is a potential concern when both the criteria and predictors are self-reported (Crampton and Wagner, 1994). Future studies should gather data from multiple sources, whenever possible. For example, multiple assessments of an expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. self, spouse) should be examined, to increase the reliability of the cross-cultural adjustment measure.

In the context of expatriate success, there are many other predictors that should be examined in future studies. Comprehensive theoretical models have included many additional predictors of expatriate adjustment. For example, perceptions of host ethnocentrism, perceived organisational support upon repatriation (Selmer, 1998), expatriate mentoring (Feldman and Bolino, 1999), and family adjustment (Caligiuri et al., 1998). Future studies should take a broader perspective to examine these predictors. Few studies have examined the effects of organisational support or supervisor support on expatriates' adjustment. The role of cross-cultural training as an antecedent of cross-cultural adjustment needs to be explored.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, stressors, family support, and motivation of expatriates should be considered when selecting and managing expatriates. Studying the Big Five personality dimensions in relation to the stress expatriates experience constitutes a particularly promising approach that is able to provide a broad, accepted basic framework for future research. However, personality constructs need to be integrated into a transactional process-oriented approach in which the interplay of situational, cognitive, behavioural and psychological processes is analysed over time.

It is important for companies to realise that support of an expatriate is imperative to the success of the assignment, and that the company's support of an expatriate will extend past the boundaries of the work environment. The company should consider offering additional support, such as pre-departure cross-cultural training and financial support. Cross-cultural adjustment might lead to the termination of the assignment. It might therefore be worth the company's time and expense to help expatriates adjust to the international assignment and develop the skills needed to interact and adjust.

This study used a cross-sectional design, resulting in an inability to determine causal relationships. Longitudinal research is needed in order to provide further evidence that cultural stress precedes adjustment of expatriates. The relationship between expatriates' performance and their cross-cultural adjustment needs to be explored in future studies. It is recommended that both task and expatriate contextual performance be measured as outcomes of expatriate adjustment.

REFERENCES


