



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION AND MANAGEMENT

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CULTURAL APTITUDE & ADJUSTMENT - THE IMPACT OF THE EXPECTED TENURE OF A CROSS CULTURAL PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of the anticipated tenure of an international assignment on the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and adaptation measures. A proposed model expands already existent models concerning the relationship of the facets of Cultural Intelligence (cognitive, met cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ) and the dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment (interaction, general, and work adjustment) with measures for the willingness to adjust and the pre-determined tenure of an assignment. Questionnaires have been sent to 49 international students and expatriates in 22 countries. Results offer further support for the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) while highlighting inconsistencies with prior researches. The most crucial results are the support of motivational CQ as a significant predictor for general adjustment and meta-cognitive CQ as significant predictor of general adjustment. Furthermore, the pre-determined tenure of an assignment moderates the impact of motivational CQ on general adjustment. Willingness to adjust is neither related to any of the CQ facets, nor to pre-determined tenure. However, it is significantly predicted by CQ in general terms.

KEYWORDS

CQ Cultural Intelligence Country National Arithmetic Mean Multi-National Company Standard Deviation Standard Error.

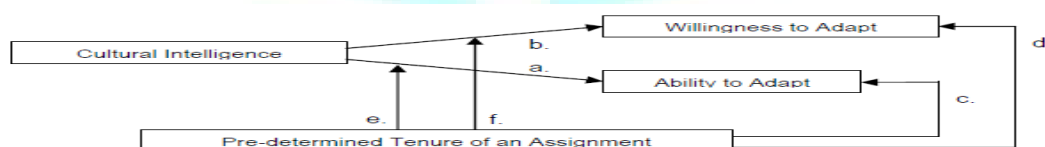
INTRODUCTION

Attitudes of respect for other nations' talents and traditions, of fascination with the variety of other worlds, of readiness to revise one's own prejudices, and of adjustment to local tasks and circumstances – these are the elements of the basic formula for success in an MNC. This first research deals with the introduction into existing literature, the problem statement and research questions, the purpose of the study and the structure of the following research.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper addresses the linkages of Cultural Intelligence, cross-cultural adaptation and tenure to each other. Following the existing literature, a relationship between CQ and the ability to adapt is present at least for some of the different CQ facets. In this research also other variables are taken into consideration which, on the one hand, might also be influenced by CQ and, on the other hand, might influence the expatriate's adaptation and the relationship between CQ and adaptability. Assuming that an expatriate has a certain level of Cultural Intelligence, it is expected that he/she is more able to adapt and also more willing to adapt due to the advantages CQ gives him/her in a cross-cultural context. The research questions which underlie this model are: What impact does the pre-determined length of an assignment have both on the expatriate's different dimensions of adaptability (general, work and relationship) and on the willingness to adjust to the culture of the host country? Furthermore, does the pre-determined assignment tenure moderate the relationship between the different dimensions of cultural intelligence and these above mentioned aspects of adaptation?

FIGURE I. SIMPLIFIED RESEARCH MODEL



The extended models in which the single relationships between the different dimensions of the variables are illustrated in detail (which at the same time represent the hypotheses) are shown below (see Figure III and IV). In order to approach the research questions, they are further broken down into several sub-questions, which later represent the hypotheses of this research. Several direct and moderating relationships between these four main variables are proposed.

- To what extent are the four facets of CQ related to the different types of adjustment?
- To what extent are the four facets of CQ related to the willingness to adapt?
- Is the tenure of an assignment directly related to the different types of adaptability?
- Is the tenure of an assignment directly related to the willingness to adapt?
- Does the tenure of an expatriate's assignment moderate the relationship between the different dimensions of Cultural Intelligence and the different dimensions of adaptability?
- Does the tenure of an expatriate's assignment moderate the relationship between the different dimensions of Cultural Intelligence and the willingness to adapt?

As already mentioned in the introduction, the four facets of CQ are cognitive, meta-cognitive, behavioral, and motivational CQ. The ability to adapt will be split up in the three dimensions called interaction, general and work adjustment.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

The question of measuring abilities, knowledge and capabilities has led to increasing recognition of the importance of different intelligence constructs like interpersonal intelligence, emotional intelligence, and social intelligence, which each measures certain kinds of intelligences in a quotient (e.g., EQ or SQ) (Ang et al., 2007). By focusing on specific capabilities that are important for high quality personal relationships and effectiveness in culturally diverse settings, CQ complements IQ (cognitive intelligence). Gardner (1999), as one author who focuses on the differentiation between different types of intelligence, summarizes ten different intelligences in the multiple intelligence theory.

Hypo research 1: Cultural Intelligence is positively related to cross-cultural adjustment. Assuming that, irrespective of the awareness of his/her level of Cultural Intelligence, the high CQ expatriate is more willing to adapt to a foreign culture than a low CQ expatriate. CQ describes the capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts, thus it means that the interest in and consideration of adaptation increases with a decrease of effort which has to be taken. As an expatriate is more capable for instance in seeing differences in cultures, in knowing how to work with HCNs, or more interested in foreign cultures, he/she might be more willing to adapt.

Hyporesearch 2: Cultural Intelligence is positively related to willingness to adapt.

However, due to being a rather new approach, studies about CQ and its relations to other influences on the ability to adjust to a foreign culture are still sparse. Recent research has focused on relationships of single variables within the concept of CQ and the antecedents of CQ (e.g., Templer et al., 2006; Ang et al., 2006; Ang et al., 2007). Ang et al. (2007) deliver the broadest insight into the relationships of CQ to other variables. They come to the conclusion that CQ predicts cultural judgment, decision-making, and task performance. More important, CQ increases one's understanding of these performance outcomes over and above demographic characteristics, general cognitive ability, emotional intelligence, and openness to experience. In other words, even after accounting for the effects of these other predictors, CQ further increases one's ability to predict and understand decision-making performance.

Hyporesearch 1a: Motivational CQ is positively related to general, work, and interaction adjustment.

Those who are interested in experiencing other cultures and feel confident that they can interact with people who have different cultural backgrounds might be more willing to adjust in culturally diverse situations. Without the interest in a foreign culture and the interaction with the host nationals it is less likely that one is taking the effort of adaptation. Motivation already describes a certain kind of willingness to do something. Therefore, the hyporesearch is:

Hyporesearch 2a: Motivational CQ is positively related to the willingness to adapt.

It has also already been mentioned that the behavioral facet is positively related to all three dimensions of adaptation (Ang et al., 2007). Fulfilling the requirement of having the capability to adapt to verbal and nonverbal behaviors, which are appropriate for different cultures, a person is more able to adapt. Selmer (2006b) supports that language ability as one part of the behavioral dimension is positively related to the three dimensions of cultural adaptation. If a person does not have this repertoire of capabilities a high CQ gives him/her the ability to acquire such behaviors (Earley and Ang, 2003). The matter of having the knowledge and knowing how to work with it gives a person the possibility to adapt regardless to the general work, or relationship level of adjustment.

Hyporesearch 1b: Behavioral CQ is positively related to general, work, and relationship adjustment.

Knowing how to conduct yourself in culturally diverse setting, being able to speak foreign languages, and to express oneself non-verbally in line with the host culture standards, makes it easier for people to adapt to a foreign culture. Therefore, a person who already possesses these capabilities is more willing to adapt because it implies less effort than for someone who must learn this particular knowledge in order to be able to adapt.

Hyporesearch 2b: Behavioral CQ is positively related to the willingness to adapt. Just as personality traits like openness, agreeableness, and extroversion have been found to be directly related to the different facets of cultural adaptation (Huang, Chi and Lawler, 2005), their association with CQ has been tested as well. Ang et al. (2006) have found by relating the Big Five personality traits to CQ that especially openness to experience is a crucial personality factor. It is significantly related to a person's capability to function effectively when interacting with those who have different cultural backgrounds. Results demonstrated the discriminant validity of the four CQ factors compared to the Big Five personality factors. The individual traits are related too differently to the facets of CQ. Conscientiousness is positively related to meta-cognitive CQ, high agreeableness is positively related to behavioral CQ, emotional stability is negatively related to behavioral CQ, and extraversion is positively related to cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ. Only openness to experience (which is characterized by curiosity, broad-mindedness, and imagination) is related to all four facets of CQ (Ang et al., 2006).

Hyporesearch 1c: Cognitive CQ is positively related to general, work, and interaction adjustment.

Cognitive CQ determines how a person makes sense of inter-cultural experiences and reflects the processes individuals use to acquire and understand cultural knowledge. Assuming that a person is more willing to adapt to something he/she not only knows but also understands, the facet of CQ is proposed to be positively related to an expatriate's willingness to adapt. It gives the expatriate the ability to rethink his/her own culturally determined behaviors and helps to realize the appropriateness of adaptation.

Hyporesearch 2c: Cognitive CQ is positively related to the willingness to adapt.

Differences and similarities between the country of origin and the country of stay can be described as cultural novelty (Selmer, 2006a). Research shows that this variable has no association to adjustment variables. Consequently, expatriates adjust to a foreign location with a low cultural novelty as easily or as difficult as to one with a high cultural one (Selmer, 2006a). Nevertheless, an important prerequisite for being able to adapt is not the existence but an individual's awareness of similarities and differences between cultures. The meta-cognitive facet describes this understanding and includes knowledge about all basic concepts of a foreign culture as values, norms and rights (Earley and Ang, 2003).

Hyporesearch 1d: Meta-cognitive CQ is positively related to general, work, and interaction adjustment. Being aware of the cultural differences or similarities might be positive in order to be able to adapt. However, the question of its impact on one's willingness to adapt is different. As it has already been mentioned, Selmer (2006a) states that differences and similarities between the country of origin and the country of stay have no impact on adjustment variables. Nevertheless, the meta-cognitive facet of CQ focuses on the expatriate's consciousness about cultural diversity and not its actual existence. Following Selmer's (2006a) initial proposition of cultural novelty being negatively related to adjustment, he also assumes that the effort which has to be taken in order to adapt is higher the bigger the cultural novelty.

Hyporesearch 2d: Meta-cognitive CQ is negatively related to the willingness to adapt.

Expatriate research deals with the impact of this factor in various ways. But looking at the existing literature which deals with the tenure of an assignment, it becomes clear that the understanding of what this factor actually implies is diverse. Many researches focus on the current assignment tenure defined by the actual time spend in a foreign country and by the time of the empirical elicitation (e.g., Takeuchi et al., 2005; Taveggia et al., 2001). Others consider the time that has been spent abroad in general also considering prior international assignments (e.g., Tung, 1998).

Following these results, the proposed influence of the pre-determined tenure of an assignment is similar. As expatriates already know that they will stay only for a short period, they might presume that it is not necessary or even impossible to adapt properly. This goes in line with the previous hypo research and the relation of tenure and adaptability. Since adaptation is considered to be an effort which has to be taken, the consciousness of having only a short period of time to do so might make the expatriate resist to adapt. The effort which has to be taken is too big in order to remunerate. Since it is controlled for the impact of current assignment tenure, the hypo research is as follows:

Hyporesearch 4: The pre-determined tenure of an assignment has a positive effect on the expatriate's willingness to adapt to the host culture. Assuming that expatriates hold a certain level of cultural intelligence, they are more willing and more able to adapt to the culture of their host country than people who do not hold CQ (or only at a low level). Nevertheless, the question arises whether this relationship is influenced by the set tenure of an assignment. Is an expatriate who knows that his assignment is only of a short duration willing and able to use his CQ to adapt effectively?

Hyporesearch 5a: The pre-determined tenure of an assignment and the expatriate's knowledge about this tenure has a moderating effect on the relationship between the expatriate's CQ and his willingness to adapt to the host culture.

Hyporesearch 5b: The pre-determined tenure of an assignment and the expatriate's knowledge about this tenure has a moderating effect on the relationship between the expatriate's CQ and his ability to adapt to the host culture. These hypotheses based on the literature discussed in this and the previous sections of this research are summarized in the research model.

RESEARCH MODEL

This model, moreover, depicts the proposed moderating effect of the pre-determined tenure of an assignment on the relationship between the facets of CQ and the willingness to adapt (see Figure IV).

FIGURE III. DETAILED RESEARCH MODEL – ABILITY TO ADAPT

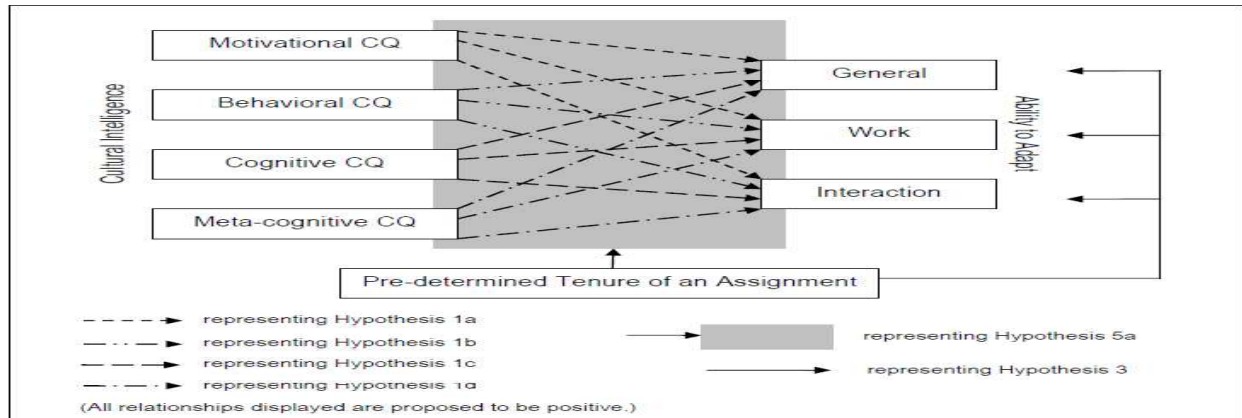
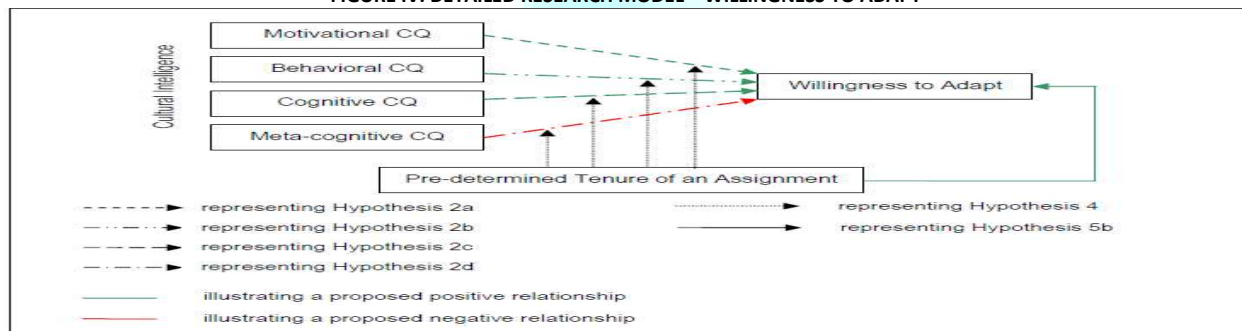


FIGURE IV. DETAILED RESEARCH MODEL – WILLINGNESS TO ADAPT



DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In the following the results of the multiple regression analyses are related to the hyporesearch. Underlying the research model of this research and discussed with regard to prior research on this topic. The regression input per hyporesearch can be found in Appendix D. Regression results for the dependent variables interaction, general and work adjustment, willingness to adjust, and adjustment and willingness in general terms are shown in Appendix E (a, b and c, d, and e respectively). \ Hyporesearch 1: Cultural Intelligence is positively related to cross-cultural adjustment. The results in Table e (Appendix E) support this hyporesearch. Overall Cultural Intelligence has a significant a positive effect on overall cross-cultural adjustment, $\beta = .63$, $p < .001$. These results imply that the higher the level of an expatriate's CQ, the more able he/she is to adapt to a foreign culture regardless of the differing impact of the four facets of CQ, and the three dimensions of adaptability. YR^2 of Cultural Intelligence in general terms indicates that CQ explains about 33% percent of the variance in adaptability.

Hyporesearch 1a: Motivational CQ is positively related to general, work and interaction adjustment. This hyporesearch can partly be supported by the results of regression analysis. Although bivariate correlation results support the assumed relationship and indicate that motivational CQ and interaction, general, and work adjustment are positively related ($r = .53$, $.62$, and $.42$, $p < .05$), the strength of a relationship can only be significantly predicted for interaction adjustment, $\beta = .38$, $p < .05$, and general adjustment, $\beta = .45$, $p < .005$ over and above other predictors. These results show that motivational CQ predicts interaction and general adjustment significantly and positively, i.e. people with a high level of motivational CQ adapt more easily to interacting with host country nationals and to the general environment. In prior researches motivational CQ was related also to work adjustment (Templer et al., 2006). In this research a positive direction can be assumed ($\beta = .16$), however, this result is with $p = .29$ relatively far from significant. Further, prior support for behavioral CQ as predictor for adjustment (Ang et al.2007) cannot be repeated in this study.

Hyporesearch 1b: Behavioral CQ is positively related to general, work and interaction adjustment. Despite prior support from other researches (Ang et al., 2007; Selmer, 2006b), this hyporesearch is rejected for this sample. Higher levels of behavioral CQ do not explain higher levels of general, work, and adjustment. Nevertheless, the strength of the bivariate correlations support prior research results on this relationships ($r = .37$, $.38$ and $.43$ respectively, $p < 0.01$).

Hyporesearch 1c: Cognitive CQ is positively related to general, work and interaction adjustment. Relating cognitive CQ to a persons' skills and level of intelligence, it was proposed that the higher the level of cognitive CQ, the high the ability to adapt to the general, work and interaction environment in a foreign country. This hyporesearch is rejected for this sample. On the one hand, no significant relationships were obtained; on the other hand, in contrast to correlation results, regression results even indicate a possible small negative impact of cognitive CQ on interaction and work adjustment.

Hyporesearch 1d: Meta-cognitive CQ is positively related to general, work and interaction adjustment. This hyporesearch can partly be accepted. Regression results support that higher levels of meta-cognitive CQ predict higher levels of work adjustment ($\beta = .53$, $p < .005$). The relationship to the other two adjustment dimensions must be rejected due to the lack of significance. Interestingly, cultural distance is also a significant predictor of work adjustment ($\beta = .30$, $p < .05$). Although during literature review an impact of cultural novelty or distance could not always be supported, the knowledge of these differences and consequently meta-cognitive CQ was assumed to have an impact on adjustment. Concerning this sample, cultural distance and meta-cognitive CQ are significant and positive predictors of work adjustment.

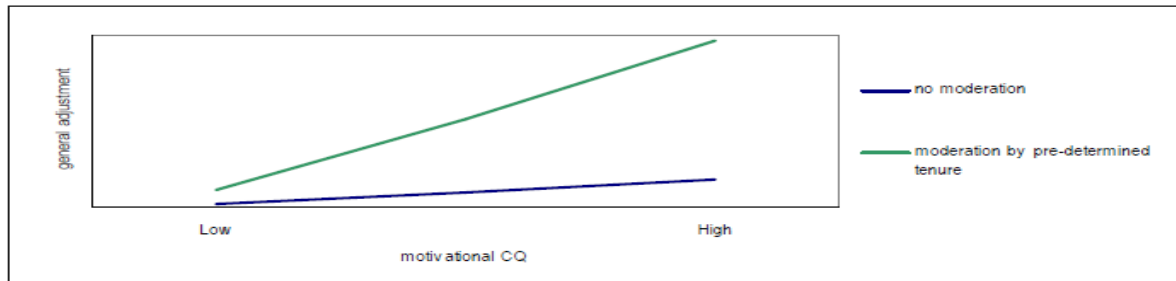
Hyporesearch 2: Cultural Intelligence is positively related to willingness to adapt. Based on the results in illustrated in Table e (Appendix E), CQ in general terms predicts the willingness to adjust in a positive way ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$). This indicates that high levels of CQ explain higher levels of the willingness to adjust. Supporting this conclusion is the strength of the bivariate correlation between the single CQ facets and willingness to adapt, cognitive CQ $r = .43$, $p < .01$, motivational CQ $r = .32$, $p < .05$, behavioral CQ $r = .38$, $p < .01$, and meta-cognitive CQ $r = .37$, $p < .01$. Hyporesearch 2a-d: The facets motivational, behavioral, and cognitive CQ are positively and meta- cognitive CQ is negatively related to the willingness to adapt. These four hypotheses have to be rejected due to the lack of significance. Although Cultural Intelligence in general does predict the willingness to adjust (see Hyporesearch 2), the individual facets fail to pass the significance level. Further, while not significant, the proposed positive direction of the first three facets can be found in the regression results. The proposed negative relationship of meta-cognitive CQ and willingness to adjust is not reflected by the results.

Hyporesearch 3 and 4: The pre-determined tenure of an assignment has a positive effect on the expatriate's ability to adapt generally, to work and relationships in the host culture and on the willingness to adapt to the host culture. These two hypotheses predicting that the anticipated tenure of an assignment has a positive influence on the adjustment dimensions and the willingness have to be rejected. Both correlation and regression analyses do not support the proposed relationship. Correlation coefficients are, though positive, with $r = .05$ -.16 relatively low and not significant. The same applies to individual regression analyses (β

= .20-.24, $p = .11-.26$). Consequently, it can be concluded that the tenure of an assignment, which is known before the start of the assignment, does not influence whether expatriates are more willing to adapt. Consequently, prior researchers (Bhaskar-Shirinivas et al, 2005; Takeuchi et al., 1997) who found a positive relationship cannot be supported.

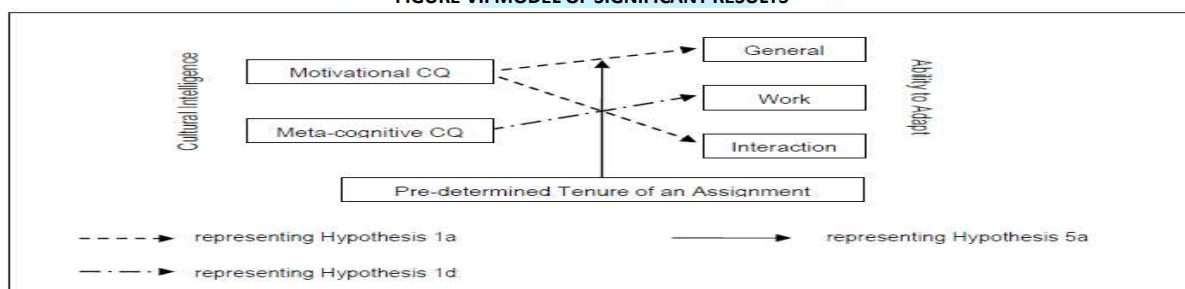
Hyporesearch 5a: The pre-determined tenure of an assignment and the expatriate's knowledge about this tenure has a moderating effect on the relationship between the expatriate's CQ and his/her ability to adapt to the host culture. Regression results indicate that only the relationship between motivational CQ and general adjustment, which has been pointed out to be significant earlier, is moderated by the predetermined tenure of an assignment. The strength of this relationship increases significantly with the influence of pre-determined tenure and changes from $[\beta = .45, p < .005$ to $\beta = 2.76$. Based on these results it can be concluded that an expatriate who holds a particular level of motivational CQ is more able to adapt to the general environment in case of the knowledge of a longer tenure of an assignment. The relationship is graphically illustrated in Figure V.

FIGURE V. INTERACTION PLOT FOR MODERATING EFFECT OF PRE-DETERMINED TENURE ON GENERAL ADJUSTMENT



Hyporesearch 5b: The pre-determined tenure of an assignment and the expatriate's knowledge about this tenure has a moderating effect on the relationship between the expatriate's CQ and his/her willingness to adapt to the host culture. The proposed relationships and the consequent assumption that expatriates with a particular level of CQ are more willing to adjust to the host country culture the higher the tenure of the expatriate assignment is cannot be supported. Neither the individual relationships are significantly related to willingness to adjust nor do the total models with all included variables obtain significant results for F statistics. This indicated that the independent variables (CQ facets, moderated CQ facets, and pre-determined tenure) do not explain the variation in the dependent variable (willingness to adjust).

FIGURE VI. MODEL OF SIGNIFICANT RESULTS



A reason for the low significant results in the regression analysis, in particular of the relationships which have been shown to be existent in prior research, can be the low number of participants. Another reason could be multicollinearity of the independent variables, the CQ facets. However, it is striking that Ang et al. (2007), who worked extensively with the concept of CQ did not come across this problem. They mention moderate inter-correlation of the CQ facets but do not mention further related problems. These results give rise to the discussion of practical implications, limitations and suggestions for further research. These are stated in the following paper along with final conclusions.

CONCLUSION

This research has resulted in many interesting findings, which partly support already existing literature and point towards new perception of examined relationships. This paper includes a summary of the research and final concluding thoughts. Further, practical implications of the results are discussed. Finally, this research closes with a section with the elaboration of the limitations and consequential suggestions for further research.

This research has tried to find answers to the several questions. Firstly, this investigated how far the different facets of Cultural Intelligence explain the variance in cross-cultural adaptation in order to either support or reject results of prior research concerning this topic. Secondly, it tried to answer the question whether these four facets of CQ also have an influence on an expatriate's willingness to adapt. The assumption was made that high levels of CQ increase the willingness to adjust as CQ was opted to facilitate adjustment. Thirdly, this research has focused on the question whether the contractually set duration has any influence on the expatriates' willingness and ability to adjust to the host country. It was proposed that expatriates are not willing to adjust the shorter their assignment, since the expected outcome does not remunerate for the effort adjustment entails. Moreover, although expatriates comply with the requirements for successful adaptation, it was expected that the shorter the tenure the lower the actual ability to adjust to a foreign culture. Based on the literature, a model which illustrated several hypotheses was constructed. The theoretical background and prior researches concerning consequences of Cultural Intelligence, antecedents of cultural adjustment and willingness to adjust as well as the impact of tenure was considered in detail to design the model and back the direction of the hypotheses. From practitioners' and theorists' point of view the importance cultural awareness and consequently Cultural Intelligence increases steadily with the growing internationalization of companies and businesses in general. This research, however, only partly supported proposed relationships and results were partly different from prior research. Only motivational and meta-cognitive CQ were detected to be predictors of general and work adjustment respectively. Moreover, CQ in all its individual facets does not predict the willingness to adjust. However, a high level in the total CQ scale has a significant impact on an expatriate's willingness to adjust. Furthermore, the pre-determined tenure does not relate to any of the adjustment measures, neither ability nor willingness to adjust. A final interesting finding is that pre-determined tenure moderates the impact of motivational CQ on general adjustment. This indicates that the extent of interest and drive to adapt to cultural surroundings increases with the knowledge about a certain tenure of the assignment. The longer the duration of the international assignment the higher is the consequent general adjustment. Since cultural adjustment is a crucial predictor for assignment success, the question arises whether short assignments can be considered less successful as the expatriates adjust less to the host culture. Yet, success measures were not included in this research, thus this question could be an interesting approach for further investigation.

Since the results show that the contractually set tenure of an assignment positively moderates the impact of motivational CQ on general adjustment, it offers implications for the development and schedule of an expatriate's assignment. Although the pre-determined tenure does not affect adjustment directly, general adjustment of expatriates can be fostered by contractually setting a longer tenure. Consequently, in case of facing the consideration of setting a short tenure with the option of an extension of the assignment or setting a longer period right away, the latter option offers to be the more prosperous one resulting in a

higher level of expatriate adjustment. Another implication can be directed towards the expatriates' preparation for international assignments via cross-cultural training. Since the results point out the particular importance of meta-cognitive and motivational CQ for cultural adjustment, the approach of Earley and Peterson (2004) can be supported. These authors highlight training methods which concentrate on meta-cognitive, motivational, and behavioral facets of CQ. Consequently, training programs could include modules of both facets, which are significantly related to adjustment in this research. Possible training interventions are cognitive structure analysis for examining knowledge structures and enhancing the awareness and reflection (for meta-cognitive CQ), and methods focusing on the values-orientation to develop empathy to the culture and role-plays to increase self-efficacy and confidence, and foster curiosity in cross-cultural settings (for motivational CQ) (Earley and Peterson, 2004).

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