

The Effects of Social Support and Cultural Intelligence on Expatriate Adjustment and Performance

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Abstract

This study aims to extend a theoretical model of cultural intelligence (CQ) and social support to examine cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate performance based on social learning and social exchange theories. The sample was drawn from the expatriate managers of MNC subsidiaries from Taiwan region and Chinese mainland in Cambodia. A cross-sectional study was conducted research on garment factories, banking services, and casinos owned by companies from Taiwan region and Chinese mainland. A self-administered survey was used to email HRM managers of each department of subsidiaries from Taiwan region and Chinese mainland in Cambodia to ask for details on expatriates' personal information. A total of 156 valid responses were to proceed with further analyses. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the hypothesis development. The results reveal that cultural intelligence (CQ) and social support positively and significantly contribute to cross-cultural adjustment and performance. The findings of this study are very important for academia and professionals in an expatriate context.

Keywords

Social Support, Cultural Intelligence, Expatriate Adjustment, Expatriate Performance

1. Introduction

Many scholars have reported that cultural adjustment is one of the major varia-

bles that can explain the success of expatriation (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). According to previous empirical evidence, culturally intelligent individuals understand what constitutes intelligent behavior in different cultures through their meta-cognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006; Ang et al., 2007; Berry & Ward, 2006). Interestingly, few studies have reported that CQ positively affects cross-cultural adjustment (Lee & Sukoco, 2010; Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2006). Other studies have also demonstrated conceptually that CQ might contribute to the level of expatriate adjustment, which in turn could lead to higher performance (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Lee, 2010). In the current global business environment, cross-international assignments can be extraordinarily difficult and have grown in significance for expatriate management (Lee, Veasna, & Sukoco, 2013). Cross-international assignment could enable international HR professionals create a global strategy-aligned HR strategy and practices (Bergs & Lub, 2020). Successful expatriates cope well in new environments. Cultural intelligence implies the ability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity, including the ability to adopt appropriate local behaviors (Cavusgil, Knight, Riesenberger, Rammal, & Freeman, 2016). HR managers in cross-cultural assignment context have assumed increasingly crucial duties due to changes in recent decades. HR managers are projected to play more essential roles in firms due to variables including rising worldwide rivalry, emerging market role, changing workplace values, etc. These shifts have led to more long-term/strategic roles like strategic partners where HR policies match with company strategy. HR managers now play a crucial role in managing change and people within firms (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2017).

It is not surprising that almost 80% of middle-size and large enterprises globally send their professionals abroad, and 45% intend to increase the number sent (Black & Gregersen, 1999). According to Mervosh and McClenahan (1997), the early return of a single expatriate will cost organizations US\$250,000 to US\$1,250,000. Unfortunately, many return early due to dissatisfaction with their jobs or inability to adjust to a foreign culture or their assignments (Selmer, 2005). One major reason for these failures is that expatriates have not been able to adjust to the new host country's environment (Caligiuri, 2000; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Perhaps even worse, if the expatriates cannot adjust to work and life in a new cultural environment, they will likely perform poorly at their international assignment (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). Therefore, the antecedents of expatriate cross-cultural adjustment have created increasing attention, and a great deal of research has been devoted to identifying the factors influencing expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and the successful completion of their assignments (Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001). Cross-international assignments can be challenging in a global business environment and have become an increasingly important subject for researchers and international human resource practitioners. International assignments for expatriates

have increased attention from academics and multinational companies (MNCs) in the past decade (Lee, Veasna, & Wu, 2013). In a cross-cultural context, international assignments played a vital role in expanding and building global skills. Expatriate adjustment is very important for the expatriate and the organization (Lee & Kartika, 2014). In the current global business environment, cross-international assignments can be extraordinarily difficult and have grown in significance for expatriate management. Cross-international assignment could enable international HR professionals to create a global strategy-aligned HR strategy and practices (Bergs & Lub, 2020). Successful expatriates cope well in new environments. Cultural intelligence implies the ability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity, including the ability to adopt appropriate local behaviors (Cavusgil et al., 2016). HR managers in cross-cultural assignment context have assumed increasingly crucial duties due to changes in recent decades. HR managers are projected to play more essential roles in firms due to variables including rising worldwide rivalry, emerging market role, changing workplace values, etc. These shifts have led to more long-term/strategic roles like strategic partners where HR policies match with company strategy. HR managers now play a crucial role in managing change and people within firms (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2017). Thus, when expatriates believe their cross-international assignments will help their careers, they are more likely to complete them and be highly motivated in international human resource management contexts (Gomez-Mejia et al, 2012).

Despite abundant interest, a large gap remains in our understanding of which factors can determine the success of expatriation. Although many researchers have concentrated on expatriate adjustment, this study asserts that two types of social support (i.e., perceived organizational support and supervisor support) can play prominent roles in enhancing expatriate adjustment and performance (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001). Only one study has reported that perceived organizational support positively affects expatriate performance (Kraimer et al., 2001). Two other studies found that supervisor support does not significantly affect expatriate performance (Erdogan & Enders, 2007; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Cultural intelligence (CQ) is another important factor for expatriate adjustment because CQ is aimed at capturing the ability to adapt, understand, and act appropriately across home cultures (Lee & Kartika, 2014). Cultural adjustment is one of the crucial factors for multinational corporations' (MNCs') global success, which can lead to enhanced expatriate performance and reduced turnover rates (Akhil & Liu, 2019). Organizations operate in diverse cultural environments, which are challenging due to the absence of cultural knowledge and difficulty adapting to the native culture, which usually leads to expatriate failure (Kour & Jyoti, 2022). A total of 272 million people living outside their country of origin, called expatriates, are distinct in their stay in the host country (Miocevic & Mikulic, 2023). These issues, therefore, deserve further investigation.

In summary, understanding the nature and impact of social support and cultural intelligence (CQ) can have important applications to individuals, teams, and organizations functioning in multicultural environmental settings. Moreover, the antecedents of expatriate adjustment and performance have been of interest to researchers and have been critically debated for expatriate paradigms. Social support is one of the core antecedents that influences expatriate adjustment and performance. However, these relationship variables have been largely ignored. Another antecedent is cultural intelligence, and few studies have provided empirical evidence of a relationship, and results still need to be consistent. Therefore, this study determines the consequences of social support and cultural intelligence on expatriate adjustment and performance.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Social Support

Social support is the provision of beneficial help for at least two individuals and is intended to buffer psychological distress and positively associate with emotional well-being (Copeland & Norell, 2002; Kim, Kirkman, & Chen, 2008). Social support literature suggests that support from diverse sources (i.e., originations, supervisors, and colleagues) can promote an individual's work adjustment by reducing psychological distress in multi-cultural situations (Kupka & Cathro, 2007; Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999). Among the most prominent stress factors that expatriates struggle with is the loss of social support provided by the organization with which they are associated, as well as family and friends (Harvey, 1995: p. 226). Yet, it is not only the loss of close family and friends but also the deprivation of the entire community at their home base that many expatriated families have to cope with. There is an argument that social support can be applied to expatriate adjustment during international assignments when the expatriate can gain emotional support from organizations and a supervisor in the form of host country nationals or peer expatriates (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002; Kraimer et al., 2001). Therefore, these two facets (i.e., perceived organizational support and supervisor support) are adopted for this study. Perceived organizational support is defined as employees' belief that the organization's actions affect their obligation to aid the organization and care about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, & Sowa, 1986). When employees believe their contribution is valued and respected by the organization for which they work, they are likely to devote themselves to their assignments positively, increasing loyalty and keeping their promises because of higher rewards and better job satisfaction. Research on leader-member exchange and socialization has indicated the importance of employee attitudes and feelings being influenced by their supervisors. Supervisors act as bridges between organizations and subordinates and are responsible for directing and evaluating their subordinates' performance (Fusilier, Ganster, & Mayes, 1986; Kraimer et al., 2001). Employees view their supervisor's favorable or unfavorable orientation toward them as indicative of the or-

organization's support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). If employees perceive their supervisor's support to include an evaluation of and concern for their well-being, this will affect their commitment and loyalty to the organization. Other scholars have also argued that perceived organizational support may be an important determinant of employee adjustment following a transfer (Payne, 1980).

2.2. Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Cultural intelligence plays an important role in developing cross-cultural relationships because individuals with high CQ enjoy interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). CQ represents an individual's capability for successful adaptation to new cross-cultural settings (Alon & Higgins, 2005), and it is particularly relevant to the working conditions of expatriates dealing with international assignments about handling pressures that are placed on decision makers (Elenkov & Manev, 2009). There are four facets of CQ: metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Metacognitive CQ refers to an individual's ability to understand a new cultural environment effectively (Ang et al., 2007). Cognitive CQ refers to "specific knowledge people can gain and comprehend about a new culture based on various cues provided" (Earley & Ang, 2003: p. 91). Motivational CQ refers to an individual's level of self-determination to satisfy the need to direct and sustain energy on a particular task or problem-solving in varying cross-cultural situations (Elenkov & Manev, 2009; Wu & Ang, 2011). Lastly, behavioral CQ refers to an individual's ability to be sensitive regarding adjusting to a new multicultural setting and having the flexibility to act effectively (Elenkov & Manev, 2009). Overall, cultural intelligence (CQ) is defined as an individual's ability to identify or behave appropriately in a new culture (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Expatriates may need to rely on themselves to cope with foreign assignments' stressful and uncertain circumstances (Aryee, Chay, & Chew, 1996). Understanding why expatriates from different backgrounds act as they do relates to a primary part of human thinking—cultural intelligence (CQ)—as the capability to solve problems and adapt to a new and changing environment (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). Earley and Ang (2003) proposed a CQ approach to capture the capability to adapt across cultures.

2.3. Cross-Cultural Adjustment (CCA)

The cross-cultural adjustment framework developed by Black (1988) argued that cross-cultural adjustment is conceptualized as the degree of psychological comfort an expatriate has with the various aspects of a host culture (Van, Pater, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004). Cultural adjustment has been distinguished in the literature by Black and Stephens (1989) and has been said to consist of three dimensions: general, work, and interaction adjustment. General adjustment refers to the degree of association with general factors such as living conditions, climate, facilities, food, and transportation (Wu & Ang, 2011). Work adjustment is defined as the degree of comfort with working conditions related to job re-

sponsibilities and performance. Interaction adjustment focuses on the extent of socialization with local co-workers in the host-cultural environment. When an expatriate is adjusted to these dimensions, they experience satisfaction and perceived acceptance from hosts and can function during everyday activities without severe stress (Brislin, 1981). In practice, most MNCs select managers as expatriates according to their technical skills. However, research evidence suggests that many management skills must still be transferred from a domestic country to the host country. Managers who perform well in the domestic setting may need help to adapt to managing in a different cultural environment or even living in intimate contact with members of another culture. In contrast, research has suggested that the major contributing factor to expatriate failure is an inability to adjust to the host cultural environment rather than a lack of technical competence (Andreason, 2003b). Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) argued that adjustment can be applied to different situations. Through their adjustment in a host country, managers can manage subordinates in a manner that leads to agreement between subordinates and managers and supports completing tasks that lead to achieving goals. Therefore, this study focuses on how the two variables, adjustment to work and interaction with local people, affect expatriate performance in working environments.

2.4. Expatriate Performance

Performance is essential for organizational success (Day, Therrien, & Carroll, 2005) and effectiveness (Ohly & Fritz, 2010). Performance refers to the degree to which an employee meets the known expectations and requirements of his or her role as an individual (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). The theory of job performance has indicated that job performance consists of task and contextual dimensions (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Task performance is the expected behaviors that indirectly support an organization's core technical processes. Contextual performance helps shape the organizational, social, and psychological conditions that support task activities in the host country's workplace (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Theorists have argued that psychological stress can perniciously affect work performance (Cohen, 1980). Parallel arguments have been made about international assignments. For example, Shaffer et al. (2001) contended that well-adjusted expatriates will have greater personal resources (time, effort, and emotional investment) to spend on the behaviors that facilitate their job performance. Models of the "criterion space" in international human resource management (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997) have suggested that fulfilling specific task requirements and maintaining relationships with host and home country nationals are the core facets of expatriate performance.

2.5. The Effects of Social Support

Individuals more capable of adapting to social support tend to be better adjusted in a cross-cultural environment (Aryee et al., 1996; Wu & Ang, 2011). According to Forster (1997), expatriates with a lower ability to adapt to new cross-cultural

environments will have poorer performance and increased psychological stress. If expatriates need more support from organizations and supervisors, their adjustment can easily fail and result in reassignment (Andreason, 2003a). In contrast, expatriates who get more resources and support from their organizations and colleagues may be better able to adjust to a new host culture (Andreason, 2003a; Shaffer et al., 1999). Such support can also provide newly arrived expatriates with valuable information about what behaviors are acceptable or unacceptable in a new cultural environment (Andreason, 2003b). Social support during an international assignment is one of the most critical determinants influencing cross-cultural adjustment (Aycañ & Kanungo, 1997; Black et al., 1991).

The provision of support provided by organizations and supervisors is expected to be particularly important regarding its contribution to reducing problems encountered in the host environment, which may influence expatriate commitment to their adjustment and assignments (Wu & Ang, 2011). Social support helps mobilize psychological resources and provides feelings of reinforcement, recognition, and affirmation (Rook, 1984) that may greatly enhance expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment to a new environment (Andreason, 2003a). Empirically, social support is a significant positive predictor of expatriate adjustment (Shaffer et al., 1999). The role of perceived social support from host-country nationals for the adjustment of expatriates and their spouses while on international assignments (Abdul Malek, Budhwar, & Reiche, 2015). Social support is one of the most critical predictors of expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment (Bayraktar, 2019; Khedher & Asadullah, 2020). Other empirical evidence reveals that support from their organizations relates positively to expatriate adjustment, assignment completion, and increased job satisfaction (Sokro, Pillay, & Bednall, 2021). Therefore, when expatriates gain social support from the host and home country nationals, this support helps them to adjust to their assignments successfully. Then, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Social support has a positive influence on expatriate adjustment.

Social support can interact and intervene to ensure that expatriates are cross-culturally adjusted, enhancing their job performance (Andreason, 2003a). Some researchers have found that such support (perceived organizational support and supervisor support) is an important buffer against stress at work that can further influence employee attitudes and job performance (Andreason, 2003b; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; Kraimer et al., 2001). Other scholars have also indicated that perceived organizational support is one of the primary factors in predicting expatriate adjustment (Caligiuri, 2000; Shaffer et al., 1999). Social support is critical in enhancing expatriate adjustment and performance (Lee et al., 2014). According to perceived organizational support theory, social support may impact expatriates' work adjustment, affective commitment, and job performance (Kawai & Strange, 2014). Perceived organizational support is presented by the positive relationship with expatriate task performance (Na-Nan & Ngudgratoke, 2017). In the context of social support (i.e., perceived organizational support) from key stakeholders, it is associated with the performance of

expatriates (Fee & Gray, 2022). Social support can further reduce the repatriation intention and lead them to perform better (Gao, Luo, Yang, Zhang, & Deng, 2023). Consequently, this study proposes the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Social support has a positive influence on expatriate performance.

2.6. The Effects of Cultural Intelligence

Cross-cultural adjustment has been suggested to be a key determinant of expatriate success in international assignment contexts (Templer et al., 2006). CQ represents a person's capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts in the host nation. At the same time, individuals with higher levels of CQ may expect to adjust better to new cultural environments experienced during their foreign assignments (Kim et al., 2008). The degree of adjustment can be higher when expatriates have higher CQ that reflects an increased ability to acquire or adapt behaviors appropriate for a new culture (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004).

Metacognitive and cognitive CQ can influence expatriates' task performance concerning areas that require higher levels of culture-related cognitive processing and more knowledge about different cultural backgrounds in the host country (Kim et al., 2008). According to theories of motivation (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2000), motivational CQ can influence expatriate performance because of the motivational states inherent in CQ (namely, task-specific self-efficacy in cross-cultural settings). Individuals who have a strong sense of self-efficacy will facilitate cognitive processes and performance in a variety of settings, such as those requiring a high quality of decision-making, goal setting, and academic achievement, and will, in turn, achieve high levels of job performance (Bandura, 1977; Albert Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). Lastly, the social learning theory can explain how behavioral CQ influences expatriate performance (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory has proposed that experiencing interaction with other groups of employees through learning about different cultural backgrounds (Tariques & Takeuchi, 2008) will influence work performance (Ang et al., 2007; Templer et al., 2006). In previous expatriate literature, CQ has been found to have a positive impact on cross-cultural adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). The relationship between motivational CQ and cross-cultural adjustment has been found by Templer et al. (2006) to be the positive effect of motivational and behavioral CQ on general, interactional, and work adjustment (Ang et al., 2007).

In sum, multiple facets of CQ can influence expatriates' performance and adjustment. This statement has also been proven by recent studies that have proposed that four aspects of CQ have a positive effect on expatriate performance and adjustment outcomes in multicultural situations (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Kim et al., 2008; Lee & Sukoco, 2010; Shaffer & Miller, 2008). Very few studies have empirically confirmed their research propositions, and some have incon-

sistent findings (Ang et al., 2007; Lee & Sukoco, 2010; Sri Ramalu, Wei, & Che, 2011).

Using similar logic, this study posits that a higher level of CQ intelligence influences expatriate performance. Referring to Côté and Miners (2006), when people can grasp and reason correctly with emotional abstractions and solve their emotional problems, they tend to perform better. According to a review paper conducted by Mol, Born, Willemsen and Van Der Molen (2005), it was found that cultural sensitivity and flexibility have prominent roles in expatriate performance. When expatriates are more capable of adapting across cultures, they tend to perform better (Lee & Sukoco, 2008). However, inconsistent findings on the relationship between CQ and expatriate performance have been reported by Lee and Sukoco (2010), and Sri Ramalu et al. (2011). Cultural intelligence appears to exert a stronger influence on adjustment outcomes (Han, Sears, Darr, & Wang, 2022). In this context, cultural intelligence plays an important role in the adjustment of expatriates (Kour & Jyoti, 2022). By drawing on the cross-cultural adjustment literature and social identity theory (SIT), this study indicated the importance of an expatriate's identity projects as conditioning mechanisms that extend the theoretical understanding of when an expatriate's general adjustment (Miocevic & Mikulic, 2023). Based on this rationale, this study develops the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Cultural intelligence has a positive influence on expatriate adjustment.

Hypothesis 4: Cultural intelligence has a positive influence on expatriate performance.

2.7. The Effects of Expatriate Adjustment

The theory of work adjustment is a key determinant of a successful work relation that tends to create a state of correspondence between individuals and new cultural environmental characteristics (Brett & Werbel, 1980; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). In an expatriate context, expatriate adjustment to new cultural situations enhances job satisfaction and performance. This rationale also suggests that expatriate adjustment is positively associated with performance and intent to stay in the host country during international assignments (Caligiuri, 1997; Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005). Empirically, it has been proven that expatriate adjustment has a positive relationship with job performance (Kraimer et al., 2001; Mol et al., 2005; Sri Ramalu et al., 2011). Another recent finding by Wu and Ang (2011) indicated that cultural adjustment partially affects expatriate adjustment, but inconsistent findings regarding this assumption were found by Lee and Sukoco (2010). The theory of work adjustment explains the relationship between cultural adjustment and expatriate performance in terms of (Kai Liao, Wu, Dao, & Ngoc Luu, 2021). Empirical evidence of expatriate adjustment and performance is positively associated (Sarfraz, Nisar, & Raza, 2023; Wu, Fan, & Dabasia, 2022). Accordingly,

well-adjusted expatriates will have better job performance on international assignments. Thus, it is assumed for this study that when expatriates are well-adjusted to the general environment of a host country, their performance will be similar to that of their home country. Based on the above research discussion, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 5: Expatriate adjustment has a positive influence on expatriate performance.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement Scales

We selected six research instruments that appropriately measure the constructs in our conceptual framework. In previous research, Cronbach's alpha reliability of all instruments has been shown to be acceptable and valid. Therefore, the questionnaires were prepared for participants from Taiwan region and Chinese mainland to use in Cambodia; a standard translation and back-translation (i.e., English to Chinese and Chinese to English) procedure was performed to validate the meanings of measurement items. A 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) was adopted for this study. All questionnaire items were adopted from existing literatures in expatriate contexts, as shown in Appendix.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The sample was drawn from the expatriate managers of MNC subsidiaries from Taiwan region and Chinese mainland operating in Cambodia. Among India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Cambodia, Cambodia is considered to be one of the most attractive destination investments for multinational company subsidiaries from Taiwan region and Chinese mainland in terms of a large pool of cheap labor, the costs for which are lower than those of their home companies in Taiwan region and Chinese mainland (Honglin- Zhang, 2005). Therefore, expatriates must be assigned to deal with core tasks between the host and home companies. Primary data on MNC subsidiaries from Taiwan region and Chinese mainland in the above-referenced investment destination was collected through a structured mailing. In each MNC, we purposely selected one expatriate manager who works in an R&D department, a production department, a sales department, and a financial department to participate in this study. The purpose of selecting the samples from cross-work units among the R & D, production unit, sales department, and final department is to provide our understanding of how individuals interact with other people from different cultural backgrounds in order to improve their work performance effectively.

The sampling procedure involved two phases: First, emails were sent to the human resource department of each host MNC to ask for the details of the appropriate expatriates to participate in this study. A total of 87 MNCs and 350 expatriate managers were contacted and asked for their opinions before sending

the questionnaire survey. Second, the questionnaires were sent to invite one expatriate manager in each of the above departments to use an email-based survey. A total of 39 MNCs and 160 questionnaires were collected. However, four questionnaires had to be excluded as outliers. The outliers were deleted using the graphic method, with a residual scatter plot of ± 3 standard deviation (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Finally, a total of 156 valid questionnaires were determined to be usable (a response rate of 45.71%) for further analyses.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Information

The following is the basic information for the respondents and the sample firms. Of the respondents, 84.62% were males, and over 67% were older than 31. About 53.21% had a bachelor's degree, and 44.23% hold a master's degree. The sample firms operated in a conventional manufacturing industry (72.44%), and 27.56% were in service industries. More than 89% of the MNC subsidiaries had annual sales above 50 million NT\$ (1\$ USD = 29 NT\$), and more than 87% had more than 200 employees. In addition, 84.62 percent of respondents were males, and this study investigates that female expatriates occupy lower positions than males despite the equal tenure policy being applied to all organizations. This notion is consistent with Selmer and Leung (2003), and Cole and McNulty (2011). This study argues that female expatriates regard expatriation as a somewhat less successful international assignment path than males because they are less engaged in meeting their career goals than males. In addition, female expatriates represent between 10% and 15% of expatriates in North and Latin America, Asia-Pacific region, and Europe (Harrison & Michailova, 2011). Harrison and colleagues argued that women were less interested in careers abroad than men. Therefore, this study assumes that male expatriates seem to play a more important role in handling international assignments than female expatriates in the 39 MNCs in Cambodia under consideration in this study.

4.2. Measurement Model Assessment

The construct reliability and convergent validity were assessed using the threshold guidelines of Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, the exploratory factor analysis and reliability test were used to validate the reliability of all research items by indicating that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each factor were greater than 0.70. Second, this study performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the distinctiveness of the measures used in the present study by using AMOS 23.

For CFA procedures, the first order-factor model was adopted to examine each research construct, and the results of this procedure indicated that standardized loading for all items exceeded 0.70 and that t -values were higher than 1.96 ($p < 0.001$). The fitness index of each research construct was acceptable: Chi-square/degree of freedom (χ^2/df) < 2 , Goodness-of-fit (GFI) > 0.90 , and

Adjusted Goodness-of-fit (AGFI) > 0.90, Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) < 0.05, and p -value > 0.05. Thus, it satisfies the threshold Hair et al. (2010) and Kline (2011). recommended. Then, the second-order and hierarchical models were conducted to examine the fitness of each research construct. The results of the second-order and hierarchical model were satisfied the threshold (see Figure 1 and Table 1), such as cultural intelligence ($\chi^2 = 30.488$; $df = 26$; GFI = 0.963; AGFI = 0.921; RMR = 0.032), expatriate adjustment ($\chi^2 = 1.496$; $df = 4$; GFI = 0.996; AGFI = .986; RMR = 0.005), social support ($\chi^2 = 5.227$; $df = 3$; GFI = 0.987; AGFI = 0.934; RMR = 0.036), and expatriate performance ($\chi^2 = 6.479$; $df = 5$; GFI = 0.986; AGFI = 0.941; RMR = 0.011), respectively. As suggested by Kline (2011), the χ^2 value and model fit indices for the hierarchical model of each construct are identical to the second-order CFA model, and based on the principle of parsimony, the hierarchical model was accepted. Finally, the mean scores of individual factors of each research construct (i.e., social support, cultural intelligence, expatriate performance, and expatriate adjustment) were computed to conduct the second-order CFA in order to examine overall appropriateness of the measurement model, the results of Figure 6 showed that the overall goodness-of-fit assessment to satisfy the threshold of $\chi^2/df (37.610/26) = 1.447$; GFI = 0.956; AGFI = 0.906; RMR = 0.036, and $p = 0.066$, thus indicating that the research model for this study could be presented as a good model fit with good convergent validity and construct reliability (Gerbing & Anderson, 1992; Hair et al., 2010). Then, descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, coefficient alpha, and correlations among the research variables, are reported in Table 2.

Because the data collection process for the research variables was conducted using data obtained from the same source from the expatriate side, there was a possibility that common method variance might be a concern (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) and that it was necessary to confirm whether the strengths of the relationships among research constructs had been either inflated or deflated (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). To assess the potential impact of this common variance bias in this study, discriminant validity was tested in three steps. First, a Harmon one-factor test was adopted (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) that loaded all the variables into a principal component factor analysis. The results revealed that a solution accounted for 61.520% of the total variance, while factor 1 only accounted for 31.580%. Therefore, a single factor did not emerge into one factor, and factor 1 did not explain most of the variance. Second, convergent validity was demonstrated, as all constructs' average variance extracted (AVE) values should be higher than the suggested threshold value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was determined by comparing the square root of the AVE with the Pearson correlations among the constructs (see Table 2). All AVE estimates represented in Table 1 are greater than the corresponding inter-construct square correlation estimates, as shown in Table 2. Based on these results, common method bias is unlikely to be a problem with the data (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000).

Table 1. The results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)—second-order factor model.

Indicator	Construct/Factors	Standardized loading	t-value	AVE	Fit indices statistic
Sups2	Supervisor Support (SUS)	0.61***	A	0.58	$\chi^2 = 5.227$; df = 3; GFI = 0.987 AGFI = 0.934; RMR = 0.036
Sups3		0.86***	7.58		
Sups4		0.79***	7.38		
Pos1	Perceived organizational support (POS)	0.82***	A	0.60	
Pos3		0.72***	7.86		
Metcq1	Metacognitive CQ (MetCQ)	0.79***	A	0.62	
Metcq2		0.79***	5.914		
Ccq1	Cognitive CQ (CCQ)	0.73***	A	0.57	
Ccq2		0.78***	5.09		
Bcq1	Behavioral CQ (BCQ)	0.77***	A	0.67	
Bcq1		0.86***	9.95		
Mocq1	Motivational CQ (MoCQ)	0.87***	A	0.72	
Mocq2		0.86***	14.08		
Mocq3		0.79***	12.11		
Mocq4		0.88***	14.56		
Work1	Word adjustment (WoAdj)	0.78***	A	0.72	
Work2		0.94***	12.92		$\chi^2 = 1.496$; df = 4; GFI = 0.996 AGFI = 0.986; RMR = 0.005
Work3		0.82***	11.27		
Inter1	Interactional adjustment (IntAdj)	0.89***	A	0.82	
Inter2		0.92***	15.48		
Task1	Task performance (TasP)	0.92***	A	0.79	
Task2		0.93***	19.64		$\chi^2 = 6.479$; df = 5; GFI = 0.986 AGFI = 0.941; RMR = 0.011
Task3		0.81***	13.98		
Task4		0.88***	17.19		
Cont1	Contextual performance (ConP)	0.98***	A	0.72	
Cont2		0.68***	7.93		

Note: AVE = Average variance extracted was calculated by Hair et al. (2010). *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$, which is significant level at t-value > 1.96. A = parameter regression weight was fixed at 1.

Table 2. Correlation matrix (n = 156).

Variables	Mean	Std. D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1-SUS	4.885	1.149	0.791												
2-POS	4.985	1.057	0.632**	0.720											
3-MetCQ	5.837	0.785	0.020	0.110	0.766										
4-CCQ	5.112	0.953	0.144*	0.270**	0.402**	0.716									
5-MoCQ	5.449	0.913	0.100	0.278**	0.351**	0.572**	0.913								
6-BCQ	5.758	0.825	0.131*	0.281**	0.281**	0.485**	0.699**	0.795							
7-WoAdj	5.816	0.791	0.245**	0.359**	0.216**	0.426**	0.515**	0.616**	0.883						
7-IntAdj	5.760	0.899	0.161*	0.266**	0.168*	0.401**	0.460**	0.608**	0.774**	0.901					
9-TasP	5.744	0.847	0.453**	0.613**	0.078	0.246**	0.362**	0.360**	0.425**	0.297**	.947				

Continued

10-ConP	5.741	0.792	0.341**	0.551**	0.160*	0.326**	0.414**	0.595**	0.630**	0.575**	0.649**	0.806		
11-Firm	3.577	1.387	-0.072	-0.111	-0.111	-0.132	-0.152	-0.091	-0.171*	-0.105	-0.056	-0.079	n/a	
12-Age	2.090	0.616	-0.029	0.157*	0.057	0.016	-0.058	-0.093	0.061	0.004	0.085	0.013	-0.061	n/a
13-Education	3.419	0.567	0.038	0.071	-0.059	-0.092	-0.068	-0.086	-0.032	0.056	0.009	-0.05	0.107	-0.032 n/a

Note: ** $p < 0.001$ and * $p < 0.05$ with significant level of Pearson Correlation Coefficient at t -value > 1.96 .

Third, the results shown in **Table 2** indicate that few correlations among the research variables exceeded 0.50, which indicated higher relative correlations; thus, a CFA assesses the distinctiveness of the research variables for cultural intelligence, cultural adjustment, and expatriate performance, respectively. One-factor model and two-factor model CFA procedures were adopted to compare the fit of the two-factor measurement model against a one-factor model among the research dimensions of the research constructs (see [Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000](#); [Kim et al., 2008](#); [Lee & Sukoco, 2010](#)). We set the six dimensions (including four cultural intelligence and two cultural adjustment dimensions) to load on one-factor and two-factor models, respectively. The hypothesized two-construct model generated $\chi^2 = 122.343$ ($df = 79$); NFI = 0.906; CFI = 0.964, and RMSEA = 0.059. In comparison, with all six factors loading on the one-factor model, the one-factor model had a $\chi^2 = 123.647$ ($df = 80$); NFI = 0.905; CFI = 0.964, and RMSEA = 0.059. The chi-square differences between the two were significant, suggesting that each construct is distinct. Similarly, the results indicated that chi-square significantly differed between social support and expatriate performance, having $\chi^2 = 52.435$ for the two-factor model vs. $\chi^2 = 67.810$ for the one-factor model, respectively. As shown in **Table 3**, the results supported the distinctiveness among the research variables in the measurement model by demonstrating a better fit for the two-factor model, as compared to the one-factor model ([Kim et al., 2008](#)), and the results also indicated that there was no problem with discriminant validity ([Anderson & Gerbing, 1988](#)).

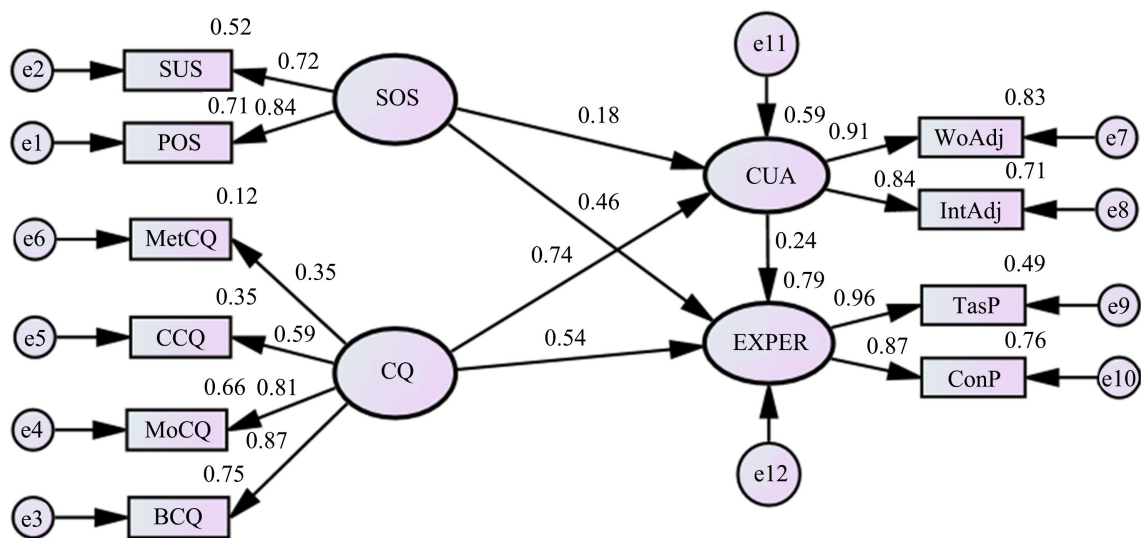
Table 3. Results of fit comparisons for discriminant validity test.

Model	χ^2	df	NFI	CFI	RMSEA	Model comparison test	
						$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf
<i>CQ vs. CUA</i>							
Two-factor model	122.343	79	0.906	0.964	0.059		
One-factor model	123.647	80	0.905	0.964	0.059	1.304***	1
<i>EXPER vs. SOS</i>							
Two-factor model	52.435	35	0.960	0.986	0.057		
One-factor model	67.810	37	0.948	0.975	0.073	15.375***	2

*** $p < 0.001$; CQ = Cultural intelligence, EXPER = Expatriate performance; SOS = Social support; CUA = Cultural adjustment; NFI = Normed fit index; CFI = Comparative fit index; RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation.

4.3. Discussions

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied with the likelihood estimation method to test the hypotheses. The research variables remaining after CFA, shown in **Table 1**, were adopted to proceed with SEM. The second-order factor model was adopted to test the overall research variables (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The results showed that the goodness-of-fit measurements were acceptable (GFI = 0.960; AGFI = 0.911; RMR = 0.054) (see **Table 4** and **Figure 1**), indicating that the proposed model was satisfactory (Hair et al., 2010). The results also support Hypothesis 1—social support significantly and positively influences expatriate adjustment ($\beta = 0.181$; $p < 0.005$; t -value = 2.456). This research finding is consistent with Bayraktar (2019), who states that understanding the key antecedents of expatriate adjustment is critical for the success of their international assignments. Indeed, social support is one of the most critical predictors of expatriate adjustment (Gudmundsdottir, Gudlaugsson, & Adalsteinsson, 2019). They experienced social and organizational support during their international expatriation assignment in a host country (Khedher & Asadullah, 2020). Thus, this study asserts that organizational support and social support mechanisms extended to expatriate families influence the adjustment of the expatriate (Shah, de Oliveira, Barker, Moeller, & Nguyen, 2022). Drawing upon social support theory, this study emphasizes that social support is a stronger determinant of expatriate turnover intention and expatriate adjustment (Karunaratne, 2022).



Model = Standardized estimates
 Group = Group number 1
 Ch-square = 33.729,
 df = 25, Chi-square/df = 1.349,
 GFI = 0.960, AGFI = 0.911,
 NFI = 0.958, CFI = 0.989,
 RMR = 0.054, RMSEA = 0.047, P = 0.114

Figure 1. The results of path relationship—SEM.

Table 4. The results of path relationship—SEM.

Construct	Indicator	Standardized coefficient (β)	<i>t</i> -value
Social support (SOS)	→ SUS	0.841***	A
	→ POS	0.722***	6.199
Cultural intelligence (CQ)	→ BCQ	0.866***	10.95
	→ MoCQ	0.814***	A
	→ CCQ	0.759***	7.365
Cultural adjustment (CUA)	→ MetCQ	0.645***	4.124
	→ WoAdj	0.910***	12.003
	→ IntAdj	0.841***	A
Expatriate Performance (EXPER)	→ TasP	0.965***	A
	→ ConP	0.872***	8.53
Path relationship			
H₁: Social support → Cultural adjustment		0.181**	2.453
H₂: Social support → Expatriate performance		0.461***	5.575
H₃: Cultural intelligence → Cultural adjustment		0.745***	8.075
H₄: Cultural intelligence → Expatriate performance		0.545***	3.784
H₅: Cultural adjustment → Expatriate performance		0.236**	2.055
Goodness of fit assessments			
$\chi^2/df(33.729/25) = 1.349; p = 0.114$			
GFI = 0.960			
AGFI = 0.911			
RMR = 0.054			

Notes: A = parameter regression weight was fixed at 1.000; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$, and significant level at t -value > 1.96 . SOS = Social support (POS = Perceived organizational support; SUS = Supervisor support); CQ = Cultural intelligence (BCQ = Behavioral CQ; MoCQ = Motivational CQ; CCQ = Cognitive CQ; MetCQ = Metacognitive CQ); CUA = Cultural adjustment (WoAdj = Work adjustment; IntAdj = Interactional adjustment); Expatriate performance (TasP = Task performance; ConP = Contextual performance).

Hypothesis 2—social support significantly and positively influences expatriate performance ($\beta = 0.461$; $p < 0.001$; t -value = 5.575). This research finding is consistent with [Jyoti and Kour \(2017\)](#). At the same time, social support is an important factor for successful international assignments for expatriates, including adjustment, commitment, performance, and retention ([van der Laken, van Engen, van Veldhoven, & Paauwe, 2019](#)). Hypothesis 3—cultural intelligence significantly and positively influences expatriate adjustment ($\beta = 0.745$; $p < 0.001$; t -value = 8.075). The findings also indicate that four dimensions of cul-

tural intelligence (CQ) directly and significantly affect expatriate adjustment. However, this study's results do not align with those of [Lee and Sukoco \(2010\)](#) and [Sri Ramalu et al. \(2011\)](#), who reported that CQ has no significant effect on expatriate performance. In cross-cultural management, this is consistent with previous empirical findings and proposed frameworks of CQ that suggest that expatriates capable of interacting in different cultures will have a higher level of adjustment ([Akhil & Liu, 2019](#); [Ang & Van Dyne, 2008](#); [Kim et al., 2008](#); [Zhang & Oczkowski, 2016](#)). Cultural intelligence and cultural adjustment of expatriate talent through cultural distance between home and host countries (i.e., [Song, Varma, & Zhang Zhang, 2023](#); [Zhang et al., 2021](#)).

Hypothesis 4—cultural intelligence significantly and positively influences expatriate performance ($\beta = 0.545$; $p < 0.001$; t -value = 3.784). This research finding is consistent with [Qomariyah, Nguyen, Wu and Tran-Chi \(2022\)](#) and [Chew, Ghurburn, Terspstra-Tong and Perera \(2021\)](#). Hypothesis 5—expatriate adjustment significantly and positively influences expatriate performance ($\beta = 0.236$; $p < 0.005$; t -value = 2.055). This research finding is consistent with [Jyoti and Kour \(2017\)](#), [Sambasivan, Sadoughi and Esmaeilzadeh \(2017\)](#), and [Setti, Sommovigo and Argentero \(2022\)](#). Thus, this study assumes that the social capital of expatriates, which includes leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived organizational support (POS) ([Qomariyah et al., 2022](#)), expatriate adjustment or cultural adjustment plays an important role in enhancing expatriate performance in MNCs subsidiaries in Cambodia.

5. Conclusion

This study examines how social support and cultural intelligence influence expatriate adjustment and performance. The findings indicate that two dimensions of social support directly and significantly contribute to expatriate adjustment and performance. These findings are very important for academia and professionals. Social support examines expatriate adjustment and performance based on social learning and social exchange theories ([Lee et al., 2013](#)). Thus, the findings of this study suggest that, in general, expatriates who engage more interest in exploring and experiencing diverse cultures and who are more self-confident in their abilities to adapt to new cultures will find it easy to adjust to and perform better in work in foreign assignments. When expatriates have more cultural intelligence and are willing to overcome cultural differences, they are better adjusted to work and interact with local co-workers, thus improving their ability to complete their assigned tasks. Based on the results of this study, it is assumed that social support and CQ play critical roles in enhancing expatriate adjustment and performance. This study also suggests training courses to enhance expatriates' CQ so that they are more willing to learn and face cultural challenges to adjust better and achieve higher performance. An updated meta-analysis of 7040 trainees quantitatively examines the links between cross-cultural training (i.e., language pre-training) and three outcomes: adjustment, cultural intelligence, and job performance ([Chenyang, 2021](#)). Since international expatriate manage-

ment is essential to human resource management, this study explores how personality traits and training affect expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment and expatriate performance (Lo & Nguyen, 2023). IHRM should improve expatriate training related to language and cultures, as human capital is a key resource of firms (Marchiori, Rodrigues, Popadiuk, & Mainardes, 2022) and enhances competitiveness and firm performance (Singh, 2019). IHRM's success for multinational enterprises' international business depends on cross-cultural training (Lo & Nguyen, 2023). This research focuses on expatriate employees to analyze their performance and adapt to new environments, aiming to provide insights for human resource management and offer suggestions for improving their living and working conditions in another country. Human resource managers in MNCs need to prepare expatriates and their families to live and work effectively in new cultural environments. Employees should be trained to understand local government regulations, cultural norms, and language differences, and to adapt to local customs such as gift giving and business dining (Cavusgil et al., 2016). Thus, language training significantly impacts employees' workplace behaviors and performance, particularly in international expatriate contexts. It enhances competence and adaptability, making it a crucial human resource tool for multinational enterprises to compete globally and improve their performance (Belitski, Caiazza, & Rodionova, 2020).

Some recommendations are suggested for future study. First, this study adopts a cross-sectional survey design and investigates only one-sided opinions from expatriates. This sample can also include expatriate supervisors, peers, and subordinates. It is thus recommended that future research be longitudinal to confirm this study's findings (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). Second, the samples of this study are very limited because they only include expatriates working for MNCs from Taiwan region in Chinese mainland. However, as mentioned earlier, cultural differences (Earley & Ang, 2003; Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006), cultural distance (Gabel, Dolan, & Cerdin, 2005; Kim et al., 2008), psychological climate (Şahin, 2011), and psychological contracts (Lee, 2010) could moderate the effect of CQ on expatriate adjustment and performance. Expatriates with low CQ who face a host cultural environment highly contrasted with their home environment will tend to achieve lower expatriate performance (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). Individual factors, e.g., achievement self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, previous assignments, and language fluency, could moderate the effect of social support on expatriate performance (Shaffer et al., 1999). Since this study focuses on Asia as a context, it is recommended that future research select samples from different countries with cross-cultural settings, and this could include research in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. These additional efforts will further confirm the validity and generalizability of the current study's findings. Furthermore, further studies comparing the leadership styles of Taiwan region and host areas seem to be more critical and interesting factors in successful expatriate adjustment, expatriate performance, and career development. Indeed, cross-cultural training also needs future investigation to enhance expatriate ad-

justment and performance. Cross-cultural training (i.e., language and host culture) is the most essential factor in improving expatriates' CQ and cultural adjustment (Iskhakova & Ott, 2020). Cross-cultural understanding is key to expatriate success. The expat candidate should tailor the pre-departure training program (i.e., host language, culture, and organizational culture) to the location they are moving to. At a minimum, cross-cultural training should aim to identify the cultural similarities and differences in a destination while effectively adjusting plans to align with the new culture (Lansford, 2022).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix—Questionnaire Design

Cultural intelligence (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004)

Meta-cognitive CQ

- 1) I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
- 2) I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.
- 3) I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.
- 4) I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.

Cognitive CQ

- 1) I am aware of the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.
- 2) I am aware of the legal and economic systems of other cultures.
- 3) I am aware of the rules (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.
- 4) I am aware of the marriage systems of other cultures.
- 5) I am aware of the arts and crafts of other cultures.
- 6) I am aware of the rules for expressing nonverbal behavior in other cultures.

Behavior CQ

- 1) I am a flexible person in culturally diverse situations.
- 2) I am a flexible person in regard to changing my verbal behavior (e.g. accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
- 3) I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
- 4) I am a flexible person in regard to changing my nonverbal behavior when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
- 5) I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.

Motivational CQ

- 1) I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
- 2) I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
- 3) I am confident that I can deal with the stress of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.
- 4) I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.
- 5) I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping situations in a different culture.

Social Support (Lee, Veasna, & Wu, 2013)

Supervisor support

- 1) My supervisor supports me with necessary human resources in my expatriate assignment.
- 2) My supervisor supports me with necessary finances during my expatriation.
- 3) My supervisor cares about my feelings and encourages me.
- 4) My supervisor promotes me when I perform well.

Perceived organizational support

- 1) The organization values my contributions to its well-being.
- 2) My organization shows a great deal of concern for me.
- 3) The organization considers my goals and values.

Expatriate performance (Black & Porter, 1991)

Task performance

- 1) My overall performance during my assignment is good.
- 2) I have good achievement with regard to my work goals.
- 3) I have the capability necessary to effectively complete my tasks.
- 4) I have good quality of performance.

Contextual performance

- 1) I have good ability with regard to getting along with others.
- 2) I keep good relationships with my local co-workers.
- 3) I maintain relationships in and socialize with the locals in my social environment.

Expatriate adjustment (Black & Stephens, 1989)

Working adjustment

- 1) I am adjusted to my job and responsibilities.
- 2) I am a flexible person who can adjust to working with Chinese co-workers.
- 3) I am adjusted to supervising Chinese subordinates.

Interaction adjustment

- 1) I am adjusted to interacting with the Chinese in general.
- 2) I am adjusted to working with foreigners outside the company.