



9th INDES 2020
LIMITLESS MIND:
EMPOWERING INNOVATION THROUGH VISUALIZATION



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The 9th International Innovation, Invention
& Design Competition
INDES2020

17th May – 10th October 2020

A NEW PERSONAL AND WORK CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT MODEL OF MALAYSIAN PROFESSIONAL EXPATRIATES IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The difficulty in adjusting to a new environment is among the issues that contribute to the poor performance of expatriates. What contributes to the success of an individual in a workplace is the psychosocial comfort that is prevalent in the new environment. Diversity of culture, race and religion in an organization is acceptable where there is tolerance. The aim of this study is to develop a new model of cross-cultural work adjustments for professional expatriates in Malaysia. Three stage review of previous studies involving identification of work adjustment elements, cross-cultural elements and conceptualising a proposed expatriate adjustment framework was adopted. The cross-cultural work adjustment model developed is hinged upon three pillars: personal adjustment factor, work adjustment factor and cross-cultural adjustment. The findings of the study revealed that adjusting to the host's national custom or culture, religious practice, and cultural entertainment are among the factors that influence personal and work cross-cultural adjustments of expatriates. Organisations and related agencies could use the findings of the research to take necessary actions to reduce the propensity of professionals leaving their home companies abroad.

Keywords: personal, work adjustment, cross-cultural, professional, construction

1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's number of multinational construction companies has increased from year to year. The rapid growth of Malaysia's economy as well as globalisation which allows Malaysian companies to operate overseas. Spectacular socio-economic development has taken place all around and thriving construction industries are apparent everywhere in the country. Construction is a high employment source in any country. Expatriates in Malaysia with more significant conscientiousness personality fared better in their task and contextual performance. Nevertheless, expatriates who are working abroad, uniquely Malaysian, have faced a cross-cultural adjustment. As a consequence, the feeling of unsatisfactory adjustment leads to poor individual performance resulting from "cross-border assignments". The primary role of an expatriate manager can be thought of as a catalyst that ensures the continuity to retain an organisation. The purpose of the innovation is to identify the new model that contribute to the expatriate adjustment of the individual.

2. FINDINGS

Several studies on cross-cultural relating to expatriate adjustments. The various concept that has been used in determining the comfort and synonymous with the concept of well-being and quality of life (Pinto et al., 2017). Halim, Bakar, & Mohamad (2019) stated that comfort is related to everything contributing to the well-being and convenience of the aspects of life also an improvement of living conditions in inhabited space. Thus, expatriate's adjustment regarding various issues of the host culture environment, such as personal and work condition (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011). Different interpersonal styles used in the host culture reflects the degree of psychological comfort in the host country (Peltokorpi & Ramaswami, 2019). Cultural differences between foreign and local values are inevitable in which expatriates experience challenges. Limited research regarding Malaysian's expatriate, especially in the construction industry working abroad. The study also shows two dimensions influenced the cross-cultural of expatriates.

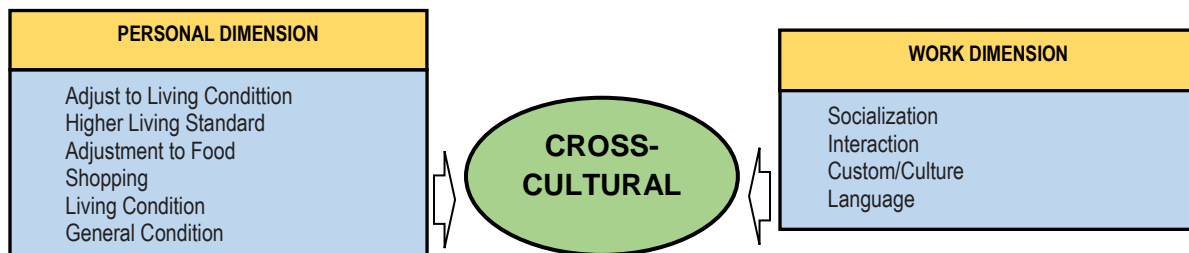


Figure 1. Personal and work cross-cultural adjustment proposed model.

From Figure 1 indicated the personal dimension which includes adjust to living condition, higher living standards, food adjustment, shopping, living condition and general condition. Among the element in general conditions are healthcare facilities and recreational. Work dimension has been another dimension in predicting adjustment as socialization, interaction, custom or culture and language ability with the host country. Even though some of these elements may belong to different categories, there are possibilities that the variables can interact with each other to enable successful adjustment. For example, language ability is very much needed for expatriates (or spouse and children) to communicate with the host. Excellent communication skills will ensure that the expatriate can communicate, interact and perform their job satisfactorily. Expatriates need to make an adjustment of cross-cultural in the host country. To access all the elements in the host country is different while in the home country. Living in a host country is exciting, but, it can also be a challenge if not capable of sustaining living comfortably. Expatriates in abroad who are followed similar daily life in the home country, especially custom and living environment will not be having difficulties to adjustment with the home country.

3. RESEACH METHODOLOGY

The study involved a literature review using relevant journals, articles, proceedings and books. The search is related to expatriate adaptation elements from past studies. Three phases involved in this stage. The first phase was personal elements that influence the expatriate adjustment in the host country. The information in terms of definition, theories, components, and related variables were explored. The second phase was, to classify the work adjustment of expatriates that contribute expatriate adjustments such as socialization, interaction and so forth. Third, the identification conceptual the cross-cultural adjustment in details relating to personal and work adjustment, A review was able to recapitulate the primary elements contributing to cross-cultural adjustment.

4. CONCLUSION

This innovation contributes to the understanding of the cross-cultural adjustment of Malaysian professional during the assignment in the host country. Personal and work adjustment were the crucial elements influence the cross-cultural adaptation abroad. A new framework was identified for application in Malaysia multinational construction industry. It is hoped that can be also accepted in other industries.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Ministry of Higher Education for awarding this FRGS research grant (FRGS/1/2018/SS108/UiTM/02/1).

PAPER PUBLISHED RELATED TO INNOVATION

Four paper have been published related to innovation the paper are:

1. Zainol, H. & Aziz, A. R. A. (2010) Personal Adjustment for expatriate. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(5), 697–709.
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