

**THE ROLE OF CULTURAL DISTANCE ON EXPATRIATE'S
MULTICULTURAL PERSONALITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL
ADJUSTMENT**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Acknowledgements	vi
Abstract	7
1. Introduction	8
2. Literature Review	9
2.1 Cross-cultural Adjustment	10
2.2 Multicultural Personality	12
2.3 Cultural Distance	13
2.4 Ecological Approach	14
3. Methodology	16
3.1 Sampling Frame	16
3.2 Instrumentations	17
4. Results	18
5. Discussion	20
5.1 Multicultural Personality	21
5.2 Cultural Awareness	23
5.3 Cultural Sensitivity	24
5.4 Cross-cultural Adjustment	26
5.5 Research Limitations	28
5.6 Research Implications	29
6. Conclusion	30
References	31

The Role of Cultural Distance on Expatriate's Multicultural Personality and Cross-cultural Adjustment

Abstract

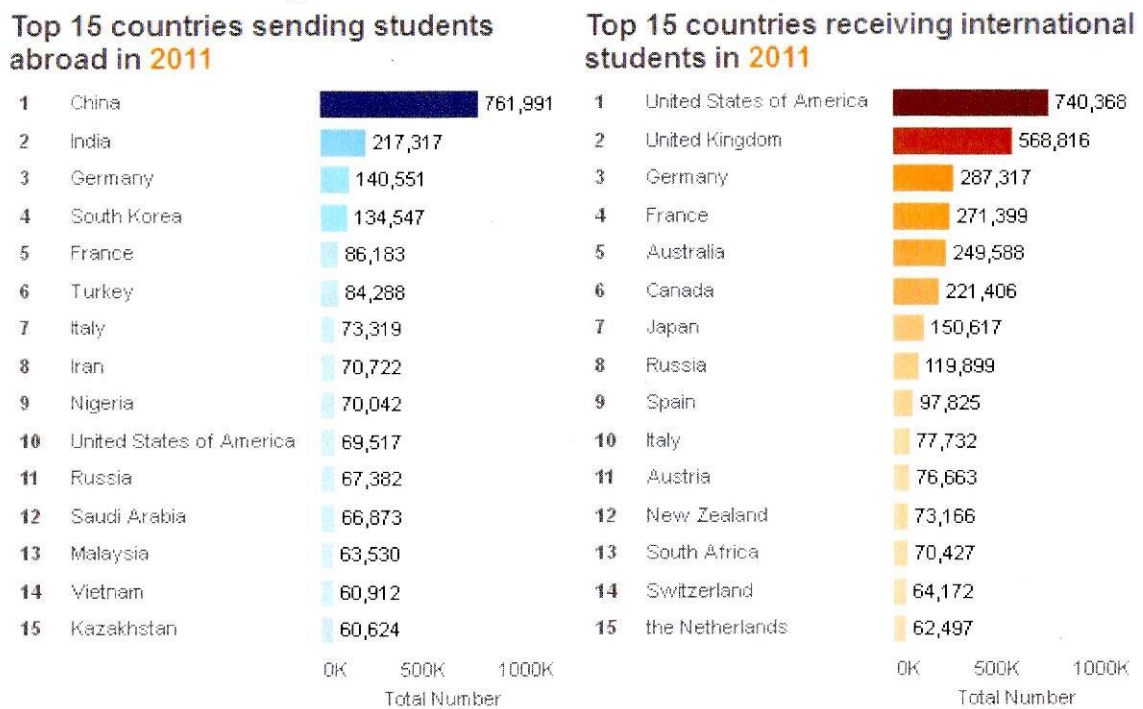
Different parts of the world are offering sojourners' with a variety of socio-cultural experiences. The inability to understand the variation triggers psychological, physical or behavioural difficulties, maladjustment or misunderstanding. Cross-cultural underestimation is the root of intercultural resistance, stereotyping, ethnocentrism and racism sentiments among sojourners. The online survey was conducted in the present study to comprehend the role of multicultural personality traits on sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment. With snowball method and a purposive sampling, 55.5% of the response rates were obtained among Malaysian sojourners in New Zealand. Basically, the manifestation of self and other's affection, behavioural and contextual variations amplify the rationalisation and contradictory nature of cultural variation. As highlighted, social initiative is a sole important multicultural personality trait which is perceived as vital to the success of sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment abroad. However, cultural distance is found not statistically significant has a moderation effect towards the relationship between multicultural personality traits and cross-cultural adjustment among sojourners. The implication of the study is discussed.

Keywords: International Human Resource Development, Cultural Variations, Autoethnographic

1. INTRODUCTION

International mobility challenged a person’s physical, psychological, socio-cultural and financial fitness. Reported by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the number of international students, estimated account of 4.5 million enrolled outside of their country of citizenship as in 2011 (Epnuffic, 2015). As shown in Figure 1, Asian (especially China, India and South Korea) is the leading sources (53%) of international students, especially to the ‘white’ countries (UK, Australia and Canada). Notably, there are 63530 Malaysian studying abroad and about 3137 students reported enrolling in the New Zealand tertiary institutions in 2011 (Epnuffic, 2015).

Figure 1. International Students Mobility Flows.



Source: OECD, 2011

In addition, referring to the Worldwide ERC® the 2014 Transfer Volume & Cost Survey, an average of \$17 million was spent by a company to relocate the expatriates overseas; 37% is the new hires and the rests are current employees (WERC, 2015). The figure indicates that it is a financial implication to the international mobility. The returned of investment (ROI) obtained by the company by sending expatriate oversea

is worthy if the international missions are accomplished. The country benefits from those who have successfully graduated and returned home, especially those who are government-funded. These students bring home beneficial knowledge and expertise trained abroad.

Sojourning success depends on sojourner's personal competencies in facing various politics, economics and socio-cultural challenges experienced overseas. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to empirically examine the socio-cultural influences on sojourner's effective cross-cultural adjustment. In particular, cross-cultural adjustment refers to the successful adaptation and acculturation processes which encompassing the psychological and behavioural responses to ecological, socio-political and cultural context (Berry, 2010). It is a reflection on sojourner's affective, cognitive and behavioural discrepancy to signify the changes experienced in different socio-cultural environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Sufficient rationalization and interactive adjustment are vital in reducing socio-cultural difficulties on sojourner's daily living, working and interaction with others' in the visited country. In addition, cultural distance is the extension of the differences between sojourner's home culture and social-cultural environment of the host location. Cultural distance is perceived to have contributed to the adjustment ability and adaptability while sojourning abroad. Hence, the present study which is quantitatively undertaken, is able to predict the moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between multicultural personality and cross-cultural adjustment among sojourners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cross-cultural difficulties, ethnocentrism, racism and stereotyping occurred due to misinterpretation of the rigorous spectrum nature of the culture. In order to prove a beneficial international mobility, sojourners entail to make essential adaptation by integrating a micro- and macro-cultural appealing, and react towards the differences and changes. Sojourners are described in expatriation literature (refer, Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Shafer & Luk, 2005) as and international travellers that include asylum seekers, expatriate managers, immigrants, missionaries, peacemakers, refugees,