

Teachers and their international relocation: The effect of self-esteem and pay satisfaction on adjustment and outcome variables

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This is the second of two papers investigating the adjustment process in a designated group of expatriates, (teachers), who have severed ties with their home country and employer. In the first paper we examined the effect of self-efficacy and flexibility within this adjustment process, revealing the significance of self-efficacy but failing to show a pronounced relationship between flexibility and adjustment (von Kirchenheim and Richardson, 2005). In this particular study, again based on existing literature, the value of self-esteem and pay satisfaction on the adjustment process was explored. Again, it was hypothesised that adjustment would result in reduced turnover intention, increased life satisfaction, and higher job satisfaction. Based on our findings, there would now appear to be some clear implications for individuals and organisations involved in the expatriation process. More specifically, from a personal point of view, there is evidence to suggest a direct relationship between specific personal characteristics, pay satisfaction, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. In essence, those who score high on scales which measure self-efficacy and pay satisfaction would appear to be the ones most likely to find success within the international relocation process. Thus, from an organisational perspective, the accurate measurement of some of these identified intrinsic and extrinsic factors may provide valuable information to the employer regarding those applicants that have the greatest probability of adjustment. Given that both studies looked exclusively at educators in its sampling, the implications for faculties of education, who are seeing increasing numbers of their graduates accept postings in foreign jurisdictions, are profound.

Expatriate, adjustment, relocation, self esteem, pay satisfaction

BACKGROUND

There has been increasing interest in the issue of expatriate **adjustment** over the recent past (Luthans and Farner, 2002; Selmer, 2001; Wang, 2002). This is due primarily to the incremental importance of international trading, cross-national manufacturing and the emergence of a global economy (Adler, 1991; Johnston, 2004; New York Times, 2002), all resulting in a dramatic increase in the expatriation of employees (Dodd, 2003; Harvey et al., 1999; Harzing, 1995; Windham International and the National Foreign Trade Council Survey, 1997). This is especially profound within education where ever increasing numbers of foreign countries are regularly

seeking out the services of university trained teachers, (particularly those trained in English speaking countries), in an effort to give their young citizens the necessary skills required to compete effectively in this newly emerging borderless economy (Brown, 2004; Richardson and Richardson, 2002-2006). As one popular teacher recruitment and training site specifically reports, “teachers work in virtually every country in the world. They probably have more choice about where to work than any other profession” (Norwood English, 2006). With respect to this view, although there can be little doubt that employment opportunities now know no national boundaries, conversely, current research in the field reports a relatively high failure rate within these expatriate assignments (Black, 1988; Black and Gregersen, 1999; Down, 1978; Tung, 1981), education seems no exception. There has, however, been very little published research devoted exclusively to the study of educators serving in foreign destinations.

Nonetheless, for the employee in general, across all disciplines, it is evident that adjustment following foreign relocation is fraught with tremendous amounts of anxiety, stress, and pitfalls (Harvey, 1983). Restated, many expatriates, when first introduced to a completely foreign environment or culture, initially experience an intense period where they have to, at minimum, psychologically recalibrate (Furnham and Bochner, 1986). Although the term ‘adjustment’ is used frequently in the literature (Adler, 1991; Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall, 1992), there does not appear to be a consistent or universal definition of it. However, with this point being conceded, when it comes to measuring cross-cultural adjustment, the criterion of whether or not an individual returns prematurely from his or her overseas assignment is the one most frequently applied (Baker and Ivancevich, 1971; Desatnick and Bennett, 1978; Lanier, 1979; Misa and Fabricatore, 1979; Tung, 1988). By utilising this particular perspective, studies overwhelmingly indicate that between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of all expatriate employees ultimately terminate their employment before their contract officially expires, with rates ranging from 25 per cent to 40 per cent when associated with a developed country, to as high as 70 per cent when associated with a developing country (Buckley and Brooke, 1992; Shay and Tracey, 1997). However, premature termination of contract may not be the only reliable indicator of overall adjustment. For example, several other studies have tried to measure the true ‘effectiveness’ of expatriate employees in their overseas assignments, and have discovered that a statistically significant number, although not returning to their countries of origin prematurely, are nevertheless viewed as being completely ineffective in their postings, with their overall assignments being considered ultimately as failures (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Copeland and Louis, 1985; Naumann, 1993).

The authors of *Global Assignments, Successfully Expatriating and Repatriating International Managers* (Black et al., 1992), devote an entire chapter to the issue of cross-cultural adjustment. Their discussion centers on the issue of ‘culture shock’. This theme was also taken up by Oberg (1960), where he describes a process whereby a new culture is rejected in favour of a very positive review of, and desire for the familiar. Similarly, Hofstede (1983; 1980) reviews some of the significant differences in work-related values between cultures and their effect on global assignments. In this work, ‘adjustment’ remains broken into a number of different factors and subsequent measures. As might be expected, much of this early research in the field focuses on aspects of living, such as food, transportation systems, and daily customs. However, more recently, adjustment is filtered through a more complex paradigm, being defined and described by some as consisting of three very distinct but related factors (Black et al., 1992); adjustment to the job, adjustment to interacting with host-country nationals, and finally, adjustment to the general nonwork environment.

Other research, concerning adjustment, has further divided it into two main temporal sections (Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991). The first is called ‘anticipatory adjustment’ and refers to the expectations that the individual forms about the new culture and assignment. These expectations can be based on factual information such as knowledge acquired through reading and

training, or through personal beliefs and wishes. It is generally conceived that the more accurate the expectational set, the smoother the adjustment will be. The second temporal section proposed by Black et al. (1991) is the 'post-arrival' or 'in-country factor' adjustment. Of importance here is the process that takes place when the expatriate actually arrives in the new country, again, particularly as it relates to the individual and his or her expectations. In essence, it is believed that the degree to which expectations are confirmed or disconfirmed, greatly impacts on adjustment. Louis (1980) addressed this issue for 'newcomers' in general, and described it as the difference between expectations and reality. Her theory suggested that negative surprises detracted from successful socialisation or adjustment. Both of these temporal sections are further subdivided into individual factors, job factors, organisational factors, and non-work factors.

What is evident in the literature is that there are numerous definitions and subsequent measures for the construct of 'adjustment.' It is important, therefore, to define the term in a way that incorporates many of the definitions previously used and studied, while at the same time lending itself favourably to the specific purposes of this particular study. The following then is the specific definition of adjustment utilised for this study: **Adjustment is the person's ability to function effectively, personally and vocationally, in the new environment.**

With very little exception, the majority of published research within this general domain has focused on individuals moving overseas for work with a parent company or on those who have been formally recruited by a home country organisation for an overseas assignment (for example, the Peace Corps or CIDA here in North America). The greatest percentage of this research would seem to involve primarily North Americans moving abroad to represent a multi-national parent company. The literature, then, does not adequately address the issue of how a specific sub-group, (namely teachers who resign from their current employment to accept overseas jobs), adjust to their new environments. Thus, this research is an attempt to address this quite apparent void.

INTRODUCTION TO PRESENT STUDY AND HYPOTHESES

Hypothetical Antecedents

The present study has been designed to measure adjustment in individuals who have willingly left employment in their home country to seek out opportunities within the educational sector in a foreign jurisdiction. Relying on the proposed definition of adjustment cited directly above, it is necessary to measure personal attributes and examine their relationship to certain outcomes associated with subjects who have adjusted effectively to their new environment. Some literature (for example, Sayegh and Lasry, 1993) suggests that it is proper adjustment that enables the individual to function optimally in the new environment. Reciprocally, successful adjustment is likely to result in a general sense of well-being in both the world of work and in the private life of the individual. The causal relationships are not clear.

Although self-esteem has long been known to play a significant role in education in general (Davies and Brember, 1999; Erikson, 1968; Hansford and Hattie, 1982; Katz and Chard, 1989; King et al., 2002; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1990), and in the chemistry of the truly exceptional educator in particular (Allinder, 1994; Dietzel, 2006; Dewar, 2002; King and Peart, 1992; King, Warren, and Peart, 1988; Lamborn et al., 1991; Miller, 1997; Roy, 1987), its influence within the expatriate adjustment dynamic has also not gone unnoticed. For example, in a very broad way, specific traits of character have consistently been found to be relevant to adjustment in expatriate communities (Caligiuri, 2000; Costa, McCrae, and Dye, 1991; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). Trying new foods and engaging in different hobbies or sporting activities is often an expatriate necessity because the familiar is inaccessible. Hence, an attitude of open-mindedness would appear to play a significant role in moderating the stress sometimes associated with culture shock. Likewise, some authors (Black et

al., 1992), quoting research by Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) and Hawes and Kealey (1981), imply that expatriates (individuals, spouses, and families) who are generally 'willing' to make accommodations with respect to dealing with unfamiliar or different experiences are also the ones most likely to make the smoothest of transitions. Similarly, Caligiuri and Jacobs (1993) and Tung (1981) found that individuals who are open to new cultures, able to get along with people of different backgrounds, and capable of being effective in a variety of situations, ultimately, have the capacity to adjust much better. As Konopaske and Werner more succinctly put it, "in a global assignment context, researchers have identified several personality characteristics and have proposed that such factors can influence expatriate success" (2002, p. 409); with openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness appearing very high on the list.

With direct reference to the concept of self-esteem playing a role within the expatriate experience, Dowling and Schuler (1990) propose that it should be, at minimum, seriously explored. They suggest that individuals possessing high self-esteem are more likely to become involved in behaviours that strengthen overall 'mental hygiene', allowing them, for example, to replace pleasurable home culture activities with parallel substitutes in the host culture. According to Dowling and Schuler (1990), individuals with high self-esteem and high self-efficacy are seen to persist in attempting to learn new behaviours. More specifically, it would appear that expatriates who are high in self-esteem and self-efficacy are also the ones who are persistent in learning and imitating the appropriate behaviours of the host country, which then sets in motion a process which leads directly to adjustment. Consequently, these individuals are less likely to become discouraged when compared to those with low self-esteem and low self-efficacy (Black et al., 1991; Dowling and Schuler, 1990). Black et al., (1992) and Black and Mendenhall (1990) addressed the issue of expatriate adjustment through the application of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). This theory states that learning takes place through the use of four central elements: attention, retention, reproduction, and incentives. One of the main arguments of this theory is that gradual modelling of behaviour is more effective than modelling of only the final or target behaviour. Individuals with high self-esteem and high self-efficacy are seen to persist in attempting to learn new behaviours when compared to those with low self-esteem and low self-efficacy. It is surmised that these same individuals will be more willing to change mental and behavioural patterns and consequently, adjust successfully to their new environment. As Baumeister et al. suggest (2003), at minimum, high self esteem may provide a great benefit to individuals merely because of its incredible capacity to move people to work harder and persist longer in the face of adversity.

Further, as might be expected, one cannot look at international relocation and overall adjustment without, at some point, examining the issue of remuneration or pay satisfaction within this whole dynamic because it is consistently cited as having some considerable influence on both job satisfaction and turnover intention (Hills, Bergman and Scarpello, 1994; Milkovich And Bloom, 1998; Milkovich and Newman, 1999; Townsend, Scott and Markham, 1990). In short, pay as it relates directly to employment, does seem to matter in the attracting, motivating, and retaining global assignees.

In summary, in consulting the literature, self-esteem and pay satisfaction would appear to substantially assist, expatriates in the overall adjustment process. Improved adjustment, in turn, should result in higher life satisfaction, greater job satisfaction, and decreased turnover intention. The following then, are the six hypotheses investigated within the confines this particular study.

- Hypothesis 1 suggests that **individuals with high self-esteem will be better adjusted.**

- Hypothesis 2 states that **individuals with higher levels of pay satisfaction will be better adjusted.**
- Studies have clearly demonstrated that adjusted individuals grow to not only enjoy their foreign assignments, thereby completing their overseas contracts, but are also more productive in the process. Hypothesis 3 then, suggests that **adjustment predicts job satisfaction.** Quite naturally, following on from this, Hypothesis 4 states that **adjustment predicts turnover intention.**
- Hypothesis 5 is predicated on the perceived permeability between life and work stress (Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1992). In the context of the present study, this may play an even more significant role due to the fact that employees have, in most instances, left a job in their home country to join a new employer in their new country. This suggests that work and non-work adjustment may result in differing levels of well-being and life satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 5 states that **adjustment predicts overall life satisfaction.**
- Hypothesis 6 is based on the idea that individual differences predict adjustment and that adjustment, in turn, predicts certain outcomes. Adjustment is believed to act as a mediator between the two predictor variables and the three outcome variables. Hence, Hypothesis 6 states that **adjustment mediates the relationship between the antecedent and outcome variables.**

METHOD

Procedure

Permission was sought and granted by the Ministry of Education and the Education Department of a small island Caribbean state, to survey all teachers employed by the host government in the public school system. In order to collect all information before expatriate employees would formalise their requests to renew or terminate their contracts in the following year, all data were collected over a two week period in late fall. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the authors directly. In total, 196 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, an effective sample of 184 usable and complete surveys were obtained for a return rate of 94 per cent.

Participants

The **sample** consisted of 56 expatriates from North America and the United Kingdom, and 128 teachers from other Caribbean countries. The mean age for the expatriates was the 40-49 year age group. There were 56 males and 126 females with two missing responses. In order to ensure homogeneity of working conditions, the total sample consisted of only those individuals who spent more than 50 per cent of their working time in a teaching capacity which excluded most school administrators and support staff.

Measures

Self-esteem was measured with a series of eight items adapted from the Jackson Personality Inventory (1976). The adaptation allowed for a response format that was appropriate for a Likert-type scale format.

Pay satisfaction was measured with a shortened version of the Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ; Heneman and Schwab, 1985). This scale consisted of the eight highest loading items from the factor analysis performed by Judge (1993).

Adjustment was measured with a scale developed for this project. It initially consisted of 20 items. These items were generated following interviews for a realistic job preview exercise (von Kirchenheim, 1992). A sample item is "Although I do not necessarily agree with the politics, I accept the way things are done here."

Job satisfaction was measured with a five-item scale similar to that used by Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992). A sample item is "I am very dissatisfied with this job," (reverse scored).

Turnover intention was based on a four-item scale. Three of the items were based on the scale used in the Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) study. The other item addressed whether expatriate employees intended to renew their contract or terminate their employment with the government. A sample item from the scale is, "In general, I intend to stay in this job for as long as possible."

Life satisfaction was measured with the five item Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985). This scale was designed to measure global life satisfaction (Pavot and Diener, 1993). An item from this scale is "I am satisfied with my life."

Psychometric Properties

The items for the adjustment scale were compiled through an item writing exercise. The initial alpha on the twenty item scale was 0.49, so it lacked the necessary level of reliability. Consequently, the scale was factor analysed using an exploratory principal component factor analysis procedure with a varimax rotation of factors. Extracting 10 items from a two factor solution, with a minimum factor loading of 4, resulted in a revised and shortened scale with an internal consistency of 0.74. Four items addressed work related adjustment while the other six items measured non-work adjustment, thus meeting the criteria for the definition of adjustment.

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations and intercorrelations between the measures. Reliabilities of the measures are also presented in this table. As can be seen, the measures meet an accepted standard of alphas at 0.70 or higher.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6
Self Esteem	28.29	5.87	(0.77)					
Pay Satisfaction	22.27	6.93	-0.06	(0.89)				
Adjustment	39.08	5.91	0.12	0.15*	(0.74)			
Life Satisfaction	16.33	4.06	0.21*	0.13	0.36*	(0.73)		
Job Satisfaction	18.24	4.36	0.14	0.27*	0.53*	0.57*	(0.84)	
Turnover intention	9.02	4.08	-0.04	-0.21*	-0.53*	-0.36*	-0.70*	(0.82)

Note: * denotes correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$. Correlations with values $\Rightarrow 0.25$ are significant at $p > 0.001$. Coefficient alphas are reported in the diagonals, in parentheses.

RESULTS

The first hypothesis stated that high self-esteem would correlate with better adjustment. This was not supported by the data ($r=0.12$, $p=0.09$). There is however, a significant correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction ($r= 0.21$, $p<0.05$).

The second hypothesis stated that pay satisfaction would be associated with increased adjustment. This hypothesis received support ($r=0.15$, $p<0.05$). As would be expected, pay satisfaction was also correlated with job satisfaction and negatively correlated with turnover intention. There was, however, no relationship between pay satisfaction and life satisfaction.

In order to ensure that there were no suppressors, an overall regression was performed. Both hypothetical antecedents were regressed onto adjustment. No evidence of suppression was found in this analysis.

The next set of hypotheses dealt with the outcomes of positive adjustment. Specifically, the third hypothesis stated that adjustment would be associated with increased job satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported ($r=0.53$, $p<0.01$). The fourth hypothesis, stating that adjustment would negatively correlate with turnover intentions, was also supported ($r=-0.53$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, the fifth hypothesis was supported, stating that overall life satisfaction would be associated with adjustment ($r=0.36$, $p<0.01$).

The next step was to use hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Cohen and Cohen, 1983) to test the overall model (Hypothesis 6), that adjustment would act as a mediator. Table 2 shows the results of hierarchical regression with adjustment operating as a mediator for pay satisfaction, for the outcomes of job satisfaction, life satisfaction and turnover intention, respectively. As some significant relationship between the predictors and adjustment must exist, it was decided that only the variables that fit the overall model by meeting the precondition of correlating at a significant level, would be retained at this step. This effectively eliminated self-esteem from the equation.

Table 2. Results of the first hierarchical regression

Variables	Beta	R2	F Change	B
Job Satisfaction				
Pay Satisfaction	0.18		0.28	
Adjustment	0.46	0.193	52.56	0.34
Life Satisfaction				
Pay Satisfaction	0.08		0.14	
Adjustment	0.32	0.091	19.29	0.22
Turnover Intention				
Pay Satisfaction	-0.13		-0.22	
Adjustment	-0.29	0.074	16.07	-0.20

A test of mediation is indicated in this model as the hypothesis suggests that adjustment adds to our understanding of the relationship between the predictor and outcome variables in the expected direction. Preliminary support and evidence of at least partial mediation for the model is indicated if there is significant change at each step of the equation. In order to test for full mediation a second step is required. The factors are entered into the equation in reverse order. Evidence of full mediation is provided if the predictive factors at step two do not significantly add to the variance explained by adjustment. As can be seen in Table 2, there was significant change at each step of the equation. Table 3 presents the regression results when the factors have been entered in reverse order, with Adjustment entered at the first step and Pay Satisfaction entered at the second step. These results indicate that for both Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention there is only partial support for the mediation model.

Table 3. Results of the second hierarchical regression, performed in reverse order

Variables	Beta	R2	F Change	B
Job Satisfaction				
Adjustment	0.53	0.284	72.13	0.39
Pay Satisfaction	0.13		0.20	
Life Satisfaction				
Adjustment	0.36	0.131	27.37	0.25
Pay Satisfaction	0.05		0.09	
Turnover Intention				
Adjustment	-0.35	0.125	26.10	-0.24
Pay Satisfaction	-0.10		-0.18	

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the adjustment process in a designated group of expatriates who have severed ties with their home country and employer. Based on existing literature, the strength of self-esteem and pay satisfaction in the adjustment process was

investigated. It was hypothesised that adjustment would result in reduced turnover intention, increased life satisfaction, and higher job satisfaction.

The results provide partial support for the proposed model, but also provide additional findings that are of interest. As expected, there is evidence of a relationship between pay satisfaction and other job-related factors, namely job satisfaction and turnover intention. All of the outcome factors correlate positively with adjustment. It should be noted that the pay satisfaction measure used is multi-dimensional. Clearly, then, there is a relationship between perceptions of pay and benefits, overall adjustment, and other work related factors.

As was documented in our previous study on the international relocation of teachers and their adjustment, a surprise finding to us at the time was that flexibility was without profound influence within the overall process (von Kirckenheim and Richardson, 2005), unlike several other studies which found flexibility to be quite predictive of future adjustment (Gentile et al., 1993; Tung, 1991). We highlighted a proposed explanation for this discrepancy as potentially being found in the fact that the measures used in designing our specific research model were not appropriate for determining the type of flexibility required in the particular international setting under study. In review, the Caribbean country studied, especially its Education Department, is world renowned for adhering to a very rigid set of standards that are overwhelmingly Christian based. Hence, deviation from the standard is very much discouraged. In fact, as we noted, within this international setting, inflexibility may be of value and actually assist in the adjustment process.

The same sense of surprise, as noted directly above where flexibility is specifically explored, also holds true with respect to our present study, where self-esteem, (at least where a large group of educators is concerned), does not appear to have any measurable degree of sway. Although a relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction is found, this correlation is tenuous at best and does not fit the overall model. Although we believe that self-esteem may indeed help individuals feel good about themselves, it does not appear to, at least in any substantial way, contribute to their overall ability in being able to adapt successfully. Restated, although high self-esteem may assist individuals in coping effectively with the negative stress of international relocation (Baumeister et al., 2003), it does not appear to assist them in their actual adjustment. To utilise the 'stress inoculation' model advanced by Meichenbaum (1975), self-esteem may protect individuals from experiencing the dysfunctional aspects of stress associated with relocation, but not actually aid in adjustment. However, it just may be that the results, at least where self-esteem is concerned, may be vastly understated, again, for reasons that are solidly anchored in the uniqueness of both the international setting, and the particular sampling being profiled. For example, to extend a similar logic, such as that applied above where previous (flexibility) results were briefly discussed, the culture, which is Christian based, may actually prevent or limit responses that advance a view of 'self' that might in any way be perceived as being superior to those of the next person, thereby perhaps skewing the final analysis.

Limitations of Present Research

Clearly this study was conducted on a very homogeneous population. The subjects had relatively the same education, identical job descriptions, worked under very similar conditions, and lived in the same non-work environment. Consequently, it is difficult to make generalisations to other groups. It would be valuable to conduct similar studies not only with other organisational groups, but also in different geographical settings. Similarly, a design that does not rely solely on self-report may add considerably to the validity of the findings. This study also does not specifically measure whether or not expatriates are successful in their jobs as educators. It may also have been helpful to have controlled for job tenure. Finally, although we noted, empirically, some subtle differences in the responses from foreign nationals from North America, the United Kingdom, and other countries in the Caribbean, we were prevented from formally or officially collating these

data in this particular way due to constraints placed on the survey design and analysis by the host country. As mentioned in our previous study, this may have significant influence, particularly in getting more accurate measurements in the flexibility and self-esteem domains, as many educators of Caribbean extraction come from countries that share a similar heritage and tradition. As a result, future research needs to match clearly country of origin with specific response, which we believe can more powerfully highlight the role played by self-efficacy, flexibility, self-esteem, and pay satisfaction in the adjustment experiences of expatriate teachers.

Practical Implications

Despite the limitations of this study, and the one which preceded it (von Kirchenheim and Richardson, 2005), there are some clear implications for individuals and organisations involved in the expatriation process. Of paramount importance, appear to be the issue of self-efficacy and pay satisfaction. From a personal point of view, those who score high on scales which measure self-efficacy, and those who perceive their international endeavours as being rewarded in a beneficial fashion, appear to be the ones most likely to find success within the international relocation process. From an organisational perspective, the accurate measurement of some of these studied factors may provide valuable information to the employer regarding those applicants that have the greatest probability of adjustment; because with little exception, as has been previously demonstrated, maladjustment prevents even the most technically or professionally qualified employees from working to their full potential.

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