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Antecedents of expatriates' time to proficiency: does home country  
culture have an effect?

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## **ANTECEDENTS OF EXPATRIATES' TIME TO PROFICIENCY: DOES HOME COUNTRY CULTURE HAVE AN EFFECT?**

### **Abstract:**

The time required by expatriates to become proficient in their new positions is important to both employers and employees. This study extends research on expatriate adjustment by examining organizational antecedents of expatriates' Time to Proficiency (TTP). Specifically, we examine the direct and moderating effects of Home Country Culture on TTP, which have not been previously explored. Our results show that TTP mean scores vary significantly across home country cultures. Results using Partial Least Squares also demonstrate that organisational antecedents of expatriate TTP and their relative importance vary across home country cultures. Contributions and managerial implications are discussed.

**Key words:** expatriation, expatriate time to proficiency, adjustment, culture of origin, home country culture, organizational antecedents

# **ANTECEDENTS OF EXPATRIATES' TIME TO PROFICIENCY; DOES HOME COUNTRY CULTURE HAVE AN EFFECT?**

## **INTRODUCTION**

International assignment issues figure prominently in the international human resource management (IHRM) agenda, owing to their importance in the global coordination and integration of resources and operations (Björkman and Stahl, 2006: p.8). After a retrenchment in the numbers of people sent abroad by their organizations following the economic crisis that began in 2008, consultants soon reported more firms expanding their use of expatriates (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2011; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2010). Given the high cost of expatriation, there is pressure to ensure that they are managed in a cost-effective manner. That implies that they should adjust to their new environment and become proficient there as quickly as possible (Sinangil and Ones, 1997).

There is an extensive literature on expatriate adjustment, and this literature largely assumes that adjustment equates with performance on the job, though few if any scholars have directly examined this issue (Thomas and Lazarova, 2006; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr and Christiansen, 2003). A number of conceptual and methodological issues contribute to the view that the adjustment–performance relationship is equivocal (Thomas, 1998; Festing and Maletzky, 2011). Moreover, what literature there is on expatriate success (see, eg, Caligiuri and Tung, 1999; Caligiuri and Day, 2000; Shaffer, Ferzandi, Harrison, Gregersen and Black, 2003) is largely blind to what may be two significant factors in the process of creating and sustaining job performance amongst the expatriate group. First, there are the effects of time (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hippler, Brewster and Haslberger, 2015; Torbiorn, 1982). The longer an expatriate stays in the country the better their understanding of the need to adjust and the greater their knowledge of the country (Haslberger, Brewster and Hippler, 2013). Second, there is the impact of the home country culture (HCC) - the culture of the country of origin: Do expatriates from any specific culture adapt better and quicker than those from another culture to a specific country, and does the HCC have an impact on expatriates' adjustment antecedents?

In terms of time, expatriation has generally been the subject of cross-sectional studies (Hechanova et al., 2003). Hence, many studies of expatriate adjustment and the few studies of expatriate performance are limited in what they can say about the effect of time. In practice, however, even if the vaunted 'U-curve' of adjustment is not necessarily found in practice (Janssens, 1995; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005), there is a significant longitudinal effect in the process of expatriate adjustment. In any role, people become more capable with time spent (Pinder and Schroeder, 1987; Pinder et Das, 1979). It seems likely that this will apply with extra force where the individual is adjusting not only to a new role, but also a new environment and culture (see, eg, Janssens, 1995; Selmer and Fenner, 2009; Waxin 2006; Waxin, Roger and Chandon, 1997).

Pinder and Schroeder (1987) used the notion of perceived time to proficiency (TTP) and its antecedents in the context of national transfers. Following March and Simon (1958), Pinder and al. (1979, 1987), and Waxin et al. (1997), we conceive of TTP as the length of time that elapses between an individual's move into a position and the ascendancy of that individual to a performance level with which they are satisfied. Proficiency in a job requires competencies both in the official demands of that job and in its informal, social demands (Barnard, 1938). With few exceptions (Waxin et al., 1997, Waxin, 2000) researchers have given little attention to the concept of TTP for corporate expatriates.

The implications of the TTP of an expatriate will be theoretical and practical, for both employers and expatriates. For the employer, during the adjustment period, the total expenses incurred exceed the total contribution that the expatriate can make to the organization (Pinder and Das, 1979; Waxin et al., 1997). Only once the employee is proficient are they likely to add value to the organization. From the individual's perspective, adjustment is a factor of job satisfaction and psychological well-being (Aryee and Stone, 1996). If the new job's demands are different enough from the former job, the decrease in job performance and the feelings of frustration can be especially pronounced (Brett, 1984). It is therefore also important from the employee's viewpoint to become proficient as quickly as possible.

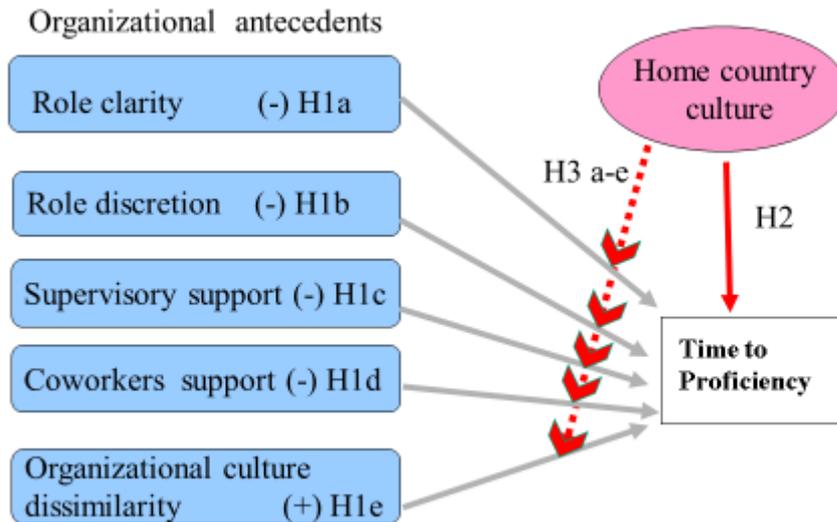
The literature on expatriate adjustment also shows a paucity of research on the effects of the cultural 'baggage' that the expatriate brings from their home country. Parker and McEvoy (1993) reported that culture novelty explains as much variance in adjustment as other organizational and individual variables, but argued that additional research was needed. In Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., (2005)'s meta-analysis, the relationships between culture novelty and expatriate adjustment were negative and significant. To date no research has investigated the moderator effect of the HCC on the relation between expatriates' TTP and its antecedents.

This paper seeks to extend our understanding of the expatriate experience using the TTP concept, its organisational antecedents, and HCC. We begin by presenting a conceptual model of TTP and the study's hypotheses. This is followed by a discussion of methodology and findings. The paper concludes with implications for researchers and practitioners, study limitations and opportunities for future research.

## **CONCEPTUALIZATION AND HYPOTHESES**

A review of the extant literature suggests that there are three major ('classical') categories of factors influencing TTP following expatriation: organizational, individual and contextual factors. In this paper, we focus on the organisational antecedents of TTP. In addition to the focus on the time dimension, we contribute to understanding by introducing a contextual factor, the HCC. Our model, which forms the basis for our literature review, is shown in Figure One.

**Figure 1: Research model**



### ***A. Organizational Antecedents of TTP***

Organizational variables comprise two job-related variables (role clarity and role discretion), two organizational social support factors (supervisory and co-workers' social support), and organizational culture dissimilarity.

*Role clarity:* Role clarity refers to the level of certainty surrounding role expectations. For expatriates, lack of clarity increases uncertainty upon arrival in the new host organization, and may also engender misunderstandings between the parent company and the expatriate during later stages of the assignment (Aycan, 1997). Role clarity can lead to a faster TTP for national transferees (Pinder and Schroeder, 1987). Large-scale meta-analytic studies have empirically confirmed that for expatriates there is a positive association between job clarity and work adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005, Hechanova et al., 2003). Therefore, we advance the following hypothesis:

*(H1a) Role clarity shortens expatriate TTP*

*Role discretion:* Role discretion allows individuals to adjust their job and setting to themselves rather than adapting themselves to the job (Brett, 1980). In the light of previous work that has demonstrated a positive relationship between role discretion and work adjustment (Aryee and Stone, 1996; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Hechanova et al., 2003), we expect that:

*(H1b) Role discretion shortens expatriate TTP*

*Social support:* Support is a physical, emotional, or symbolic contribution increasing individuals' net stockpile of emotional capacity to cope with change (Walter and Marks, 1981). The literature on career and career transitions attests to the role of interpersonal support in removing uncertainties and generally making things easier for a newcomer in a strange work setting (Brett, 1984; Pinder and Schroeder, 1987). Supervisory and co-worker support reduced the TTP of transferees (Pinder and Schroeder, 1987; Toh and DeNisi, 2005). Hence:

*(H1c) Supervisory support shortens expatriate TTP*

*(H1d) Co-workers' support shortens expatriate TTP*

*Perceived organizational culture dissimilarity:* Perceived dissimilarity between home-country and host-country organizations is a source of uncertainty and stresses (Parker and McEvoy, 1993, Waxin and Chandon, 2003; Waxin, 2006) and thus is expected to relate positively to expatriates TTP:

*(H1e) Perceived organizational culture dissimilarity lengthens expatriate TTP*

### ***B. TTP differences across home country culture***

We know that there are differences between countries in their values and their cultures and that, unlike institutional differences, an individual's national culture travels with them. Since nearly all studies of culture conflate culture with 'country' (these studies assume a similarity of culture within the country and distinctiveness between countries), and we want to use those studies to explain TTP, we ground our second hypothesis in these assumptions.

Research into the relationship between cultural distance and expatriate adjustment has been growing (see eg Colakoglu and Caligiuri, 2008; Dupuis *et al.*, 2008; Tanure *et al.*, 2009) and, generally, there is confirmation of the intuitive assumption that the more different the host culture is from the HCC, the more demanding the adjustment will be (Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun and Lepak, 2005; Van Vianen *et al.*, 2004; Waxin, 2004, 2006). However, results are inconsistent. Some researchers have argued that as problems in culturally close countries are often not recognized, it can be just as difficult to adjust to a similar as a dissimilar culture (see eg Selmer, 2007; Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005; Wang, 2001). Other researchers find no relationship between culture novelty and work adjustment (Kraimer, Wayne and Jaworski, 2001; Shaffer, Ferzandi, Harrison, Gregersen, and Black, 1999; Selmer, 2006). Overall, however, the balance of the literature suggests that cultural distance makes adjustment harder (see Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, (2005)'s meta-analysis).

In the management field the most influential studies of culture are those by Hofstede (1991, 2001; Hofstede and Minkov, 2010) and the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) team (Chhokar, Brodbeck and House, 2008; House *et al.*, 2004). Culture can be conceptualized as 'shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations' (House *et al.*, 2004, p. 15). Hofstede identified power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism and

masculinity-femininity (and later long versus short term orientations) as the major aspects on which cultures differ. More recently, the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) refined Hofstede's work, suggesting nine dimensions: in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, future orientation, performance orientation, humane orientation, assertiveness and gender egalitarianism.

The proponents of the cultural dimensions approach introduced the practice of calculating scores on each dimension for each culture, enabling relative ranking among them. These typologies and dimensions are useful generalities in providing explanations when we encounter differences in outcomes that seem to originate from differences in cultural values and practices. This paper uses these cultural measures as indicators of national or HCC difference.

*(H2) There will be statistically significant differences in the mean value scores of expatriate TTP across home country cultures.*

### ***C. The Moderating Effect of HCC***

We argue that the cultural differences indicated in these HCCs will also have an effect on the magnitude of the impact of the organizational antecedents on TTP. However, there are critiques of the cultural literature (see eg Gerhart, 2008; Gerhart and Fang, 2005; McSweeney, 2002) and, moreover, the scores offered by Hofstede and GLOBE are incompatible even when they have the same titles (Avloniti and Fragkiskos, 2014). Thus, we suggest differences but do not advance specific differences across HCC. Our hypotheses here are a strong form of what are in effect propositions to be tested.

Following the order above, then, we expect that the importance of role clarity will vary with uncertainty avoidance. Since uncertainty avoidance measures the degree of comfort that a culture has with unclear or ambiguous situations, we might expect that cultures that have a high need for uncertainty avoidance, and perhaps those with a preference for power distance, would find that a lack of role clarity reduces their time to proficiency.

*(H3a) The strength /magnitude of the relation between role clarity and TTP will vary across HCC.*

Equally, cultures that are more comfortable with uncertainty and perhaps those with greater achievement orientation and assertiveness, will find that role discretion helps them to adjust quickly, whereas people from countries with the opposite combination of cultural dimensions will find it takes them longer to become proficient in their new locale.

*(H3b) The strength of the relation between role discretion and TTP will vary across HCC.*

The importance of supervisory support is likely to be moderated by such cultural dimensions as power distance, uncertainty avoidance and assertiveness. The higher the first two are and the lower the latter is, the more an individual is likely to rely on the support of their supervisor in reaching proficiency.

*(H3c) The strength of the relation between supervisory support and TTP will vary across HCC.*

Co-worker support is likely to be more important to people from a culture where collectivism is high and, perhaps, where a humane orientation is also high and assertiveness is low.

*(H3d) The strength of the relation between co-workers support and TTP will vary across HCC.*

Uncertainty avoidance may affect the relationship between perceived organizational dissimilarity and the time taken to reach proficiency in the new environment.

*(H3e) The strength of the relation between perceived organizational culture dissimilarity and TTP will vary across HCC.*

## METHODOLOGY

### *A. Sample and data collection*

The sample consisted of 4 groups of expatriated managers in New Delhi, India: 56 French, 53 German, 60 Korean and 57 Scandinavian (1), for a total of 224 respondents. Respondents worked in multinational companies, assigned from their home base to general management or high technical positions, for a maximum period of four years. Data for this research were collected via self-administrated questionnaires in English. The Embassies and the Chambers of Commerce of France, Germany, Korea, Denmark, Norway and Sweden cooperated by providing a list of their national companies based in New Delhi. For each subsidiary, either the general manager or the Human Resources Manager helped us to contact the expatriates from the home country and each was sent a questionnaire. Out of the 295 distributed questionnaires, 224 were returned, for a 76% response rate.

### *B. Measures*

The questionnaire was developed by adapting and integrating questions that had achieved strong internal and external validity in previous studies. All scales and measures are available from the first author. To measure TTP, we adapted Pinder and Schroeder's scale: for the four items of that scale, we used answers expressed in number of weeks rather than a seven-point scale, as that method allowed more precision in the results. To measure role clarity we used the nine items created by Breugh and Colihan (1994) to measure three role clarity dimensions: performance criteria, work method, and scheduling clarity. Specifically, we used the composite scores of each set of items for each dimension since the use of composite scores to represent the construct as a partial aggregation model acknowledges its multidimensional nature (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994). Similarly, to measure role discretion we used eight items created by Black and Gregersen (1991), measuring three dimensions of role discretion: personal, delegation and expertise. Supervisory and co-workers' social support were averaged from the four-item scales adapted from Pinder and Schroeder (1987). Perceived organizational dissimilarity was measured from an adaptation of the six-item scale created by Cerdin (1996). Demographic data such as gender, age, time elapsed since arrival were collected as controls.

Results from Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986) showed that because a single factor did not emerge and Factor 1 did not explain most of the variance, common method bias is unlikely to be a concern in our data.

The five HCC/ countries included in our study are significantly different from each other culturally and belong to five different 'culture clusters' both in the GLOBE (House et al., 2004) and Hofstede (1991) studies. Using Hofstede's four main factors of cultural variability, we computed the cultural distance between the four countries of origin and India: France (91), Germany (96), Korea (109) and Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden and Denmark) (125-142). Using the nine cultural factors of practices in GLOBE, we find cultural distances of: Korea (4.33), France (5.36), Germany (6.19), and Scandinavia (6.77) (Sweden and Denmark). We

note that using both scales, we find that France, Germany and Scandinavia show increasing cultural distances to India. However, the results for Korea are mixed.

### ***C. Analytical Techniques***

To examine relationships between variables we used SEM which incorporates both econometric and psychometric analyses in the statistical estimation. Structural equation modeling is best suited to measure unobserved variables (or theoretical constructs) that use survey-based data and permits measurement error in statistical estimations. Specifically, we utilized PLS Graph version 3.00, a component based SEM technique (Chin, 1998) to test hypotheses H1a-e and H3a-e. H2 was tested by examining the mean scores in TTP across HCC. Differences between path coefficients (H3a-e) across the four countries were analyzed using path coefficients' comparison (Chin 2009; Wilson, 2010).

PLS is particularly advantageous in dealing with smaller sample sizes (all four expatriate groups) relative to co-variance based methods (Qureshi and Compeau, 2009; Reinartz et al., 2009) because the iterative algorithm behind PLS estimates parameters in only small subsets of a model during any given iteration (Whittaker et al., 2007; Wold, 1985). PLS was also chosen due to the exploratory nature of our research (the effects on organizational variables on TTP across different expatriate countries have been under-explored) and our focus on the maximization of variance of the dependent variable: time to proficiency. PLS is also ideally suited to the early stages of theory building and testing, and can be used to identify where relationships might or might not exist, and to suggest propositions for later testing (Chin, 1998). Our structural model was evaluated on the basis of the  $R^2$  values for the dependent construct, the size,  $t$ -statistics and significance level of the structural path coefficients, the  $f^2$  effect size, and the Stone-Geisser  $Q$ -square test (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974) for predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2014).

Prior to these analyses, we examined the structured model for multicollinearity by applying the commonly accepted cut-off value of  $VIF > 10$  or its tolerance equivalent (Hair et al, 2006). The VIF values suggested that multicollinearity was not present. The same PLS path model was estimated in each of the distinct subsamples ie the four expatriate groups. Testing differences in path coefficients across groups requires that the latent variables are created in the same way for all groups (Carte and Russell, 2003). Since we were using PLS and not a covariance-based modeling approach, it was not possible to analyze measurement model invariance by a comparison of fit statistics. Instead we addressed the issue by using the bootstrapping technique in PLS, which involved re-sampling the dataset 1000 times (Efron and Tibshirani, 1993). We then compared the path coefficients between the four groups by using a parametric procedure from Chin (2009), as originally described by Keil et al. (2000). This procedure is shown below and illustrates a  $t$ -distribution with  $m+n-2$  degrees of freedom.

$$t = \frac{Path_{sample\_1} - Path_{sample\_2}}{\sqrt{\left[ \frac{(m-1)^2}{(m+n-2)} * S.E.^2_{sample1} + \frac{(n-1)^2}{(m+n-2)} * S.E.^2_{sample2} \right]} * \left[ \sqrt{\frac{1}{m} + \frac{1}{n}} \right]}$$

where path = path coefficient; SE = standard error; m = sample 1 size and n = sample 2 size. It determines a t-value with m+n-2 degrees of freedom dependent on the standard error of the estimated path coefficients from bootstrapping as well as the sample size (Chin 2009).

## RESULTS

### A. Measurement Model Evaluation

**Measurement model invariance.** We first assessed whether the same measurement model held for each expatriate group by analyzing the measurement model invariance between respondents from the four countries. This was undertaken using the bootstrapping technique and the Fishers *z* transformation. Chin (1998 suggests that loadings (item reliability) of 0.50 or 0.60 are acceptable if there exists other indicators in the block for comparison. Most of the loadings exceeded the more stringent threshold of 0.707 (Barclay et al. 1995). However, in the French expatriate group, three items (ORG 2, 3, 4) exhibited loadings < 0.50 and were subsequently dropped from further analysis in all countries.

Table 1 summarizes the final measurement model results and shows that most individual item loadings did not differ significantly across the four expatriate groups. Three items were between 0.60 and 0.70 but satisfied the Chin (1998) requirement of being greater than 0.60. These items were retained because they were conceptually relevant to the measurement of their respective construct and they did not have a higher loading on any other construct in the measurement model.

**Table 1. Model Validation Results**

CONSTRUCT NAME AND ITEMS	France (n=54)			Germany (n=53)			Korea (n=60)			Sweden (n=57)		
	Loading	IC	AVE	Loading	IC	AVE	Loading	IC	AVE	Loading	IC	AVE
Role Clarity		0.93	0.81		0.93	0.81		0.94	0.85		0.94	0.83
WCP	0.86			0.78			0.89			0.93		
WCM	0.91			0.95			0.93			0.88		
WCS	0.93			0.95			0.94			0.93		
Autonomy		0.95	0.87		0.96	0.89		0.92	0.80		0.91	0.78
WAP	0.94			0.95			0.84			0.94		
WAD	0.91			0.94			0.97			0.94		
WAE	0.94			0.93			0.87			0.74		
Supervisory		0.93	0.77		0.91	0.71		0.97	0.88		0.96	0.86

Support												
SSUP1	0.86			0.89			0.92			0.90		
SSUP2	0.87			0.81			0.93			0.89		
SSUP3	0.94			0.90			0.93			0.96		
SSUP4	0.84			0.76			0.95			0.95		
Co-worker Support		0.84	0.57		0.84	0.56		0.93	0.78		0.94	0.80
SCOL1	0.73			0.82			0.86			0.85		
SCOL2	0.88			0.76			0.92			0.91		
SCOL3	0.67			0.72			0.95			0.92		
SCOL4	0.71			0.67			0.80			0.90		
<b>Organizational Culture Dissimilarity</b>		0.89	0.73		0.81	0.60		0.89	0.74		0.92	0.78
ORG1	0.92			0.62			0.86			0.94		
ORG5	0.76			0.98			0.92			0.87		
ORG6	0.89			0.77			0.78			0.85		
<b>TTP</b>		0.97	0.89		0.96	0.87		0.94	0.80		0.96	0.87
TTP1	0.95			0.91			0.89			0.94		
TTP2	0.95			0.92			0.89			0.91		
TTP3	0.92			0.95			0.90			0.94		
TTP4	0.94			0.93			0.90			0.94		

Notes: IC: Internal consistency; AVE: average variance extracted.

**Constructs' internal consistency and average variance extracted.** Table 1 also shows composite reliability (internal consistency) and average variance extracted (AVE) scores for each construct. All composite reliabilities were above the 0.70 acceptable threshold (Gefen et al., 2000) and ranged from 0.81 to 0.97. AVE scores for all reflective constructs were above 0.50, and ranged from 0.57 to 0.89 in the French expatriate group, from 0.56 to 0.89 in the German expatriate group, from 0.74 to 0.88 in the Korean expatriate group and from 0.78 to 0.87 in the Scandinavian expatriate group. When AVE is greater than 0.50, the variance shared with a construct and its measures is greater than error (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

**Constructs' discriminant validity.** Constructs may be considered to have adequate discriminant validity if the square root of the AVE for each construct is larger than the correlation between the construct and any other construct in the model (Chin, 1998; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 2, all constructs in the estimated model fulfilled this condition of discriminant validity. Since none of the off-diagonal elements exceeded the respective diagonal element, discriminant validity was achieved.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation among Construct Scores (square root of AVE in the diagonal)**

<b>FRANCE</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Role Clarity	<b>0.90</b>					
2. Autonomy	-0.18	<b>0.93</b>				
3. Supervisory Support	0.03	0.30	<b>0.88</b>			
4. Co-worker Support	0.01	-0.06	0.27	<b>0.76</b>		
5. Organizational Culture Dissimilarity	0.17	-0.05	0.10	0.04	<b>0.85</b>	
6. TTP	-0.49	-0.14	-0.56	-0.26	-0.15	<b>0.94</b>
Mean	5.01	4.37	4.70	4.60	3.57	11.35
SD	1.29	1.46	1.53	1.11	1.33	14.95
<b>GERMANY</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Role Clarity	<b>0.90</b>					
2. Autonomy	0.03	<b>0.94</b>				
3. Supervisory Support	0.03	0.12	<b>0.84</b>			
4. Co-worker Support	0.08	0.29	0.10	<b>0.75</b>		
5. Organizational Culture Dissimilarity	0.18	0.05	0.03	0.05	<b>0.77</b>	
6. TTP	-0.28	-0.43	-0.36	-0.45	0.28	<b>0.93</b>
Mean	5.28	4.99	4.31	4.61	3.67	14.95
SD	0.97	1.30	1.43	1.05	1.10	5.78
<b>KOREA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Role Clarity	<b>0.92</b>					
2. Autonomy	0.07	<b>0.89</b>				
3. Supervisory Support	0.36	0.33	<b>0.94</b>			
4. Co-worker Support	-0.01	0.37	0.27	<b>0.88</b>		
5. Organizational Culture Dissimilarity	-0.16	-0.23	-0.32	-0.02	<b>0.86</b>	
6. TTP	-0.65	-0.24	-0.59	-0.41	0.34	<b>0.89</b>
Mean	5.68	4.53	4.70	4.88	3.48	24.90
SD	0.97	1.47	1.44	1.13	1.41	10.50
<b>SCANDINAVIA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Role Clarity	<b>0.91</b>					
2. Autonomy	0.24	<b>0.88</b>				
3. Supervisory Support	0.36	0.60	<b>0.93</b>			
4. Co-worker Support	0.05	0.13	0.19	<b>0.89</b>		
5. Organizational Culture Dissimilarity	-0.39	-0.35	-0.45	0.02	<b>0.88</b>	
6. TTP	-0.13	-0.73	-0.61	-0.14	0.33	<b>0.93</b>
Mean	5.53	4.92	4.62	4.62	3.94	17.17
SD	0.89	1.25	1.43	1.25	1.72	5.83

*Notes:* S.D. = Standard Deviation. The bold numbers on the diagonal are the square root of the Average Variance Extracted. Off-diagonal elements are correlations among constructs.

### ***B. Hypotheses Testing***

**Hypotheses 1a-e: Organizational antecedents of TTP.** Role clarity demonstrated a significant negative relationship with TTP ( $\beta = -0.15, t = -2.52$ ). The relationship between role discretion and TPP was also significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.14, t = -2.42$ ). Supervisory support was a significantly stronger predictor of TTP with more than twice the *b* of role clarity and autonomy ( $\beta = -0.31, t = -4.97$ ). The remaining two organizational variables also exhibited significant relationships with TTP although the magnitude of the path coefficients were weaker. Specifically, co-worker support ( $\beta = -0.09, t = -1.65$ ) demonstrated a significant negative relationship while organizational culture dissimilarity ( $\beta = 0.12, t = 1.88$ ) demonstrated a significant positive relationship with TTP. H1a-e are therefore all supported.

These main findings for the full sample were consistent with and without the control variables in the model. There was no relationship between gender, time elapsed since arrival, seniority and scores on the dependent variable, TTP. The Stone-Geisser test of predictive relevance was also performed to further assess model fit in PLS analysis (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974). Using omission distances of 10 and 25 produced similar results, indicating that the estimates are stable. Values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance. The communality *Q*-square (*Q*<sup>2</sup>) for TTP was greater than 0.

**Hypothesis 2: Assessing differences in the mean value scores in TTP across HCC.** With respect to TTP, significant differences were found in the mean scores ( $p < 0.05$ ), thus supporting H2. Table 3 shows that Korean respondents ( $M = 24.90; SD = 10.50$ ) and Scandinavian respondents ( $M = 17.17; SD = 5.83$ ) reported longer TTP relative to French respondents ( $M = 11.35; SD = 5.76$ ). Korean respondents also reported longer TTP relative to German respondents ( $M = 14.95; SD = 5.78$ ) and Scandinavian respondents ( $M = 17.17; SD = 5.83$ )

**Table 3. TTP Mean scores across country samples**

Country	France	Germany	Scandinavia	Korea
Mean TTP in weeks	11.35	14.95	17.17	24.90
SD	5.76	5.78	5.83	10.50

**Hypotheses 3a-e: Assessing path differences across HCC.** The structural model results for the four subsamples are shown in Table 4. Role clarity demonstrated a significant negative relationship with TTP in the French ( $\beta = -0.49, t = 5.65$ ), German ( $\beta = -0.30, t = 3.65$ ) and Korean sub-samples ( $\beta = -0.53, t = 6.46$ ), but a non-significant relationship with TTP in the Scandinavian group ( $\beta = 0.13, t = 1.12$ ). The relationship between autonomy and TPP was significant for respondents from two of the four countries: Germany ( $\beta = -0.32, t = 2.67$ ) and Scandinavia ( $\beta = -0.56, t = 4.92$ ). Supervisory support demonstrated a significant negative relationship with TTP for all four sub-samples: France ( $\beta = -0.48, t = 4.75$ ), Germany ( $\beta = -0.29, t = 2.91$ ), Korea ( $\beta = -0.28, t = 2.80$ ) and Scandinavia ( $\beta = -0.29, t = 2.45$ ). In contrast, co-worker support demonstrated a significant negative relationship with TTP for respondents from two countries: Germany ( $\beta = -0.33, t = 4.36$ ) and Korea ( $\beta = -0.35, t = 4.85$ ). Finally, perceived organizational culture dissimilarity demonstrated a significant positive relationship with TTP for German ( $\beta = 0.38, t = 1.91$ ) and Korean ( $\beta = 0.17, t = 2.10$ ) respondents but a non-significant relationship with TTP for French ( $\beta = -0.01, t = 0.21$ ) and Scandinavian

respondents ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $t = 0.49$ ). The organizational antecedents of TTP vary clearly across HCC.

**Table 4. PLS Results of the ‘ $\beta$ ’ hypotheses testing**

Antecedent TTP	France n=54		Germany n=53		Korea n=60		Sweden n=57	
	Path Coef.	t-value	Path Coef.	t-value	Path Coef.	t-value	Path Coef.	t-value
Role Clarity	-0.49	5.65****	-0.30	3.65****	-0.53	6.46****	0.13	1.12 n.s
Role discretion	-0.09	0.66 n.s	-0.32	2.67***	0.06	0.57 n.s	-0.56	4.92****
Supervisory Support	-0.48	4.75****	-0.29	2.91***	-0.28	2.80***	-0.29	2.45***
Co-worker Support	-0.14	0.81 n.s	-0.33	4.36****	-0.35	4.85****	-0.02	0.15 n.s
Organizational CD	-0.01	0.21 n.s	0.38	1.91**	0.17	2.10**	0.05	0.49 n.s
$R^2$	0.56		0.58		0.70		0.59	

Note: \* p-values: \*\*\*\* p < .001, \*\*\* p < 0.010, \*\* p < 0.05, n.s not significant

The structural model for each HCC sample was also examined using the level of the  $R^2$  values. In general,  $R^2$  values of 0.25, 0.50 and 0.75 are considered as weak, medium and substantial respectively (Hair et al., 2014). The structural model explained 56 % of the variance in TTP in the French expatriate group, 58% in the German expatriate group, 70% on the Korean expatriate group and 59% in the Scandinavian expatriate group. These  $R^2$  values demonstrate that the variance explained in TTP across all four countries is significant. In addition to evaluating the  $R^2$  value for TTP, the change in  $R^2$  when a specified exogenous construct is omitted from the model was used to evaluate whether the committed construct had a substantial impact on TTP. This is referred to as the  $f^2$  effect size and was calculated as follows:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2 \text{ included} - R^2 \text{ excluded}}{1 - R^2 \text{ included}}$$

The results are shown in Table 5. Scores of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 are reported as small, medium and large  $f^2$  sizes (Hair et al., 2014). In the French expatriate group, omitting role clarity and supervisory support had a substantial impact on TTP ( $f^2$  sizes of 0.49 and 0.41 respectively). In contrast, in the German expatriate group, all five constructs had a substantial impact on TTP. Large  $f^2$  sizes were reported when all exogenous constructs were omitted from the model. In the Korean expatriate group, four of the five exogenous constructs (role clarity, supervisory support, co-worker support and organisational culture dissimilarity) had a substantial impact on TTP, with role clarity having the largest impact ( $f^2$  size of 0.78). Finally, in the Scandinavian expatriate group, autonomy had a substantial impact on TTP ( $f^2$  size of 0.48) while supervisory support had a relatively smaller effect ( $f^2$  sizes of 0.11).

The above findings suggest significant differences in the substantive impact of organizational antecedents of TTP across HCC.

**Table 5. Summary of results when independent variable excluded**

	France n=54		Germany n=53		Korea n=60		Sweden n=57	
	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect
Role Clarity	0.34	0.49	0.49	0.21	0.47	0.78	0.58	0.03
Role Discretion	0.55	0.01	0.49	0.21	0.70	0.01	0.40	0.48
Supervisory Support	0.37	0.41	0.50	0.19	0.65	0.17	0.55	0.11
Co-worker Support	0.54	0.04	0.48	0.23	0.60	0.34	0.59	0.00
Organizational CD	0.56	0.00	0.44	0.32	0.68	0.08	0.59	0.01

The Stone-Geisser test for each subsample showed the communality  $Q$ -square ( $Q^2$ ) for TTP was greater than 0 for all constructs, in all four expatriate groups, indicating that the model has predictive relevance in all four subsamples.

**Differences between significant path coefficients** across the four subsamples were analyzed using path coefficients' comparison (Chin 2009; Wilson, 2010). The explained variances and the  $t$  values for the differences between respondents ( $t$  value diff.) using Chin's (2009) procedure are shown in Table 6. A comparison of significant path coefficients across countries highlighted a number of interesting observations. First, the negative effect of role clarity on TTP was significantly stronger for the French ( $t = -1.91$ ) and Korean sub-samples ( $t = 1.99$ ) relative to those from Germany. Second, the negative relationship between role discretion and TTP was significantly stronger for expatriates from Scandinavia ( $t = 1.87$ ) relative to those from Germany. Third, there were no statistically significant differences in the size of the path coefficients across the four expatriate groups when comparing the effect of supervisory support on TTP. Finally, there were no significant difference in the size of the path coefficients when comparing the effects of co-worker support and organizational dissimilarity on TTP in the German and Korean sub-samples.

In summary, not only do the organizational antecedents vary significantly across HCC samples, but the significant impact of some organizational antecedents of TTP is stronger in some HCCs relative to other organizational antecedents.

**Table 6. Differences in path coefficients across countries**

	FR	GR	Diff in path coef.	t-value diff	FR	KO	Diff in path coef.	t-value diff	FR	SW	Diff in path coef.	t-value diff
Role Clarity	-0.49	-0.30	0.19	-1.61	-0.49	-0.53	-0.04	0.34	-0.49	0.13	-0.62	-4.19
Role Discretion	-0.09	-0.32	-0.23	1.29	-0.09	0.06	-0.15	-0.92	-0.09	-0.56	-0.47	2.69
Sup. Support	-0.48	-0.29	0.19	1.35	-0.48	-0.28	0.20	-1.43	-0.48	-0.29	0.19	-1.21
Co-worker Support	-0.14	-0.33	-0.19	1.04	-0.14	-0.35	-0.21	1.20	-0.14	-0.02	0.12	-0.60
Org. CD	-0.01	0.38	-0.39	-1.77	-0.01	0.17	-0.18	-1.36	-0.01	0.05	-0.06	-0.39

	GR	KO	Diff in path coef.	t-value diff	GR	SW	Diff in Path coef.	t-value diff	KO	SW	Diff in Path coef.	t-value diff
Role Conflict	-0.30	-0.53	-0.23	1.99	-0.30	0.13	0.43	-2.96	-0.53	0.13	0.66	-4.65
Role Discretion	-0.32	0.06	0.38	-2.53	-0.32	-0.56	-0.24	1.47	0.06	-0.56	0.62	4.19
Sup. Support	-0.29	-0.28	0.01	-0.07	-0.29	-0.29	0.00	0.00	-0.28	-0.29	-0.01	0.07
Co-worker Support	-0.33	-0.35	-0.02	0.19	-0.33	-0.02	0.31	-2.25	-0.35	-0.02	0.33	-2.48
Org. CD	0.38	0.17	0.21	1.04	0.38	0.05	0.33	1.52	0.17	0.05	0.12	0.89

Notes: FR=France, GR=Germany, KO=Korea, SW=Sweden.

## DISCUSSION

### *Main findings and contributions*

Table 7 summarizes the results of our study. The first part of our analysis sets the baseline for our original contribution on country of origin. Among the organisational antecedents, role clarity and discretion (H1a and H1b) are both significant predictors of TTP (confirming Pinder and Schroeder, 1987; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Aryee and Stone, 1996). Both supervisory and co-workers' support (H1c, H1d) were also predictors of TTP on the global sample (as in Pinder and Schroeder, 1987 for national transfers). Perceived organizational dissimilarity (H1e) was significantly related to expatriates' TTP. So far, although interesting and adding a new context and new group of expatriates to the analysis, our findings confirm the results of previous studies.

**Table 7: Summary of the results: the significant antecedents of TTP globally and by country**

Antecedents / Samples	Global	France	Germany	Scandinavia	Korea
Role clarity (H1a)	X	X	X	-	X
Role discretion (H1b)	X	-	X	X	-
Supervisory support (H1c)	X	X	X	X	X
Coworker support (H1d)	X	-	X	-	X
Org. CD.	X	-	X	-	X

Our contribution on the effect of HCC on TTP is new. First, our findings demonstrate that TTP mean scores vary significantly across HCC. The results are broadly consistent with GLOBE (House et al., 2004) and Hofstede's cultural distances to India: French, German and Scandinavian respondents report increasing TTP (respectively 11.35, 14.95 and 17.11 weeks). Thus, in our sample, the larger the cultural distance, the longer the TTP. Koreans are the exception: their reported TTP is longer than the Scandinavians (24.9 weeks), although their cultural distance to India is smaller in both Hofstede and GLOBE. This exception could perhaps be explained by the fact that the international exposure of Koreans is relatively recent in comparison to the Europeans. Or Koreans may be more likely, given the highly competitive nature of their education system, to be more self-critical in terms of proficiency. Conversely, and perhaps controversially, it could demonstrate that certain nationalities are more likely than others to be successful as expatriates; perhaps their national culture makes them more adaptive or less certain of their home-learned ways. Although there seems little doubt that country of origin has a significant effect on time to proficiency in our sample, the relationship is complicated by the incompatibility of the data in the various studies of cultural distance.

Our results also demonstrate that HCC affects which antecedents play a role in the explanation of expatriates TTP, and to what degree. The strength of the relation between organisational antecedents and TTP varied across HCC. These HCC effects are consistent with Hofstede's (1991) and the GLOBE (House et al., 2004) studies, at least on three points. First, for French and Korean expatriates, whose cultures are characterized by a high score on power distance and uncertainty avoidance factors, it seems logical that role clarity is an important predictor of TTP. Second, for German and Scandinavian expatriates, whose cultures are characterized by a low power distance and (respectively), medium and low uncertainty avoidance compared to their Korean and French counterparts, it seems logical that job discretion should enhance TTP. Third, for Korean expatriates, whose culture is characterized by strong collectivism, it also seems intuitive that co-workers' support and organisational culture similarity should be helpful in reducing TTP adjustment. Supervisory support is a common antecedent across all HCC.

### ***Practical implications***

The results of this research have important implications for the management of expatriates, especially in the fields of recruitment, staffing policies and support policies. Knowledge that HCC/ cultural distance is a significant predictor of TTP suggests that organizations may need to reconsider their international staffing policies. If HCC is critical, then selecting third country nationals for whom the culture of assignment is not that different culturally from their own (Parker and McEvoy, 1993) may be a sensible policy. In order to avoid discrimination, there would be a need to test individual expatriates cultural distance to the destination country. Another possibility would be to hire bi-cultural employees (Brannen and Thomas, 2010; Furusawa and Brewster, 2014). Finally, since antecedents of TTP are not the same across national groups of expatriates, support policies for different groups of expatriates might include different variables to facilitate their integration to their new positions abroad. Effective support and encouragement to expatriates should take account of expatriates' cultural and personal needs.

#### ***Limitations and avenues for future research***

Although this study expands our knowledge of the relationships between organizational variables and TTP across HCC, viable prospects for further research remain. The first relates to our sample, four 'countries of origin' and one host country. Due to sample size limitation, we bundled all Scandinavian expatriates into 'Scandinavia'. Future studies should include more countries and more respondents per country. Moreover, our sample only includes expatriates who were sufficiently proficient to stay in their positions, so excluding those who left before the research or before the end of their contract.

Other limitations relate to our data collection methods. First, the questionnaire was distributed in English, a foreign language for all the respondents, even though it was the language in which they were all conducting business while in India. Second, this study presents a potential problem of retrospective rationality since our dependent and independent variables were collected simultaneously via a single questionnaire from individual respondents, at a single point in time. However, our analysis has identified that there were no problem of common source bias in the results.

Further limitations relate to our model. First, our measure of TTP is a self-perceived measure of proficiency. Nicholson (1984) notes that what is operationally important is a person's subjective perceptions of the reality at work, following the reasoning that what is perceived as real is real in its consequences. Moreover, previous studies of expatriates have usually relied on self-reports of performance (for exceptions see Caligiuri and Day, 2000; Caligiuri and Tung, 1999). Future studies should use other measures of expatriates' job performance and should attempt to collect additional objective and subjective data from different sources (colleagues, supervisor). Our model does not claim to be comprehensive and other antecedents might increase understanding of TTP: organizational factors, such as compensation and benefits policies; individual factors, such as adaptability, motivation to go abroad, language competence; contextual factors, such as family/ partner adjustment, or expatriation management practices. Nevertheless, our study constitutes one of a small number of attempts to study of expatriate TTP and its antecedents across different country samples.

Research is also needed to examine the effects of HCC and its characteristics on expatriates' TTP. Whilst our findings on the effect of HCC are unequivocal, the relationship between that and the measures of culture and cultural distances is less clear. Finally, future studies could examine the respective roles that local co-workers, expatriate co-workers and the local and expatriate communities play in assisting expatriates to adjust (Toh and DeNisi, 2005).

## References

**(Marie finalizes) version 6c.**

### FORMAT STYLE:

a) **Journal Article:** White, Halbert (1980), A Heteroscedasticity Consistent Covariance Matrix Estimator and a Direct Test for Heteroscedasticity, *Econometrica*, Vol. 48, No. 2, pp. 203-23.

b) **Book Chapter:** Balkin, Steven, (1953) "A Grameen Bank Replication: The Full Circle Fund of the Women's Self Employment Project of Chicago", in Abu Wahid (ed.) *The Grameen Bank: Poverty Relief in Bangladesh*, Westview Press, pp. 235-266.

c) **Book:** Keynes, John M. (1936) *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, Macmillan.

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