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Emotional intelligence as predictor of cultural adjustment for success in global assignments

Emotional
intelligence

375

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present a new framework for assessing the human resource strategy for international assignment (IA) of managers.

Design/methodology/approach – The approach posits the construct of emotional intelligence (EI) as a critical predictor for intercultural adjustment thereby leading to success. A theoretical model and the respective preliminary empirical test of a series of hypotheses pertaining to the relationships between several dimensions of EI, their impact on cross-cultural adjustment and success of international managers overseas assignments, is presented. Analyses is based on cross sectional data of 67 cases (based on questionnaires), and on 39 cases with rectangular data where both supervisory input and questionnaires were used.

Findings – A significant correlation was found between the interpersonal emotional component and specific performance. Thus the capacities of empathy, social responsibility and social relations may predict better performance in the specific characters of IA. Moreover, the correlation between EI and adjustment dimensions showed significantly higher correlations; while cultural adjustment is not correlated with any EI dimensions, interaction fit correlates with all the EI dimensions except for stress management; adjustment at the work place was only correlated with intrapersonal emotional component. The correlation between adjustment variables and success variables shows that cultural adjustment is positively correlated with satisfaction among global managers. Adjustment at work correlates negatively with the wish to terminate the assignment. In other words, those who adjust less well to work show greater interest in terminating their assignment.

Research limitations/implications – Findings are based on the self-reported questionnaires and should be treated with caution due to the possibilities of “method-variance”. The findings are based on a small sample of international assigned managers operating within the Latin American theatre.

Practical implications – It is proposed that EI assessment be used in the selection of internationally assigned managers, in addition to the traditional selection criteria in order to improve the predictive ness of the assignee success.

Originality/value – The use of soft skills rather than hard skills as part of the selection decision of expatriates or any other internationally assigned professionals was long debated. In this study, for the first time, EI scores were used to predict cultural adjustment and subsequence success for managers.

Keywords Cross-cultural management, Human resource strategies, International business, Globalization, Intelligence, Senior managers

Paper type Research paper



International assignment: a brief review from a career perspective

Career is an important issue for individuals at all phases of international assignment (IA), i.e. before, during and after an IA. In the boundary less career perspective, “expatriation amounts to crossing geographical boundaries and, quite often, crossing other types of boundaries, such as organisational or occupational ones as well” (Cerdin and Bird, n.d.). In these various crossings, people are concerned about succeeding in their IA, which should in turn materialise into career success.

However, there is ample evidence that IA managers experience severe difficulties in terms of effectiveness and meeting organisational and personal expectations (e.g. Caligiuri, 2000; Cerdin, 1999; Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997; Windham International, 2000; Forster, 1997; Tung, 1998; Aycan, 1997; Harvey *et al.*, 2002; Yan *et al.*, 2002). IA failure results in significant direct and indirect costs (Black *et al.*, 1999; Osland, 1996; Harzing, 1995; Forster, 1997). In addition to IA failure, other problems arise when professionals increasingly refuse expatriate assignments for family-related reasons, like double-career couples (Harvey *et al.*, 2001).

The meta-analysis conducted by Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* (2005) of over 50 determinants and consequences of expatriate adjustment using data from 8,474 expatriates in 66 studies, indicates that cultural adjustment “is perhaps the strongest determinant of disengagement and withdrawal decisions” (p. 273). Their results indicate that higher levels of adjustment are related to overall performance. However, in their study, adjustment left around 90 per cent of the variance in performance unexplained. The authors suggest including traditional individual difference variables such as general mental ability and the big five, which have been largely examined in the literature on domestic job performance. In our study, we focused on emotional intelligence (EI), which is also often overlooked in the study of IA. We suggest that EI might be a determinant of expatriate adjustment, which in turn should have an impact on outcomes of expatriate adjustment such as performance, satisfaction and withdrawal decisions. All these outcomes are of paramount importance to career success.

As part of the staffing strategy, the selection process aims at ensuring that strategy is implemented, and that highly qualified “global managers” are assigned to branches around the world as an essential element for corporate vitality and continuous growth (Caligiuri, 2000; Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998). Along with new concepts of international career-making, the emerging global marketplace needs highly-qualified professionals able to manage business in various and complex environments, and who can effectively and efficiently transmit technical, administrative, operational, functional, commercial and structural knowledge (know-how) that is unique and specific to their corporations (Harvey *et al.*, 1999, 2001; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004). These global or international managers have become a critical component of any international human resource strategy.

Traditionally, selection of personnel destined for IAs has incorporated “hard” elements, such as technical competencies and experience, as the first criterion as well as the identification of personal traits that help to improve “survival” probabilities (Mendenhall and Oddou, 2001; Selmer, 2001). Recently, in the light of international managers being viewed as global team managers, there is an emerging interest in “soft” competencies and tactical knowledge deriving from the specific social skills required to be effectively competitive (Caligiuri, 2000; Harvey *et al.*, 2002).

Global managers, are expected to simultaneously manage the tension between integrating global operations and achieving local responsiveness (Schuler *et al.*, 1993; Taylor *et al.*, 1996).

The competencies of future global managers often considered include:

- (1) Cognitive competence,
- (2) Personality traits, and
- (3) Environmental variables (Eysneck, 1998).

Cognitive skills play a large role in the selection process by identifying multiple intelligence indicators of learning aptitudes and skills in various social environments. Cognitive competencies are divided into three main groups of intelligence: *analytical*, composed of cognitive and EI; *practical*, composed of political, cultural, social, organisational and network intelligence, and *creative*, composed of innovative and intuitive capabilities (Gardner, 1993, 1999). Recently, scholars such as Boyatzis *et al.* (2000) and Cooper and Sawaf (1997) have asserted that interviews with senior executives suggest that they consider technical skills to be of less importance than the ability to control emotions. Therefore the importance of EI increases with authority level in an organisation.

There is consensus among researchers that criteria for IA success should embrace four main dimensions: individual, cultural, social and organisational (Caligiuri, 2000; Dalton and Wilson, 2000; Black *et al.*, 1999; Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Katz and Seifer, 1996; Hofstede, 1993). Consequently at the Individual level, the research reported here considers four success indicators:

- (1) cross-cultural adjustment,
- (2) performance evaluation,
- (3) complete full term of the assignment, and
- (4) life satisfaction.

Emotional intelligence and success

EI recognises the non-cognitive psychological aspects intervening in human behaviour. Research along these lines has identified a significant correlation between the cognitive and emotional components of people's intelligence, and how that relationship matters in effectively accomplishing all sorts of goals in any area of human behaviour (Matthews *et al.*, 2002). Despite much criticism against popularising concepts like multiple conceptualisation, psychometric properties and intelligence measurements and their practical applications (Matthews *et al.*, 2002; Zeidner *et al.*, 2004), the concept of EI related to social and personal intelligence may have highly significant applications in the social and organisational environment. In essence, EI is a psychological concept that seeks to describe the role and relevance of emotions for intellectual functions (e.g. Thorndike, 1920; Gardner, 1993; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). High social-emotional intelligence reflects a person's capacity to perform actions on his own, and with and through others (Early and Ang, 2003; Bar-On, 1997; Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

In an attempt to provide a conceptual framework for IA selection and thus efficiently and effectively facing new cultural and organisational environments, aspects and contexts through EI capabilities, the Bar-On (1997, 2000) conceptualisation of EI of "Non-Cognitive Intelligence" EQ-i was adapted as a framework for this study.

Bar-On (1997) describes EI as knowledge and a set of emotional and social skills that influence our general ability to effectively face our environment's demands. Thus, skill is based on the individuals' ability to effectively understand, control, express and be aware of their emotions (Caruso *et al.*, 2000; Bar-On, 1997). In this sense, the model "constitutes a set of knowledge used to effectively face life" (Mayer *et al.*, 2000, p. 402). Bar-On (1997) has classified emotional capabilities in two main types. The first concerns basic capacities, while the latter refers to facilitating capacities divided up into a set of five main areas of EI.

- (1) Intrapersonal abilities, which evaluate the individual's general self-identification. This ability consists of being aware of, and understanding and relating to others, through our *emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-realisation and emotional independence*.
- (2) Interpersonal abilities, including the three capacities of empathy, social responsibility and social relations, gathered together as the ability to manage strong emotions and control personal drives.
- (3) Adaptability, or the individual's capacity to correctly appraise the world around him/her and efficiently adjust to new situations, together with the ability to create appropriate solutions to everyday problems. It includes the notions of *reality testing, flexibility* and *problem solving skills*, or generally the ability to adapt to change and resolve problems of a personal and social nature.
- (4) Stress management, understood as the ability to both *tolerate stress* and *keep personal drives under control*.
- (5) General state of mind, the ability to hold and convey a positive and optimistic view of life. This component includes two dimensions, namely optimism and happiness.

These five main components influence one's general ability to face pressures and daily demands. It is interesting that Bar-On (2000) reports that some emotional capabilities allow a distinction to be made between high-level managers with meaningful achievements and managers of moderate performance. In the context of IAs, having social and emotional skills for the effective management of different or unknown environmental situations is an essential and preliminary requisite (Black *et al.*, 1991). Thus using EI as a selection criterion could consistently help to predict adjustment capabilities to new environments, providing for the general success of international managers (Jassawalla *et al.*, 2004).

Thus Hypothesis 1 suggests:

H1. EI is a significant predictor of success in international assignments.

EI and cross-cultural adjustment

Cross-cultural adjustment is one of the most frequently studied factors in assessing the success of IAs (Aycan and Kanungo, 1997; Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997). It argues that adjustment to a foreign culture is an important determinant of success of an IA, and is defined as the key process of change an individual undergoes to "fit into" the host society, as a form of individual satisfaction derived from perceived acceptance by the host, and as the ability to function during everyday activities without severe stress

(Brislin, 1981). Given such a broad definition, adjustment has been conceptualised and rendered operational as a multidimensional construct (Aycan, 1997). An often-quoted model is the social/cultural adjustment model (Black *et al.*, 1991), which states that the degree of cross-cultural adjustment must be treated as a multidimensional construct rather than a unitary phenomenon. Three dimensions are often used: *social-cultural adjustment*, which means engaging in harmonious interpersonal relations with members of the host society; *work adjustment*, which means fitting into the local unit's culture, policies, procedures, operation and work requirements; and *general adjustment* to the environment, which means adjustment to daily living issues such as food, transportation etc., and satisfaction with life compared to other reference groups.

The reference framework mentions those elements that could affect an international manager's adjustment in three dimensions. Those factors could be either external or internal to the individual or the organisation. Furthermore, adjustment is commonly conceived as an evolving and dynamic process, and several theories have aimed at capturing and determining the dynamic nature of expatriate adjustment and success by singling out various predictors (e.g. Aycan, 1997; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960). Criticisms of cross-cultural adjustment measures include that they: tend to be very mechanical as they do not take into account the intricacies of each variable or the relationships between them, fail to evaluate the outcome of adjustment, and bear primarily cross-sectional characteristics (Cerdin and Dubouloy, 2004). A new conceptualisation of adjustment has therefore been called for, and scholars responded by offering a cultural intelligence approach (CQ) (Early and Ang, 2003) and a "copy and paste" approach based on experience and the maturation process (Cerdin and Dubouloy, 2004).

Thus cross-cultural adjustment should be seen as a process where difficulties in adjusting include limitations in competencies or motivation for understanding, accepting or adapting to the norms of the foreign culture. The latter are manifested in forms of behaviour towards the people, objects or conditions that represent another culture (Aycan, 1997; Mendenhall and Oddou, 2001; Cerdin, 1999). So the five dimensions of EI of Bar-On (1997) can be viewed as the competencies necessary for overcoming difficulties of adjustment and consequently achieving a better cultural fit.

This leads to the statement of *H2*:

H2. Emotional Intelligence is a significant predictor of adjustment-mediated international assignments.

H2a. Emotional intelligence is a predictor of the adjustment process in general.

H2b. Emotional intelligence is a predictor in the adjustment process of mediated international assignments.

The role of cultural differences

People in any given nation often share cultural denominators such as history, leaders, religion, literature and economic system. These values often develop along national boundaries (Hofstede, 1980). A host's national culture may vary from the global manager's own culture. The differences between host and home cultures have been called cultural toughness, cultural distance or country difficulty (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Hofstede, 1980). The influence of cultural differences on the success of IAs is not clear. While some researchers argue that the greater the difference between

cultures, the more difficult it would be to adjust and perform, others have found that there is no association between the difficulty in adapting to the culture and the international manager's effectiveness (e.g. Black *et al.*, 1992; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1997). Tung (1997) found that, where an expatriate adopted an open attitude toward interacting with people in the host society (including socialising with them both during and after work, learning about the host country's culture and adapting to norms in the host country), they were equally successful in countries with varying degrees of cultural difference.

Thus to determine the role of cultural differences in the success of an IA, this study examined the cultural value differences at work and in life in general as a moderating variables, that is then hypothesised to determine the strength of the relationships between EI and cross-cultural adjustment.

H3. Cultural difference moderates the impact of emotional intelligence on adjustment.

Additionally, in order to understand the direct impact of EI and cross-cultural adjustment on an IA's success, some additional control variables are controlled for in this study. These three level variables include: individual (demographic characteristics, experience, and spouse adjustment); organisational (organisational support and training), and cultural (language fluency).

The research model and the respective hypotheses

The primary and secondary hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 1

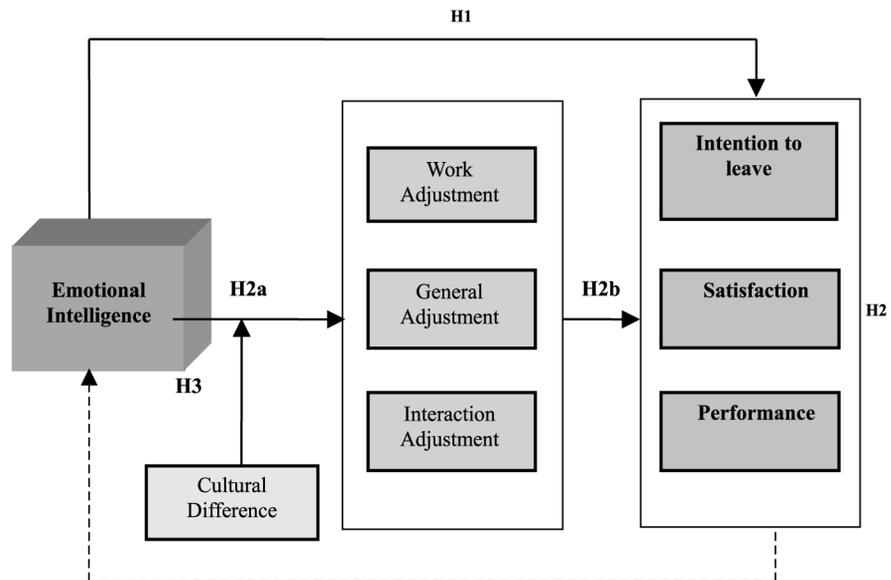


Figure 1.
The conceptual research model and the respective hypotheses

Methods, procedures and design

Due to the conceptual and operational complexity of defining the IA's success, as well as the host of independent variables and multiple linkages that might explain this phenomenon, three issues have been considered as the most critical in this research. These are methodology, data collection procedures, and the priority given to each stage of data integration in the case of the multiple data collecting method (Creswell, 1994; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003). An approximation of this study on cases of success was obtained through cross-sectional and quasi-longitudinal designs, employing currently working international managers as participants. The study uses a series of multiple-item measures, as well as multiple sources of data, thereby minimising potential problems of "method-variance" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The multiple data collection used quantitative and qualitative measures simultaneously (i.e. questionnaires and semi-structured interviews).

Sample

Data used in this research come from two different samples. The first is made up of two types of participants in a survey, namely internationally assigned managers and their supervisors. While the target of the broader study is a fairly large sample of internationally-assigned managers, in this study a small sample of senior managers assigned to work in several Latin American countries was used. Several criteria were employed in selecting the sample participants, including their socio-demographic characteristics, their company's profile and the term of the assignment. The former includes: being in a high-level manager position and aged between 30 and 55 years. The supervisors of international managers who chose to participate were also asked to complete a performance appraisal instrument. Data thus includes a complete survey from both internationally-assigned managers and their matched supervisors, as well as a non-complete survey of internationally-assigned managers without their matched supervisors. Results reported herein are based on input from 67 participants. However, the answers of 28 supervisors were not available. Thus the analyses reported here are based on a sample of 67 cases, except when the worker performance variable is included in the analysis, in which case the sample falls to 39 cases.

The average age in the sample was 38 years. Subjects are mostly male (85 per cent) and married (81 per cent). Their previous experience may include as many as two IAs, they have been with their organisations an average of 106 months, they have been 27 months in their present assignments, and they expect to conclude their present assignment in another 24 months on average. Their preferred assignment is in a strategic executive position (45 per cent) and they mostly work in Spanish (78 per cent).

The second sample is made up of 20 international managers who agreed to face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These managers work for Spanish international companies operating in Peru. The interviews, which lasted 45-60 minutes, were conducted within the companies, in Peru, in 2005. The average age of respondents was 45, and all were male. Most typically, the respondents operate in the service industry, including banking, insurance, telecommunications and infrastructure. All the managers were responsible for operations in Peru in their capacity as CEOs or Country Managers. Typically, the companies had operated in Peru for more than seven to ten years. The average length of their experience as internationally-assigned managers in Peru was 3.5 years at the time of the interview,

and the average length of their whole experience as international-assignee managers was five years' working in IA positions in different countries in Latin America.

Measures

Emotional intelligence. Bar-On's (1997) EQ-i test adapted by Ugarriza (2001) to the Spanish language (short version) was used. The original Bar-On EQ-i test includes 133 items that are rated on a Likert five-point type scale. These items are structured around five factors; intrapersonal abilities, interpersonal abilities, adaptability, stress management, and general state of mind. In the EQ-i Spanish short version, these five components are subdivided into 15 sub-components measured by 60 items.

Adjustment. The adjustment scale for expatriate managers created by Black and Stephens (1989) was used. The 14-item scale evaluates three dimensions of adjustment: general, interaction and work. The respondents were ranked on a Likert seven-point scale (ranging from 1, or totally unsettled, to 7, or perfectly adapted).

Intention to leave the assignment early. Desire for an early end of the assignment was measured by the Caligiuri (1997a, b, 2000) scale. The four-item questionnaire is based on a four-point Likert-type scale and includes questions about intention to leave the assignment.

Job performance. This component was measured using the Caligiuri and Day (2000) instrument to assess four dimensions of the expatriate manager's performance. The supervisors were asked to rate the performance of the expatriate on 15 items, using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (outstanding). The items included "motivation", "facilitating peer and team performance" and "establishing interpersonal bonds with host nationals".

Satisfaction. Subjective Well-Being (SWB) (Diener and Lucas, 2000) was applied to evaluate the expatriate managers' general satisfaction. SWB refers to how people evaluate their lives, and includes three primary components, namely satisfaction, pleasant affection, and low levels of unpleasant affection. These dimensions form a global factor of interrelated variables. SWB was measured through self-report ranked on a seven-point scale: 1 (strong dissatisfaction) to 7 (strong satisfaction).

Cultural differences. The cultural differences scale was based on the first 12 items of Hofstede's (1993), cultural distance measure, and consist of only one single factor as recommended by Spector *et al.* (2001). High scores on this scale point to cultural differences marked by a distancing away from the set of the proposed value, and conversely.

Perceived organisational support. A short eight-item version of the original Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) scale was used. Respondents were asked to rate on a five-point scale: 1 (agree) and 5 (disagree) to a series of statements. Examples of these statements include "this organisation really cares for my well-being", "whenever they can, this organisation takes advantage of me", or "this organisation listens to my opinions".

Cross-cultural training. Three training metrics for cultural training were used. The first measure comes from Ford and Noe's (1987) scale on the adequacy of training. The second comes from Early's (1987) two-item scale that specifically deals with cross-cultural training for managers, including responses to questions like "how specific is the information you get about your destination country's culture?". Both items were ranked on a five-point Likert-type scale.

Spouse adjustment. This component was measured in a similar way to global manager adjustment. Specifically, global managers were asked to respond to nine of the 14 questions in Black and Stephens (1989) questionnaire, i.e. excluding job-related items. This same procedure has been used by Black and Gregersen (1991).

Demographic data. Age, nationality, sex, marital status, and previous experiences in IAs were ascertained by the questionnaire, time in the organisation, time in the assignment and type of position were asked under demographic data.

Data Collection

Because the participants in this study were Spanish-speaking and the original instrument as previously available was in English, a translation/back-translation technique was used to ensure reliability (for more information, see Behling and Law, 2000). The EQ-i (Bar-On, 1997) Spanish short version (Ugarriza, 2001) was also included in the questionnaire. The global manager and his immediate supervisor each responded to a separate questionnaire.

Surveys were sent to global managers currently occupying IA positions in Latin America. The participant's data base was obtained from the HR departments of international companies, as well as from the data base of former students of academic institutions. The immediate supervisor was identified by the HR department and by asking the global manager for his immediate supervisor's details. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and the overall confidentiality of the responses was stressed.

In parallel, a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted amongst international managers of Spanish international companies operating in Peru. In total, 20 international-assignee managers were interviewed. The first key theme in the interviews was to define the success measures of an international-assignee manager. Next, the focus shifted to related factors that influence the success level of international-assignee managers. Finally, the interviewer was asked to define the profile of a successful internationally-assigned manager and the elements to be taken into consideration in the international-assignee manager selection process. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Results

The results are separated into two sections: preliminary quantitative result and illustrative qualitative results.

Preliminary quantitative results

Given that the research proposal calls for predicting success of internationally-assigned managers over a particular assignment, these preliminary quantitative results focus on

- (1) establishing the psychometric quality of the scales used,
- (2) drawing the research participants' baseline, and
- (3) preliminary hypothesis quantitative results.

The psychometric properties of the scales and variables. Table I shows Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the multiple-item scales used in the study. Despite the relatively small sample size, the values are high for almost all the scales used (obviously, calculations will be repeated when the sample size rises at the next phase of the study).

Table I.
Descriptive statistics and
Crobach's alpha for the
model variables

General variable	Specific variables	Mean	Std. deviation	Number of items in the scale	Range	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional intelligence	Intrapersonal	4.17	0.40	20	1-5	0.83
	Interpersonal	4.19	0.44	14	1-5	0.78
	Adaptability	4.06	0.51	9	1-5	0.67
	Stress management	3.94	0.60	8	1-5	0.79
Adjustment	G. state of mind	4.24	0.38	9	1-5	0.70
	Work	6.18	0.90	3	1-7	0.94
	Culture	5.40	0.91	7	1-7	0.78
	Interaction	5.59	1.11	4	1-7	0.92
Performance	Contextual & technical performance	3.85	0.53	14	1-5	0.89
	S. job performance	3.83	0.67	3	1-5	0.72
Term assignment	Intention to leave	1.93	0.57	4	1-4	0.43
Satisfaction	General satisfaction	5.07	1.09	5	1-5	0.86
Cultural differences	Cultural differences	2.00	0.75	12	1-5	0.91

Drawing the research participants' baseline. The achievement score was calculated as a percentage rate for individual compares at the maximum possible score for the scale or variable used. The participants show outstanding scores across the various measures. EI achievement scores are above 79 per cent, pointing to relatively good assignment adjustment. Also, global managers show high performance rates (above 76 per cent) and an extremely high level of life satisfaction (91 per cent), revealing that they feel well and highly satisfied, as is also reflected in their score on intention to leave the assignment. With regard to cultural differences, it has been found that global managers are mostly well-adapted, and only 39 per cent diverge from the ideal fit. Their spouses are also generally well-adapted (with 82 per cent, 78 per cent and 76 per cent scores for cultural fit, interaction fit and general adaptation). They also get substantial support from their organisations (77 per cent performance score), although most of them did not get any organisation based training (76 per cent).

Preliminary hypothesis quantitative results. Considering the small sample size, testing the primary hypotheses in this study was limited to bivariate correlations as displayed in Table II. We present the main results of the quantitative analysis below.

EI and success. The correlation between EI and success variables shows a partial picture. A significant correlation was found between the interpersonal emotional component and specific performance.

Thus capacities for empathy, social responsibility and social relations may predict better performance in the specific character of IA.

EI and cross-cultural adjustment. The correlation between EI and adjustment dimensions showed significantly higher correlations. Moreover, while cultural adjustment is not correlated with any EI dimensions, interaction fit correlates with all the EI dimensions except stress management. Adjustment at the work place only correlated with the intrapersonal emotional component.

Cross-cultural adjustment and success. In addition, the correlation between adjustment variables and success variables shows that cultural adjustment is positively correlated with satisfaction among global managers. Finally, adjustment at work correlates negatively with the wish to terminate the assignment. In other words, those who adjust less well to work show greater interest in terminating their assignment.

Cultural differences and EI. It was also found that cultural differences are related to EI though not to adjustment. Specifically, cultural differences are inversely related to the emotional components of adaptability and overall state of mind, but not to any adjustment variable. Cultural differences seem to be both an advantage and a barrier when considering IAs.

Control variables and cross-cultural adjustment. It was found that a positive relationship exists between personal adjustment and spouse adjustment, both between cultural and interaction adjustment aspects and between work and general adjustment. This finding points that appropriate adjustment amongst global managers also includes their spouses' adjustment.

A positive correlation was also found between time with the organisation and cultural adjustment, technical performance and performance on the job. In other words the longer the time with the organisation, the better the fit and the performance. In addition, there is evidence of a positive correlation between time on the assignment and all adjustment variables, and between scheduled time for the assignment

Table II.
Correlations amongst the
study variables
corresponding to the
stated hypotheses

	1	2	3	4	10	11	12
Success							
1 Intention to leave							
2 Satisfaction							
3 Contextual & technical performance							
4 Specific performance						0.28*	0.31*
5 Intrapersonal				0.36*			
6 Interpersonal							
7 Adaptability							
8 Stress management							
9 General state of mind							
10 Cultural adjustment		0.27*					
11 Interaction adjustment			(0.35*)				
12 Work adjustment	(0.26)*						
13 Cultural difference					(0.29)*	(0.29*)	
14 Interaction spouse adjustment					0.56**	0.72**	
15 Cultural spouse adjustment					0.83**	0.64**	0.30*
16 Time in the organisation			0.41*		0.33*		
17 Time in the assignment			0.36*		0.32*		
18 Age	(0.25*)						0.29*
19 Organisational support		(0.33*)					

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

and context-technical performance, thus revealing a strong link between time on the assignment and adjustment, and that longer-scheduled assignments will result in better context-technical performance.

A negative correlation was nonetheless found between organisational support and general satisfaction, probably meaning that lower satisfaction is linked to lower perceived organisational support, and that satisfaction is a personal element not referred to perceived organisational support.

A negative correlation was nonetheless found between age and intention to leave, probably meaning older managers had less intention to leave the IA than the younger global managers. This might be explained by future career development, where the younger global managers tend to take on more challenges and risks in their future career development, while the older managers are more conscience of the limited possibilities of further international or other assignments. Nonetheless, these findings should be interpreted with caution because of the low reliability of the intention to leave criterion.

Illustrative qualitative result

In this part, we intend to illustrate quantitative data by using qualitative data. Here we would stress that we are not testing the model, but only examining its relevance.

Several interviews mention that EI dimensions are important for success in IA positions.

A CEO in a financial company declared:

(...) When we hire Spanish staff we value in particular their ability to adapt to the country, their technical expertise in the area we need, their willingness to improve, self-drive, and ability to come up with new proposals, their ability to adapt to change and unforeseen circumstances. That's standard. Our screening cycle includes accounting for emotional balance of people who are outside their environment and away from their families.

... accepting our choice was poor and detrimental to the organisation implies recognising your candidates must be screened in every possible sense and not just for their technical contributions. They must also know how to live with others and relate to people.

EI and cross-cultural adjustment. Some of the emotional competencies were mentioned by the interviewers in order to adjust to the new IA context.

A CEO of a service company with more than five years' experience in various IA positions had this to say:

... some of my colleagues were good technical experts but they lacked the ability to adapt to the country and respond to unforeseen circumstances or to reach the emotional balance that is needed, so some people had to leave.

Also a young global manager who was on his first IA had this to say:

(...) Obviously someone in my position has clearly defined goals, but one of the greatest motivations to come here was of a personal character, because I wanted to meet new people, learn new things about this country and see new things in a new culture, a new way to work, and seen from this viewpoint, I think it is crucial to arrive with a new mind-set and not to think you will get here to set the rules or bring here the way we work there. It helps a lot to meet the guy who was in your position before you, because you can learn a new way to work, a new idiosyncrasy. Government agencies move at a different speed. People are more open, more sort of laid-back sometimes, and more relaxed at others.

Cross-cultural adjustment and success. The important role of adjustment in success was mentioned in different perspectives by the interviewers.

A CEO of an electric company in Peru had this to say:

... I think when it comes to relationships, people who are ill at ease will hardly be successful professionally in a foreign environment. Those who have a better ability to relate will be more successful. But those are things that can be identified but not taught. You can't train people on those things.

A Spanish financial CEO with over ten years' experience in global and IAs told us:

... Technically, they were all approved. Sure, they knew their jobs perfectly well. They knew the culture and knew how to adapt when they arrived here. I have seen a couple of people that did not stay their whole term had to tell them either they adapted or they would have to leave, but you have to put a stop to this kind of situation. Not all the good technical people adapt well.

Cultural differences and EI. The ability to understand and handle the differences between the host and origin cultures were mentioned as an important component in the IA.

As remarked by the CEO of a financial corporation:

We must be respectful of their habits. We have been here for five years. We should know better. If it bothers them our wives do their shopping once a week while Peruvians do their shopping every day, then I would have to tell my wife she should go shopping every day. If they do not like the way we use coarse language, then I better refrain from using that kind of language even if it doesn't sound bad to me. And when I have to argue I better bite my tongue. I know we are foreigners here so we have to respect (the local) habits.

Control variables and cross-cultural adjustment. The importance of spouse adjustment was frequently mentioned in the interviews.

A CEO of consulting company in Bolivia explained:

(...) They may not be professional (women) but many women have adjusted successfully. Why? Because they made good contacts, did charity work, played cards, went to parties. Those kinds of women adapt well. But if they are used to going shopping and those kinds of things, they will not adapt well in La Paz. Most cases of failure in our organisation were because the wives did not adapt. But the same thing happens when we move from a large city like Buenos Aires to an even larger city like Sao Paulo, because often what prevents people from adapting is their fear, or their homesickness. They miss their family and friends and they are unable to make new friends, and that can happen in New York, in Sydney or in La Paz (...).

The time in the organisation aspect was also expressed by the CEO of a financial corporation who said:

For instance, I always look at myself as an example. I have been with the Bank for 38 years. I started when I was 14. I have always worked here. And in 14 years I have been in 14 different professional positions. And I think that is important. Let's see. I think people identify with the corporate culture where they work. You have to support that with a lot of communication. Making them see the only thing that makes a difference in a bank is quality, their passion for people.

The importance of organisational support was expressed by a manager from an international service corporation who has more than ten years experience in IA positions:

I left ten years ago, and I have this feeling the concern for human resources is growing. There are things that make your life easier. But when I left there was none of that. That's why they send us to put out fires. You have to find your own resources. In Argentina we had more imports. The local organisation helps a bit. But otherwise you don't get any kind of training before you leave. You just pack up and leave. The fact they have nothing arranged in advance. To help you find a place to live. That has an effect on your mood. Because you have to waste your time when you should be working. And in the end, the company loses because you are doing things anyone can do. It was hard for me. I had no training. My company assumes you have to be ready to pick up the challenge. They assume you always have to be ready.

Discussion and Conclusion

The strategic management of international human resources, focusing on staffing issues pertaining to international manager assignment, provided the main framework for this study. The literature reports high levels of difficulties in terms of effectiveness and organisational and personal expectation. This, at the individual level, is mainly reflected in difficulties in adjustment and performance across cultural settings (Caligiuri, 2000; Cerdin, 1999, 2002).

The broader study aims at testing a "systemic" model pertaining to the relationships between several dimensions of EI, their impact on the cross-cultural adjustment of global managers in turn having an impact on the IA's success. The core hypothesis considers that the EI of global-assigned managers is a decisive variable in explaining cultural adjustment and therefore this person's success. Due to the particular design of the research, the target of the broader study will include a fairly large sample of internationally-assigned managers and data collected at 2-point intervals. However in the study presented here, only preliminary results based on a small sample of senior managers are reported. Nonetheless, the conclusions are supported by the interpretation of a series of interviews with senior executives and CEOs who had vast experience in IAs.

First, the research was able to empirically test the huge range of scales and variables used in the model, and to report their psychometric qualities. Given that this is the first time that this has been done in the Spanish language, results are very satisfactory.

Second, the average achievement scores of individual managers are relatively high. Variance is limited, which means that by and large currently-assigned international managers show the "right" skills, have high levels of adjustment and manifest good job performance. More likely than not, those who do not show high performance or exhibit negative traits have been removed from the IA, or were not screened for senior managerial positions within their respective organisations. The problem of narrow variance obviously poses a challenge for analysing the data and the corresponding limited significant findings reported.

Nevertheless, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn in relation to the proposed model. For example, although EI does not seem to have a statistically significant influence on the success variables, it is related to adjustment.

While adjustment may have a direct impact on success and career advancement, EI shows an adjustment-mediated indirect effect. These findings will be re-tested once more data has been collected, using statistical methods enabling the moderator test (i.e. moderated regression). It was also found that cultural differences are related to EI though not to adjustment. Specifically, cultural differences are inversely related to the emotional components of adaptability and overall state of mind, but not to any adjustment variables.

In general, the findings support the propositions made by numerous scholars who emphasise the importance of non-technical factors in explaining the effectiveness of IA (e.g. Caligiuri, 1997a, b, 2000). More specifically, the findings suggest that although EI is not a direct predictor of success in IA, some dimensions of EI play an important role in explaining the cross-cultural adjustment and thereby success of internationally assigned managers. These interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities and adaptability are predictive indicators of cultural interaction and work adjustment. Also cultural differences had been found to act as moderators and to have important influence on the intensity of the relationship between EI and cross-cultural adjustment. Thus EI helps to diminish the cultural differences between the host and home cultures of the global manager, and thereby increases the possibilities for better cross-cultural adjustment. Furthermore, the findings suggest that some of the control variables play an important role in the success of IAs. Spouse adjustment and time in the IA predict the global manager's success. Moreover, the findings reflect the fact that EI is indeed a major skill in IAs. It is quite likely that the extent to which it is present contributes significantly to adjustment and thereby to success in the assignment. In this sense, strong ability to adjust to a new job and cultural and social environment amongst global managers may be predicted by introducing EI as a criterion for selection, and consequently for predicting overall cross-cultural adjustment and success in IAs (Eysneck, 1998; Harvey *et al.*, 2002). In addition to a global manager's EI, family adjustment turns out to be a determining factor in IA success.

Findings supports the importance of the longitudinal design, viewing the global manager's success as a dynamic process between success criteria and their predictors. Time on the IA has an important influence on the adjustment process, and success is determined differently through various stages. This study can add value in providing a better understanding of how the process evolved (Aycan, 1997). In this context, one should add that success criteria are interrelated at a particular point in time, and their influence is felt at different points during the manager's IA. This relationship can only be fully appreciated if evaluated over time (Caligiuri, 1997a, b; Aycan and Kanungo, 1997).

Limitations, strengths and future research

This paper is not without limitations. Our model is limited by the state of cultural intelligence theories, and it will require modification as new findings and new theories come to light. Although there is no consensus on the dimensions that make up cultural intelligence, our model suggests that EI should be examined in relation to cross-cultural adjustment and success in IAs. We looked at the success of an expatriation particularly in terms of performance and intent to leave the assignment early, which may have an impact on career success. Further studies should examine whether there is a direct relationship between EI and career success.

In addition to the systemic conceptual model proposed, a key advantage of this study pertains to its rigorous methodological design (multiple data sources, quantitative data and qualitative input, two time intervals, excellent psychometric qualities of the scales used, etc.). Studying IA success in managers is an ambitious and complex task, involving the overcoming of many hurdles. Although ideally, the time interval for the data collection should extend beyond six months, the latter was chosen for pragmatic reasons. This exercise therefore does not pretend to be a true longitudinal design but rather semi-longitudinal, sufficient to detect some of the trends and dynamics of the phenomenon.

The developmental characteristics of EI, and adjustment to suit situational factors, can have a significant influence on a global manager's success. Spouse adjustment has emerged as a crucial factor for the international manager's adjustment. The relationships we identified were very frequently mentioned during the interviews, and merit deeper consideration for their likely impact.

It was also found that while adjustment has a direct impact on success, EI has only an indirect adjustment-mediated impact. Nonetheless, EI reduces the cultural gap, while a longer stay at the organisation and the assignment lead to better fit and success. These results provide evidence for the validity of the proposed model that may be subsequently tested when the final research findings are available.

Initial findings support many of the proposed hypotheses. However, the small sample size precludes definitively confirming the model. The next phase of the study envisages a larger and more heterogeneous sample including a greater range of professional levels and nationalities of the international assignees. Thus conclusions should be regarded as tentative, although their external validity may be greater for Spanish language speaking managers assigned to Latin American countries.

The findings based on the self-reported questionnaires should be treated with caution due to the possibilities of "method-variance". Nonetheless, the cross-validation of data generated through interviews somewhat mitigates this potential problem. In the second phase of this study, cross-validation data will also come from the supervisors of the internationally-assigned managers.

In this paper, we partially integrate the voluminous cross-cultural adjustment and EI literature in order to provide a predictive model of adjustment and expatriate success. When studying expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment and success, it is important to examine individual competencies such as EI. We hope that our research will help organisations to improve the recruitment of their expatriates, and expatriates to better understand individual competencies conducive to the success of an IA, from both organisational and individual perspectives.

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