

## **The Effects of Cultural Intelligence on Cross-Cultural Adjustment and Job Performance amongst Expatriates in Malaysia**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the effects of cultural intelligence (CQ) and its dimensions on cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) and job performance in a sample of 332 expatriates working in Malaysia. The findings of this study reveal that CQ is a vital cross-cultural competency that facilitates expatriates CCA and job performance in international assignment. Specifically, the results of this study reveal that expatriates in Malaysia with greater meta-cognitive and motivational CQ fared better in their general adjustment. Greater interaction adjustment was related to being greater meta-cognitive, greater cognitive and greater motivational CQ. Greater work adjustment was related to being greater motivational CQ. Secondly, it was found that greater contextual performance in expatriates was related to being greater meta-cognitive and behavioral CQ, while greater assignment specific performance was related to greater behavioral CQ. However, there was no support for the relationship between CQ and task performance. The findings of this study contributes to the body of knowledge in the cross-cultural management field as well as practical implication to expatriating firms especially in the area of selection and hiring of international candidates.*

**Keywords:** Cultural intelligence, cross-cultural adjustment, job performance, expatriate

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the pace of globalization, the effectiveness of international assignment is becoming important source of competitive advantage for many organizations (Zhang & Dodgson, 2007). Some of the advantages that companies can gain from sending expatriates on the international assignments are establishing new international markets, spreading and sustaining corporate culture, facilitating organizational coordination and control, and transferring of technology, knowledge and skills (Brown, 1994; Klaus, 1995; Huang, Chi, & Lawler, 2005). In addition, expatriate assignments are also often utilized as effective managerial development opportunities for promising employees (Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005). Prior research on expatriate management has established that individual-level factors, such as personality trait, ability, skill, gender, marital status, prior international experience, and local language fluency are important predictors of expatriate effectiveness (e.g., CCA, job performance, completion of assignment) in their international assignment (Caligiuri, 2000a; Hechanova et al., 2003; Holopainen & Björkman, 2005; Kim & Slocum, 2008). Despite growing interest in the expatriate management, many gaps remain in understanding the diverse factors affecting expatriate effectiveness. Specifically, the individual differences in the form of skills and ability for successful intercultural interaction and communication in culturally diverse environment still remain equivocal (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007). Despite the extensive research and critical reviews, however, much of the research remains poorly organized in the form of lists of skills rather than as an integrated theoretical framework. Such listings fail to provide a comprehensive conceptual classification, and thus, remain detached from theory (Dinges & Baldwin, 1996; Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, Ng, Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2007).

It is believed that cultural intelligence (CQ) represents an essential intercultural capacity that is vital for expatriates working on international assignments within contemporary organizations (Alon & Higgins, 2005). Defined broadly as an individual's capability to effectively deal with people from different cultural backgrounds (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, & Ng, 2004), CQ holds great promise to explain why some people interact and adapt more effectively in foreign cultures than others, beyond just an ability to understand the language of a culture. However, awareness of the concept's significance for international assignment effectiveness still remains at an early stage. Responding to this need, the present study aimed to advance Earley and Ang's (2003) theoretical discussion of CQ by empirically examine the role of CQ and its dimensions on two main criterion of expatriate effectiveness (i.e., CCA, job performance) in a sample of expatriates working in Malaysia. The present study is also aimed to establish the best indicator to measure expatriate effectiveness which is lacking as of to date. In addition, the present study aimed to provide practical suggestions to management. A clear understanding of which individual factors contribute to expatriate effectiveness would aid decision makers and human resource professionals in the design of appropriate selection mechanism and training programs.

## **2.0 Theoretical Development and Hypothesis**

### **2.1 Cultural Intelligence**

The concept of CQ represents an individual's capability for successful adaptation to new and unfamiliar cultural settings and ability to function easily and effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ang et al., 2007). Grounded in the established stream of intelligence research, CQ is a theoretical extension of existing facet models anchored on the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993). CQ is a multidimensional construct consist of meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral component (Earley & Ang, 2003). The meta-cognitive CQ is defined as one's knowledge or control over cognitions that leads to deep information processing relating to culture (Ang et al., 2004). It consists of the cognitive strategies that are used to acquire and generate coping strategies (Ng & Earley, 2006). Ang et al. (2004) further state that meta-cognitive CQ is the individuals' cultural conscious and awareness, and is thus manifest in the ability to question cultural assumptions. Relevant capabilities include planning, monitoring, and revising mental models of cultural norms for countries or groups of people (Ang et al., 2007).

The cognitive CQ reflects knowledge of the norms, practices and conventions in different cultures gained from both the experience and formal education, those universal as well as culture-specific (Ang et al., 2004; Ang et al., 2007). This includes knowledge of the economic, legal, and social systems of different cultures and subcultures (Triandis, 1994) and knowledge of basic frameworks of cultural values. Those with high cognitive CQ understand similarities and differences across cultures (Brislin, Worthley, & MacNab, 2006). Motivational CQ goes beyond recognizing cultural differences, and deals with the motivation behind cognitive processes and cognitive knowledge; it reflects the interest in engaging others and the desire to adapt to the other culture (Ang et al., 2007). This facet of CQ includes three primary motivators: enhancement (wanting to feel good about oneself), growth (wanting to challenge and improve oneself), and continuity (the desire for continuity and predictability in ones' life) (Earley, Ang, & Tan, 2006).

According to Earley and Ang (2003) and Ng and Earley (2006), this component directs and motivates one's adaptation to a new cultural settings. Kanfer and Heggstad (1997, p. 30 cited in Ang et al., 2007, p. 338) argued that such motivational capacities 'provide agentic control of affect, cognition, and behavior that facilitate goal accomplishment'. Lastly, the behavioral aspect involves the capability to engage in adaptive behaviors in accordance with cognition and motivation based on cultural values of specific settings. This includes having a wide and flexible repertoire of behaviors. According to Earley and Ang (2003), those with high behavioral CQ capable at exhibit situational appropriate behaviors based on their broad range of verbal and nonverbal capabilities, such as displaying culturally appropriate words, tone, gestures, and facial expressions. Anecdotal evidence has demonstrated the ability of CQ to predict various expatriate behavioral outcome such as cultural judgment and decision making (e.g., Ang et al., 2007; Ang et al., 2004), cultural adaptation (e.g., Ward, Fischer, Lam, & Hall, 2008; Ang et al., 2007; Ang et al., 2004), CCA (e.g., Lee & Sukoco, 2007; Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2006), and task performance (e.g., Ang et al., 2004; Ang et al., 2007) in the international arena.

### **2.2 Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

Cross-cultural adjustment is conceptualized as the degree of psychological comfort an expatriate has with the various aspects of a host culture (Black & Stephens, 1989; Gregersen & Black, 1990). Three specific areas of CCA have been distinguished in the literature (Black & Stephens, 1989): adjustment to (1) general environment (degree of comfort with general living conditions, such as climate, health facilities and food);

(2) interaction with host country nationals; and (3) work (performance standards, job and supervisory responsibilities). Cross-cultural adjustment has been suggested to be key indicator as well as a determinant of expatriate success in their international assignments (Templer et al., 2006). According to some researchers, CCA is a temporal and primary outcome in an expatriate's assignment that would influence the development of secondary or more distal expatriate adjustment such as strain (e.g., Hechanova et al., 2003), job satisfaction (e.g., Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002), organizational commitment (e.g., Naumann, 1993; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998), performance (e.g., Shay & Baack, 2006; Kim & Slocum, 2008), and turnover intent (e.g., Black & Stephens, 1989; Hechanova et al., 2003). Prior research on CCA has established that individual-level factors, such as personality trait, ability, skill, gender, marital status, prior international experience, and local language fluency are important predictors of CCA (Caligiuri, 2000a; Hechanova et al., 2003; Holopainen & Björkman, 2005; Kim & Slocum, 2008).

Since CQ is a person's capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts, individuals high in CQ is expected to adjust better in new cultural environment in their international assignment. We expect all the four dimensions of CQ to be related to CCA. First of these, the meta-cognitive CQ should be related to CCA as it facilitates the culture learning process which is important cognitive element in the adjustment process. According to Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve theory of adjustment, individual learn to adjust to new culture through four stages namely, honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, and mastery. As individuals move from one stage to another, the meta-cognitive CQ which is the higher-order mental capability to think about personal thought processes, anticipate cultural preferences of others, and adjust mental models during intercultural experiences would provide individuals with useful insights into understanding the process of learning cultural knowledge (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006; Ang et al., 2007). As individuals high on meta-cognitive CQ master the process of acquiring the cultural knowledge, they should be more persistent in thinking strategically about their interactions with those from other cultures and engage in make sense the general cross-cultural situations hence facilitates their adjustment to new culture.

Cognitive CQ should be positively related to CCA as it represents the knowledge component in the adjustment process. It indicates knowledge of cultural universals as well as knowledge of cultural differences (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006). This knowledge applies to any cultural environment and includes the understanding of geographic, economic, legal, and social systems in other cultures hence provides frameworks for understanding and comparing/contrasting different cultures (Johnson et al., 2006). According to Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida (1989), cultural knowledge is an important determinant of one's ability to minimize misunderstandings with someone from another culture. As such, individual's high on cognitive CQ is most likely is able to adjust to new cultural environment as they are more knowledgeable about specific aspects of other cultures.

Motivational CQ is also expected to be positively related to CCA because those with higher motivational CQ have intrinsic interest in other cultures and expect to be successful in culturally diverse situations. According to Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory, individuals higher in intrinsic motivation will initiate effort, persist in their efforts and perform better. Self-efficacy, other components of motivational CQ is also among the central motivational elements in CCA (Earley & Ang, 2003). Individuals with strong self-efficacies regulate their emotional states effectively; they not only persevere but also set goals and expectations such that they will proactively search for new and useful strategies for approaching the objectives of intercultural encounters (Bandura, 1986; Earley & Ang, 2003). Studies have shown that higher efficacy beliefs led to engagement and persistence in difficult situations, as well as better adjustment (Harrison, Chadwick, & Scales, 1996; Epel, Bandura, & Zimbardo 1999; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Palthe, 2004).

Behavioral CQ is proposed to be related positively with CCA since individual high on this dimension has the capability to vary their behavior in response to situational cues-in particular, in response to cultural cues. Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation discussed that individuals use impression management techniques to make others view them positively. Since cultures differ in their social norms for appropriate behaviors, the ability to display a flexible range of behaviors or adaptive behaviors is critical to create positive impressions and develop effective intercultural relationships with others actors in the culturally diverse environment (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988). When individuals are flexible, they are less offensive to others, more likely to fit in and better adjusted. Research has linked behavioral flexibility to various intercultural outcomes. Black (1990) found that behavioral flexibility correlated with general, interaction, and work adjustment in a sample of Japanese expatriates working in the U.S. Another study found that flexibility predicted both general and work adjustment in expatriate managers working in a variety of countries (Shaffer et al., 2006). Drawing from the above discussion, we therefore propose the below hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive relationship between CQ and cross-cultural adjustment.

Specifically, meta-cognitive CQ (H1a); cognitive CQ (H1b); motivational CQ (H1c) and behavioral CQ (H1d) will relate positively to (i) general adjustment, (ii) interaction adjustment, and (iii) work adjustment.

### **2.3 Job Performance**

Performance is a function of knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivation directed at role-prescribed behavior, such as formal job responsibilities (Campbell, 1999). In this regard, only the behavior or actions that are relevant to an organization's goals are considered as individual job performance (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). Theory of job performance has indicated that job performance is a multidimensional construct consist of task dimension (often production or deadline driven and sometimes referred to as "in-role") and contextual dimension (sometimes considered discretionary and often termed "extrarole") (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). However, there is an argument among the scholars in the expatriate management literature that expatriates are not only expected to perform in their task and contextual performance dimensions but also to accomplish certain assignment specific tasks (e.g., transferring knowledge and technology). Responding to this need, Caligiuri (1997) and Caligiuri and Day (2000) proposed the third dimension of expatriate job performance, expatriate assignment specific performance dimension which starts gain the attention in the expatriate management literature.

Various factors have been associated with expatriate job performance in past studies. A review of literature indicates that personal factors have attracted considerable attention (Caligiuri, 2000a). Specifically, individual factors such as Big Five personality, self-monitoring, self-efficacy, goal orientation, task and people orientation, ethnocentrism, communicational ability, stress tolerance, relational ability, and international experience have been related to expatriate job performance (e.g., Black, 1990; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Parker & McEvoy, 1993; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1999; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999; Caligiuri, 2000a; Hechanova et al., 2003; Holopainen & Björkman, 2005; Shaffer et al., 2006; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007). In proposing the relationship between CQ and job performance, we expect only the motivational and behavioral component of CQ is related to expatriate job performance. As for meta-cognitive and cognitive CQ, we do not predict relationships with job performance because cognitive capabilities do not necessarily translate into actions and behaviors (Hall, 1993). First of these, motivational CQ should influence expatriate performance because the motivational states of CQ (namely, specific self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation in cross-cultural settings) can enhance the strength of an individual's persistent effort toward their task in different cultural contexts.

Those with energy and persistence tend to practice new behaviors and through practice, improve their performance (Ang et al., 2007). As for behavioral CQ those with high behavioral CQ tend to flexible in their verbal and nonverbal behaviors to meet expectations of others. When self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) parallels role expectations, misunderstandings should be lower and performance should be higher (Ang et al., 2007). Drawing from the above discussion, we therefore propose the below hypotheses:

H2: There is a positive relationship between CQ and job performance.

Specifically, motivational CQ (H2a) and behavioral CQ (H2b) will relate positively to (i) task performance, (ii) contextual performance and (iii) assignment-specific performance.

### **3.0 Methodology**

Data were obtained from expatriates using a structured questionnaire through mail and online survey. The participants in the study were expatriates currently working and residing in Malaysia. A total of 500 mail surveys and 500 online surveys were distributed-339 surveys were replied. The initial response rate was 34%, which is consistent with other typical response rates (20-30%) in most expatriate studies (see Harrison & Shaffer, 2005, for example). Out of 339, 7 were unusable responses, resulting in final sample of 332, representing a 33% return rate. The sample included 252 (75.9%) men and 80 (24.1%) women. Participants age included 122 (36.7%) between 42-52 and 103 (31.0%) between 31-41 years old. Participants marital status included 251 (75.6%) married and 54 (16.3%) unmarried. 208 (62.7%) are accompanied by their spouse and 124 (37.3%) are not. 251 (75.6%) has previous international experience and 81 (24.4%) has no previous experience. 238 (71.7%) did not receive any form of cross-cultural training through their organization. Participants job status included 169 (50.9%) in managerial position and 163 (49.1%) in non managerial position. Participants education status included 119 (35.8%) with degree and 85 (25.6%) with masters degree. 112 (33.7%) working in service sector, 84 (25.3%) in manufacturing sector, and 109 (32.8%) in other sector. Participants length of stay in Malaysia ranged from 2 to 24 ( $M=4.80$ ,  $SD=3.40$ ). Tenure with present organization ranged from 2 to 25 ( $M=7.25$ ,  $SD=4.45$ ). The participants are comes from various countries with majority ( $N=51$ , 15.4%) are from India, 39 (11.7%) from UK, 32 (9.6%) from Australia, and 200 (63.3%) from some 42 different countries.

### 3.1 Measures

**Cultural Intelligence:** Cultural intelligence was measured with the 20-item, self-reported Four Factor Model of Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) developed and validated by Ang et al. (2007). The inventory includes four items for meta-cognitive CQ ( $\alpha = .76$ ), six for cognitive CQ ( $\alpha = .84$ ), five for motivational CQ ( $\alpha = .76$ ), and five for behavioral CQ ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Respondents are asked to use a seven-point Likert-type scale to indicate the extent to which each item describes their capabilities. The seven-point Likert-type scale ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

**Cross-cultural adjustment:** Black and Stephens' (1989) self-reported 14-item Expatriate Adjustment Scale was used to assess three dimensions of expatriate adjustment. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they felt they had adjusted to various aspects of life abroad. Seven items assessed *general adjustment* (e.g. housing, food, and shopping); four items assessed *interactions adjustment* (e.g. socializing with people from the host culture); and three items assessed *work adjustment* (e.g. job responsibilities and performance standards/expectations). Respondents are asked to use a seven-point Likert-type scale to indicate the extent to which each item indicates their adjustment to various living and working conditions in the new environment abroad. Response choice alternatives ranged from 1 (very unadjusted) to 7 (completely adjusted). Cronbach's alphas for general adjustment, interactions adjustment, and work adjustment were .91, .82, and .86 respectively (Black & Stephens, 1989).

**Task Performance:** Task performance was measured using Black and Porter's (1991) self-reported 5-item Expatriate Task Performance Scale. Respondents were asked to rate their perceived ability in each of the task performance item in comparison to their peers in similar positions on seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (much worse than most) to 7 (much better than most) for each items. These comparisons were made along five effectiveness dimensions (e.g. completing tasks on time and achievement of work goals). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .86 (Shay & Baack, 2006).

**Contextual Performance:** Expatriate contextual performance was measured using self-reported 5-item adapted from Caligiuri's (1997) Expatriate Contextual/Managerial Performance Scale. Respondents will be asked to rate their ability in each of the contextual performance item in comparison to their peers in similar positions on seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (much worse than most) to 7 (much better than most). Sample item include "your effectiveness at maintaining good working relationships with host nationals". Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .63 (Caligiuri, 1997).

**Expatriate Assignment Specific Performance:** Expatriate assignment specific performance was measured using self-reported 6-item adapted from Caligiuri's (1997) Expatriate Specific Performance Scale. Respondents was asked to rate their ability in each of the assignment specific performance item in comparison to their peers in similar positions on seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (much worse than most) to 7 (much better than most). Sample item include "your effectiveness at transferring job knowledge and technology to host country nationals." Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .67 (Caligiuri, 1997).

**Control variables:** Previous studies found that gender, previous international experience, time in host country and local language fluency influence expatriates' attitudes and behaviors (Ren, Harrison, Bhaskar-Shrinivas, & Shaffer, 2006; Hechanova et al., 2003; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi, Tesluk, et al., 2005). To avoid our findings from be spuriously attributed to various background characteristics, those were measured and controlled in this study.

### 4.0 Results

The descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table 1, along with the correlation matrix. Meta-cognitive CQ was correlated positively with all three dimensions of CCA (general adjustment  $r = .38$ , interaction adjustment  $r = .44$ , and work adjustment  $r = .20$ , all  $ps = <.05$ ). As for job performance criteria, meta-cognitive CQ was correlated positively with contextual ( $r = .29$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and assignment specific performance ( $r = .15$ ,  $p <.05$ ). Cognitive CQ was correlated positively with all three dimensions of CCA (general adjustment  $r = .25$ ,  $p <.05$ , interaction adjustment  $r = .35$ ,  $p <.05$ , and work adjustment  $r = .11$ ,  $p <.05$ ). As for job performance criteria, cognitive CQ was correlated positively only with contextual performance ( $r = .20$ ,  $p <.05$ ). As for motivational CQ, it was found correlated positively with all three dimensions of CCA (general adjustment  $r = .52$ , interaction adjustment  $r = .55$ , and work adjustment  $r = .23$ , all  $ps = <.05$ ). Motivational CQ is also correlated positively with contextual performance ( $r = .26$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and assignment specific performance ( $r = .16$ ,  $p <.05$ ). Behavioral CQ was correlated positively with all three dimensions of CCA (general adjustment  $r = .22$ , interaction adjustment  $r = .33$ , and work adjustment  $r = .16$ , all  $ps = <.05$ ). Behavioral CQ correlated positively with contextual performance ( $r = .28$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and assignment specific performance ( $r = .17$ ,  $p <.05$ ). Generally, CQ and its dimensions was significantly correlated with CCA and job performance and its dimensions except for the relationship with task performance (all  $ps = ns$ ).

Among the CQ dimensions, motivational CQ has the strongest correlation with the entire criteria variable and its dimensions.

#### 4.1 Hypothesis Test

The first hypothesis was: There is a positive relationship between CQ and cross-cultural adjustment. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis. The results of the first step of the regression analysis for this hypothesis are shown in Table 2. When the control variables were entered in the first step, the regression model was statistically significant,  $R^2 = .167$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .157$ ,  $F(4, 327) = 16.393$ ,  $p < .05$ . Length of stay in Malaysia ( $\beta = .231$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and language proficiency ( $\beta = .310$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were statistically significant, indicating that those who had been in Malaysia for a longer period of time and proficient in language tended to have better CCA. When CQ was added to the model in Step 2, the full model was statistically significant,  $R^2 = .368$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .359$ ,  $F(5, 326) = 38.021$ ,  $p < .05$ . Again, length of stay in Malaysia ( $\beta = .176$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and language proficiency ( $\beta = .175$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was positively associated with CCA, indicating that those who had been in Malaysia for a longer period of time and proficient in language tended to have better CCA. Additionally gender was positively related to CCA ( $\beta = .092$ ,  $p < .05$ ). CQ was statistically significant ( $\beta = .477$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of CQ tended to have better CCA. This finding supports the first hypothesis (H1). In addition, the change in  $R^2$  between Step 1 and Step 2 was significant ( $\Delta R^2 = .201$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indicates that CQ explain an additional 20.1 per cent of the variance in CCA, even when the effects of the control variables are statistically controlled for.

The sub-hypotheses 1 are: (H1a) Meta-cognitive CQ; (H1b) cognitive CQ; (H1c) motivational CQ and (H1d) behavioral CQ will relate positively to (i) general, (ii) interaction, and (iii) work adjustment, respectively. To test these hypotheses, it requires an examination on the relationship between dimensions of CQ and dimensions of CCA. Again a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. The full model (See Table 3) after controlling for the effects of control variables in Step 2 was statistically significant for all three dimensions of CCA, general ( $R^2 = .340$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .324$ ,  $F(8, 323) = 20.811$ ,  $p < .05$ ), interaction ( $R^2 = .428$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .414$ ,  $F(8, 323) = 30.262$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and work adjustment ( $R^2 = .107$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .085$ ,  $F(8, 323) = 4.846$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Meta-cognitive CQ was positively related to general ( $\beta = .142$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and interaction adjustment ( $\beta = .143$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indicating that those higher in meta-cognitive CQ tended to have higher level of general and interaction adjustment. Cognitive CQ ( $\beta = .132$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was positively associated with interaction adjustment, indicating those higher in their cognitive CQ tended to have higher level of interaction adjustment. Motivational CQ was positively associated with all three dimensions of CCA, general ( $\beta = .412$ ,  $p < .05$ ), interaction ( $\beta = .385$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and work adjustment ( $\beta = .144$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of motivational CQ tended to have better general, interaction, and work adjustment. In this model, behavioral CQ ( $\beta = -.111$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was negatively related to general adjustment. The above findings supports the hypothesis H1a(i), H1a(ii), H1b (ii), H1c(i), H1c (ii), and H1c(iii).

Comparing the adjusted  $R^2$  value for CCA dimensions, meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ found to account for 41.4 per cent of variance in interaction adjustment. The second largest was for general adjustment, 32.4 per cent of its variance was explained by meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ. The least variance explained was for work adjustment, whereby only 8.5 per cent of the variance was accounted by meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ. In addition, the change in  $R^2$  between Step 1 and Step 2 was significant for all three dimensions of CCA, general ( $\Delta R^2 = .214$ ,  $p < .05$ ), interaction ( $\Delta R^2 = .260$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and work adjustment ( $\Delta R^2 = .055$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This indicates that meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ together explains an additional 21.4, 26.0, and 5.50 per cent of the variance in general, interaction, and work adjustment, respectively, even when the effects of the control variables are statistically controlled for.

The second hypothesis was: There is a positive relationship between CQ and job performance. A hierarchical regression was run to test the hypothesis. The results of the first step of the regression analysis for this hypothesis are shown in Table 4. When the control variables were entered in the first step, the regression model was statistically significant,  $R^2 = .055$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .043$ ,  $F(4, 327) = 4.724$ ,  $p < .05$ . Gender was positively related to job performance ( $\beta = .194$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Length of stay in Malaysia ( $\beta = .123$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was statistically significant, indicating that those who had been in Malaysia for a longer period of time tended to perform better in their job. When CQ was added to the model in Step 2, the full model was statistically significant,  $R^2 = .129$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .115$ ,  $F(5, 326) = 9.615$ ,  $p < .05$ . Again gender ( $\beta = .211$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was positively associated with job performance. However, the length of stay in Malaysia was not statistically significant in this model. CQ was statistically significant ( $\beta = .289$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

This indicates that individuals with higher levels of CQ tended to have better job performance. This finding supports the second hypothesis (H2). In addition, the change in  $R^2$  between Step 1 and Step 2 was significant ( $\Delta R^2 = .074$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indicates that CQ explain an additional 7.4 per cent of the variance in job performance, even when the effects of the control variables are statistically controlled for. The sub-hypotheses 2 are: Motivational CQ (H2a) and behavioral CQ (H2b) will relate positively to (i) task, (ii) contextual, and (iii) assignment-specific performance, respectively. To test these hypotheses, it requires an examination on the relationship between dimensions of CQ and dimensions of job performance. Again a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. The full model (See Table 5) after controlling for the effects of control variables in Step 2 was statistically significant for all three dimensions of job performance, task ( $R^2 = .054$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .031$ ,  $F(8, 323) = 2.303$ ,  $p < .05$ ), contextual ( $R^2 = .158$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .137$ ,  $F(8, 323) = 7.588$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and assignment-specific performance ( $R^2 = .102$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .080$ ,  $F(8, 323) = 4.597$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Meta-cognitive CQ was positively related to contextual performance ( $\beta = .153$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indicating that those higher in meta-cognitive CQ tended to have higher level of contextual performance. Behavioral CQ was positively associated with contextual ( $\beta = .154$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and assignment specific performance ( $\beta = .157$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of behavioral CQ tended to have better contextual and assignment specific performance. In this model, cognitive and motivation CQ is not a significant predictor for job performance. Surprisingly, none of the CQ dimensions significantly associated with task performance, indicating that CQ is a not good predictor for task performance dimension. The above findings supports the hypothesis H2b (ii) and H2b (iii).

Comparing the adjusted  $R^2$  value for job performance dimensions, meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ found to account for 13.7 per cent of variance in contextual performance. The second largest was for assignment specific performance, 8.0 per cent of its variance was explained by meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ. The least variance explained was for task performance, whereby only 3.1 per cent of the variance was accounted by meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ. In addition, the change in  $R^2$  between Step 1 and Step 2 was significant for contextual ( $\Delta R^2 = .106$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and assignment specific performance ( $\Delta R^2 = .054$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This indicates that meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ together explains an additional 10.6 and 5.4 per cent of the variance in contextual and assignment specific performance, respectively, even when the effects of the control variables are statistically controlled for. However, as for task performance dimension, meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ together did not account for any additional variance.

## 5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the effects of CQ on CCA and job performance among expatriates in Malaysia. The results indicated that after accounting for control variables, gender, prior overseas experience, time in host country and language fluency, CQ were significantly related to CCA and job performance. In general, the findings of the present study is consistent with results of prior study (e.g., Ang et al., 2004; Lee & Sukoco, 2007; Templer et al., 2006; Ang et al., 2007; Ward et al., 2008). First of these, it was found that expatriates in Malaysia with greater meta-cognitive and motivational CQ fared better in their general adjustment. Greater interaction adjustment in expatriates was related to being greater meta-cognitive, greater cognitive and greater motivational CQ. Greater work adjustment was related to being greater motivational CQ. As for the job performance, greater contextual performance in expatriates was related to being greater meta-cognitive and behavioral CQ, while greater assignment specific performance was related to greater behavioral CQ. However, there was no support for the relationship between CQ and task performance.

The cognitive aspect of CQ (i.e., meta-cognitive, cognitive CQ) was related to CCA in expected direction. Specifically, meta-cognitive dimension of CQ was related positively to general and interaction adjustment. This implies that the greater the meta-cognitive CQ the greater the general and interaction adjustment will be. Similarly, the cognitive aspect of CQ was also positively related to CCA. Specifically, cognitive dimension of CQ was related positively to interaction adjustment. This implies that the greater the cognitive CQ the greater the interaction adjustment will be. This pattern of results supports Ang et al.'s (2007) contention that cognitive capabilities such as questioning assumptions, adjusting mental models, and rich cultural knowledge schemas are especially important for making accurate judgments and decisions when situations involve cultural diversity. This in turn facilitates the expatriate's adaptation process to new cultural environment. The significant positive relationship that was found between meta-cognitive CQ and job performance is as expected. The finding of this study appears to be consistent with Ang et al. (2004) and Ang et al. (2007). Specifically, meta-cognitive CQ was found to be positively related to contextual performance. The significant relationship between meta-cognitive CQ and contextual performance in intercultural settings is consistent with existing conceptual and empirical research on organizational diversity.

For instance, Caldwell and O'Reilly (1982) demonstrated that those who monitored the situation (i.e., meta-cognition) were more effective in boundary spanning jobs that required interactions across groups with different norms. Likewise, Roberts' (2005) conceptual article on professionals argued for the importance of accurate sense making for effective and appropriate self-presentation in organizations characterized by diversity. Our study conducted in culturally diverse settings in Malaysia extends these findings to show that meta-cognitive capabilities are important for effective job performance. Similar to the finding in majority of the prior studies, motivational CQ was the only CQ dimension that strongly associated with CCA. Specifically, motivational CQ was related to experiencing greater general, interaction, and work adjustment in the positive direction. This implies that the greater the motivational CQ the greater the general, interaction, and work adjustment will be. The result of this study is consistent with findings of prior study (e.g., Templer et al., 2006; Ward et al., 2008). This finding suggests that expatriates who were more interested and motivated to explore and experience diverse cultures, and who were more self-confident in their abilities to adapt to new cultural environments adjusted better to work, life, and social demands in foreign assignments (Ang et al., 2007).

The relationship between motivational CQ and job performance however was not supported in this study. Since role expectations for job performance are core responsibilities that are typically well structured and well specified, they may require relatively little intrinsic interest and self-efficacy to function effectively in culturally diverse situations (i.e., motivational CQ) (Ang et al., 2007). In addition, since motivational CQ reflects the interest in engaging others and the desire to adapt to the other culture (Ang et al., 2007) it should be related significantly to CCA than job performance. This pattern of result appears to be consistent with findings reported in Ang et al. (2004) and Ang et al. (2007). Despite prediction, behavioral CQ was not positively related to CCA. Instead it was found to be negatively related to general adjustment. Negative relationship between behavioral CQ and CCA is likely to occur when the expatriate engage in mimicry rather than of adaptive behaviors that are correct for different intercultural situations. Evidence suggests that high level of mimicry demonstrated by actors in new cultural environment are perceived as insincere or even devious (Thomas & Ravlin, 1995), hence subject to some form of rejection from other actors in the new cultural environment. This in turn may affect the expatriate's psychological well being and adjustment to various aspects of new intercultural environment.

As expected, behavioral dimension of CQ was positively related to job performance. The result of this study is in line with Ang et al. (2004) and Ang et al. (2007). Specifically, the result of this study found that behavioral dimension of CQ was related positively to contextual and assignment-specific performance. This implies that the greater the behavioral CQ the greater the contextual and assignment-specific performance will be. One possible explanation for the significant relationship that was found between behavioral CQ and job performance dimensions is that those with high level of behavioral CQ tend to be flexible in their verbal and nonverbal behaviors to meet expectations of others. When self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) parallels role expectations, misunderstandings should be lower and job performance should be higher. In addition, the significant relationship between behavioral CQ and both contextual and assignment specific performance dimensions is perhaps the adaptive behaviors nature in behavioral CQ dimension are more relevant to extra-role requirements in the contextual and assignment specific performance dimensions than task performance dimension.

### **5.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications**

This study contributes to both CQ literature and expatriate management in several ways. First, this study enhances the knowledge on CQ as an effective intercultural competency construct by providing a convincing empirical evidence for the relationship between CQ and both the expatriate CCA and job performance. In particular, the present study provides empirical support for the validity of all four dimensions of CQ in understanding how individuals adjust and perform in their international assignment. It furthers the theoretical developments of Earley and Ang's (2003) CQ concept. Second, previous studies of individual differences have focused on only one or two elements of the criterion space for expatriates (Black, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000a; Dalton & Wilson, 2000; Deller, 1997). In this study, we simultaneously cover a wide range of criterion elements, including multiple dimensions of CCA and job performance. In this regard, this study will be among the first to explore the relationships between CQ and two important criterion of effectiveness, affective (i.e., CCA), and behavioral (i.e., job performance). This will help to establish the best indicator or criterion to measure expatriate effectiveness which is lacking as of to date for future research to embark on. In addition, the use of field data collected from expatriates from wide range of backgrounds originating from 45 different countries enhances the generalizability of results. Finally, this study also adds to the body of knowledge in the area of cross-cultural management studies in Malaysia.



The findings of this study help to fill the void in the existing dearth knowledge on expatriate management in this country. Findings of this study can be used to predict and understand expatriates effectiveness in other South East Asian countries since this country have a lot of commonalities in the national cultural value as proposed in Hofstede's (1984, 1988) model of national cultural value dimensions. This study also has practical implications related to international human resource management area. Findings of this research may provide MNCs with valuable direction and tools in the area of expatriate selection, placement, and training and development. Specifically, since our results highlighted motivational and behavioral CQ as a most significant predictor of various effectiveness criteria, individuals high on these aspects should be a competency by which people scheduled for expatriate assignments are screened. As for training and development, training programs could include module on motivational and behavioral component of CQ rather than focused primarily on knowledge or cognitive training (Earley & Peterson, 2004).

## **5.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This study has certain limitations which provide venues for future research. First, we acknowledge that some concerns might exist in that self-reported measures (i.e., CQ, CCA, job performance) have social desirability and common method bias problem (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Therefore future research should include expatriate effectiveness assessment from multiple sources including peers, subordinates, and superiors. Second, this study is cross-sectional in design. Future research should considering longitudinal study since CQ is a dynamic competency which is malleable capability (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006) and therefore their effects on effectiveness criterion may varies over time. As such longitudinal study would provide better knowledge on these changes that took place over the time. Finally, since this study assesses individual's perceived ability in CQ and various assignment effectiveness, conducting a qualitative study using interview or observation may provide broader understanding of CQ and its effect on various assignment effectiveness.

## **5.3 Conclusions**

In conclusion, the research findings presented here contributes to knowledge of expatriate management theoretically, as well as practically. The results demonstrated the importance of CQ, especially motivational and behavioral component of CQ on various international assignment effectiveness criteria. This suggests that MNC's should consider this variable when selecting and training appropriate candidates for international assignments. We conclude by hoping for this research to stimulate more research attention on how CQ can enhance expatriate effectiveness in its broader nomological network by examining various antecedents, moderators, and outcomes of CQ.

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**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and correlations (N=332)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Meta Cognitive	5.79	.69	.84													
Cognitive	5.16	.56	.33**	.78												
Motivational Behavioral	5.90	.71	.53**	.35**	.85											
Behavioral	5.42	.81	.42**	.42**	.44**	.86										
General Adjustment	5.71	.70	.38**	.25**	.52**	.22**	.83									
Interaction Adjustment	5.66	.76	.44**	.35**	.55**	.33**	.55**	.86								
Work Adjustment	5.98	.80	.20**	.11*	.23**	.16**	.24**	.29**	.90							
Task performance	5.80	.72	.07	.09	.10	.07	.03	.13*	.27**	.87						
Contextual Performance	5.50	.62	.29**	.20**	.26**	.28**	.17**	.36**	.32**	.49**	.81					
Specific Performance	5.44	.67	.15**	.08	.16**	.17**	.01	.16**	.24**	.47**	.65**	.85				
Gender	1.24	.428	.05	.08	.03	.13*	.05	-.00	-.15**	-.16**	-.12*	-.21**	-			
Prior experience	1.24	.430	.01	-.08	-.09	-.07	-.02	.03	-.08	-.03	-.03	.04	.12**	-		
Duration of stay	4.80	3.40	.12*	.12*	.08	.14**	.21**	.28**	.16**	.12*	.17**	.03	-.03	-.03	-	
Language proficiency	3.57	.70	.18**	.18**	.30**	.28**	.31**	.32**	.06	-.02	.11*	.03	-.21**	-.21**	.16**	-

**Table 2:** Results of the Hierarchical Regression Analysis with CQ as a Predictor of Cross-Cultural Adjustment (N = 332)

Variable	Step 1			Step 2		
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	.063	1.214	.226	.092	2.017	.044
Prior overseas experience	-.038	-.719	.472	-.054	-1.187	.236
Length in Malaysia	.231	4.508	.000	.176	3.910	.000
Language proficiency	.310	5.804	.000	.175	3.618	.000
CQ	-	-	-	.477	10.193	.000

Note: Gender and prior experience are dummy-coded categorical variables.

Step 1  $R^2 = .167$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .157$ ,  $F(4, 327) = 16.393$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Step 2  $R^2 = .368$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .359$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .201$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $F(5, 326) = 38.021$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 3:** Results of the Hierarchical Regression Analysis between Dimensions of CQ and Dimensions of Cross-Cultural Adjustment (N = 332)

Variable	General		Interaction		Work	
	Step 1 β (t)	Step 2 β (t)	Step 1 β (t)	Step 2 β (t)	Step 1 β (t)	Step 2 β (t)
Gender	-.004(-.084)	-.013(-.274)	.058(1.118)	.064(1.474)	.149(2.685)**	.155(2.842)**
Prior experience	-.031(-.576)	-.037(-.794)	-.093(-1.780)	-.107(-2.441)*	.055(.981)	.052(.947)
Length of stay	.167(3.181)**	.146(3.138)**	.230(4.490)***	.190(4.406)***	.146(2.663)**	.125(2.313)*
Language fluency	.291(5.327)***	.167(3.323)**	.314(5.879)***	.162(3.479)**	.050(.880)	-.022(-.385)
Meta-cognitive		.142(2.543)*		.143(2.769)**		.096(1.483)
Cognitive		.058(1.136)		.132(2.760)**		.001(.016)
Motivation		.412(7.195)***		.385(7.226)***		.144(2.165)*
Behavior		-.111(-2.027)*		-.009(-.185)		.061(.951)
R <sup>2</sup>	.126	.340	.169	.428	.053	.107
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.116	.324	.159	.414	.041	.085
Δ R <sup>2</sup>		.214***		.260***		.055**
F	(4,327) 11.809***	(8,323) 20.811***	(4,327) 16.592***	(8,323) 30.262***	(4,327) 4.531**	(8,323) 4.846***

Note: \*p < .05.                      \*\*p<.01                      \*\*\*p<.001  
 Note: Gender and prior experience are dummy-coded categorical variables.

**Table 4:** Results of the Hierarchical Regression Analysis with CQ as a Predictor of Job Performance (N = 332)

Variable	β	Step 1		β	Step 2	
		t	p		t	p
Gender	.194	3.502	.001	.211	3.959	.000
Prior overseas experience	-.020	-.350	.727	-.030	-.550	.582
Length in Malaysia	.123	2.251	.025	.090	1.695	.091
Language proficiency	.054	.954	.341	-.027	-.481	.631
CQ	-	-	-	.289	5.258	.000

Note: Gender and prior experience are dummy-coded categorical variables.  
 Step 1 R<sup>2</sup> = .055, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .043, F(4, 327) = 4.724, p< .05; Step 2 R<sup>2</sup> = .129, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .115, F(5, 326) = 9.615, p< .05, ΔR<sup>2</sup>= .074, p< .05.

**Table 5:** Results of the Hierarchical Regression Analysis between Dimensions of CQ and Dimensions of Job Performance (N = 332)

Variable	Task		Contextual		Specific	
	Step 1 β (t)	Step 2 β (t)	Step 1 β (t)	Step 2 β (t)	Step 1 β (t)	Step 2 β (t)
Gender	.150(2.693)**	.156(2.790)**	.132(2.375)*	.151(2.860)**	.216(3.898)***	.231(4.230)***
Prior experience	.018(.313)	.010(.174)	-.004(-.074)	-.009(-.173)	-.070(-1.258)	-.077(-1.392)
Length of stay	.118(2.133)*	.105(1.891)	.146(2.677)**	.107(2.036)*	.025(.451)	-.001(-.016)
Language fluency	-.015(-.260)	-.053(-.879)	.113(1.976)*	.017(.299)	.017(.290)	-.057(-.967)
Meta-cognitive		-.005(-.078)		.153(2.432)*		.058(.893)
Cognitive		.060(.979)		.049(.847)		-.004(-.065)
Motivation		.078(1.141)		.091(1.404)		.092(1.383)
Behavior		.035(.526)		.154(2.489)*		.157(2.457)*
R <sup>2</sup>	.038	.054	.052	.158	.048	.102
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.027	.031	.041	.137	.036	.080
Δ R <sup>2</sup>		.016(ns)		.106***		.054**
F	(4,327) 3.268*	(8,323) 2.303*	(4,327) 4.528**	(8,323) 7.588***	(4,327) 4.104**	(8,323) 4.597***

Note: \*p < .05.                      \*\*p<.01                      \*\*\*p<.001  
 Note: Gender and prior experience are dummy-coded categorical variables.