

# THE IMPACT OF EXPATRIATES' HOME COUNTRY CULTURE ON THEIR TIME TO PROFICIENCY: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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## ABSTRACT

The time required by expatriates to become proficient in their new positions is important to both employers and employees. The existing literature on expatriate success is largely blind to what may be significant factors in the process of creating and sustaining job performance amongst the expatriate group: the effect of time and the effect of home country culture. In this study, we examined the impact of five organizational antecedents (role clarity, role discretion, supervisory support, coworkers support and perceived organizational culture dissimilarity) on corporate expatriates' Time to Proficiency (TTP) in four home country cultures (HCC) samples. We specifically examine the direct impact of HCC on expatriates' TTP and the moderating effects of HCC on TTP's organizational antecedents. We used a self-administrated questionnaire on a sample of 224 expatriated managers in New Delhi, India, from four different home countries: France, Germany, Korea, and Scandinavia. To analyze the data, we used PLS Graph version 3.00, a component based Structural Equation Modeling technique. We tested the impact of HCC on TTP by examining the mean scores in TTP across HCC. Differences between path coefficients across the four HCC were analysed using path coefficients' comparison. Our results show that 1) on the full sample, all five organizational antecedents have a significant impact on expatriates' TTP, 2) TTP mean scores significantly vary across HCC and 3) the organizational antecedents of expatriate TTP and their relative importance vary across HCC. Our results are broadly consistent with the cultural studies: except for the Korean expatriates, the larger the cultural distance, the longer the TTP. Knowledge that HCC is a significant predictor of TTP suggests that organizations may need to reconsider their international staffing policies, especially in the fields of recruitment, staffing policies and support policies.

**JEL Classifications:** M1, M160, M510, M540, M590, Z190

**Keywords:** expatriation, time to proficiency, adjustment, performance, culture of origin, home country culture, organizational antecedents.

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## INTRODUCTION

International assignment issues figure prominently in the international human resource management (IHRM) agenda, owing to their importance in the global coordination and integration of resources and operations (eds. Björkman & Stahl 2006: p.8). Given the high cost of expatriation, there is pressure to ensure that they are managed in a cost-effective manner. That implies that they should adjust to their new environment and become proficient there as quickly as possible (Sinangil and Ones 1997).

The extensive literature on expatriate adjustment largely assumes that adjustment equates with performance on the job, though few scholars have examined this issue directly (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk 2005; Hechanova, Beehr and Christiansen 2003). A number of conceptual and methodological issues contribute to the view that the adjustment–performance relationship is equivocal (Festing and Maletzky 2011). Moreover, what literature there is on expatriate success (see, eg, Caligiuri and Tung 1999; Caligiuri and Day 2000) is largely blind to what may be a significant factor in the process of creating and sustaining job performance amongst the expatriate group: the effect of time (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005; Hippler, Brewster and Haslberger 2015; Torbiorn 1982). The longer an expatriate stays in the country the better their understanding of the need to adjust and the greater their knowledge of the country (Haslberger, Brewster and Hippler 2013).

In terms of time, expatriation has generally been studied cross-sectionally (Hechanova et al. 2003). Hence, many studies of expatriate adjustment and performance are limited in what they can say about the effect of time. In practice, even if the vaunted ‘U-curve’ of adjustment is not necessarily found in practice (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005), there is a significant longitudinal effect in the process. In any role, people become more capable with time spent (Pinder and Schroeder 1987; Pinder and Das 1979). It seems likely that this will apply with extra force where the individual is adjusting not only to a new role, but also a new environment and culture (see, eg, Selmer and Fenner 2009; Waxin 2006; Waxin, Roger and Chandon 1997). Pinder and Schroeder (1987) used the notion of perceived time to proficiency (TTP) in the context of national transfers. Following March and Simon (1958), Pinder and al. (1979, 1987), and Waxin et al. (1997), we conceive of TTP as the length of time that elapses between an individual’s move into a position and the ascendancy of that individual to a performance level with which they are satisfied. Proficiency in a job requires competencies both in the official demands of that job and in its informal, social demands (Barnard 1938). With few exceptions (Waxin et al. 1997, Waxin 2000) researchers have given little attention to the concept of TTP for corporate expatriates.

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

It has been argued that organizational antecedents can have a substantial effect on TTP and performance: Factors such as role clarity or discretion (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005;

Hechanova et al. 2003; Pinder and Schroeder 1987), and support from supervisors and co-workers (Pinder and Schroeder 1987) will make the process of adjustment easier or harder, and the TTP shorter or longer.

Another substantial effect will arise from the cultural ‘baggage’ that the expatriate brings from their home country: do expatriates from any specific culture adapt better and quicker than those from another culture to a specific country, and does the home country culture (HCC) have an impact on expatriates’ adjustment antecedents? There has been a paucity of research on such effects, though Parker and McEvoy (1993) reported that culture novelty explains as much variance in adjustment as other organizational and individual variables. They also argued that additional research was needed. In Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., (2005)’s meta-analysis, the relationships between culture novelty and expatriate adjustment were negative and significant. To date no research has investigated the moderator effect of the HCC on the relation between expatriates’ TTP and its antecedents.

Pulling these strands together, the objective of this paper is to extend our understanding of the expatriate experience using the TTP concept, its organizational antecedents, and HCC through clarifying the issues, developing hypotheses and testing them against data collected from expatriates in India. We begin by presenting the study’s hypotheses and the conceptual model of TTP. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology and presentation of the findings. The paper concludes with implications for researchers and practitioners, study limitations and opportunities for future research.

## **BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Organizational Antecedents of TTP**

Based on the existing literature, we identified five organizational variables of interest: two job-related variables (role clarity and role discretion), two organizational social support factors (supervisory and co-workers’ social support), and perceived organizational culture dissimilarity.

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

*(H1a) Role clarity shortens expatriate TTP*

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

*(H1b) Role discretion shortens expatriate TTP*

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

*(H1c) Supervisory support shortens expatriate TTP*

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

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

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

### **TTP Differences Across Home Country Culture**

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

Hofstede (1991) identified power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism and masculinity-femininity (and later long versus short term orientations) as the major aspects on which cultures differ. More recently, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (Chhokar, Brodbeck & House 2008; eds. House et al. 2004) refined Hofstede's work, suggesting nine dimensions: in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, future orientation, performance orientation, humane orientation, assertiveness and gender egalitarianism. The proponents of the cultural dimensions approach introduced the practice of calculating scores on each dimension for each

culture, enabling relative ranking among them. This paper uses these cultural measures as indicators of national or HCC difference.

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

### **The Moderating Effect of HCC**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

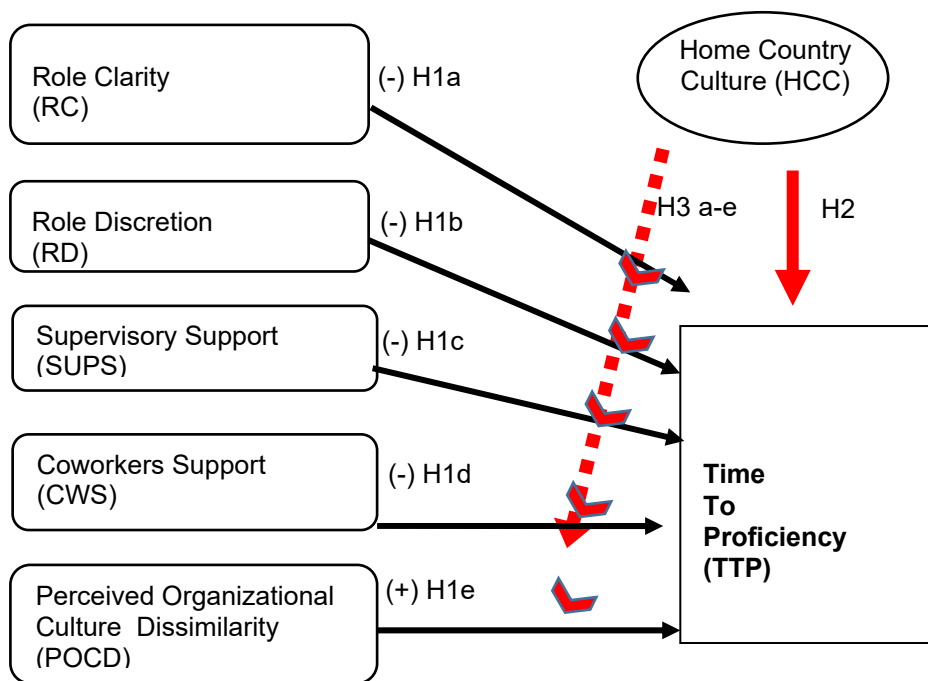
*(H3d) The strength of the relation between co-workers support and TTP will vary across HCC.*

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

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

Our hypotheses can be summarized in the research model detailed in Figure One.

**FIGURE 1. RESEARCH MODEL**



## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample and Data Collection**

The sample consisted of 4 groups of corporate expatriates in New Delhi, India: 56 French, 53 German, 60 Korean and 57 Scandinavian (Danish, Swedish and Norwegian), for a total of 224 respondents. Respondents worked in managerial positions, for a maximum period of four years. Data for this research were collected via self-administrated questionnaires in English. The Embassies and the Chambers of Commerce of France, Germany, Korea, Denmark, Norway and Sweden cooperated by providing a list of their national companies based in New Delhi. Out of the 295 distributed questionnaires, 224 were returned (76%).

### **Measures**

The questionnaire was developed by adapting and integrating questions that had achieved strong internal and external validity in previous studies. All scales and measures are available from the first author. To measure TTP, we adapted Pinder and Schroeder's scale: for the four items of that scale, we used answers expressed in number of weeks rather than a seven-point scale, as that method allowed more precision in the results. To measure role clarity we used the nine items created by Breugh and Colihan (1994) to measure three role clarity dimensions: performance criteria, work method, and scheduling clarity. Specifically, we used the composite scores of each set of items for each dimension since the use of composite scores to represent the construct as a partial aggregation model acknowledges its multidimensional nature (Bagozzi & Heatherton 1994). Similarly, to measure role discretion we used eight items created by Black and Gregersen (1991), measuring three dimensions of role discretion: personal, delegation and expertise. Supervisory and co-workers' social support were averaged from the four-item scales adapted from Pinder and Schroeder (1987). Perceived organizational dissimilarity was measured from an adaptation of the six-item scale created by Cerdin (1996). Demographic data such as gender, age, time elapsed since arrival, were collected as controls. Results from Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff and Organ 1986) showed that because a single factor did not emerge and Factor 1 did not explain most of the variance, common method bias is unlikely to be a concern in our data.

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

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

## **Analytical Techniques**

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

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

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



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

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

## **FINDINGS**

### **Measurement Model Evaluation**

#### ***Measurement Model Invariance***

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

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

**TABLE 1. MODEL VALIDATION RESULTS**

Construct and items	France			Germany			Korea			Scandinavia		
	Loading	IC	AVE	Loading	IC	AVE	Loading	IC	AVE	Loading	IC	AVE
<b>RC</b>		<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.81</b>		<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.81</b>		<b>0.94</b>	<b>0.85</b>		<b>0.94</b>	<b>0.83</b>
RCP	0.86			0.78			0.89			0.93		
RCM	0.91			0.95			0.93			0.88		
RCS	0.93			0.95			0.94			0.93		
<b>RD</b>		<b>0.95</b>	<b>0.87</b>		<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.89</b>		<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.80</b>		<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.78</b>
RDP	0.94			0.95			0.84			0.94		
RDD	0.91			0.94			0.97			0.94		
RDE	0.94			0.93			0.87			0.74		
<b>SUPS</b>		<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.77</b>		<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.71</b>		<b>0.97</b>	<b>0.88</b>		<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.86</b>
SUPS1	0.86			0.89			0.92			0.90		
SUPS2	0.87			0.81			0.93			0.89		
SUPS3	0.94			0.90			0.93			0.96		
SUPS4	0.84			0.76			0.95			0.95		
<b>CWS</b>		<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.57</b>		<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.56</b>		<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.78</b>		<b>0.94</b>	<b>0.80</b>
CWS1	0.73			0.82			0.86			0.85		
CWS2	0.88			0.76			0.92			0.91		
CWS3	0.67			0.72			0.95			0.92		
CWS4	0.71			0.67			0.80			0.90		
<b>POCD</b>		<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.73</b>		<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.60</b>		<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.74</b>		<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.78</b>
POCD1	0.92			0.62			0.86			0.94		
POCD5	0.76			0.98			0.92			0.87		
POCD6	0.89			0.77			0.78			0.85		
<b>TTP</b>		<b>0.97</b>	<b>0.89</b>		<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.87</b>		<b>0.94</b>	<b>0.80</b>		<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.87</b>
TTP1	0.95			0.91			0.89			0.94		
TTP2	0.95			0.92			0.89			0.91		
TTP3	0.92			0.95			0.90			0.94		
TTP4	0.94			0.93			0.90			0.94		

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

***Constructs' Internal Consistency and Average Variance Extracted***

Table 1 also shows composite reliability (internal consistency) and average variance extracted (AVE) scores for each construct. All composite reliabilities are above the 0.70 acceptable threshold (Gefen et al. 2000) and range from 0.81 to 0.97. AVE scores for all reflective constructs are above 0.50, and range from 0.56 to 0.89 across groups. When AVE is greater than 0.50, the variance shared with a construct and its measures is greater than error (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

***Constructs' Discriminant Validity***

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

**TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATION AMONG CONSTRUCT SCORES**

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

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

## Hypotheses Testing

### *Hypotheses 1a-e: Organizational Antecedents of TTP*

Role clarity demonstrates a significant negative relationship with TTP ( $\beta = -0.15, t = -2.52$ ). The relationship between role discretion and TTP is also significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.14, t = -2.42$ ). Supervisory support is a significantly stronger predictor of TTP with more than twice the  $b$  of role clarity and discretion ( $\beta = -0.31, t = -4.97$ ). The remaining two organizational variables also exhibit significant relationships with TTP although the magnitude of the path coefficients are weaker. Specifically, co-worker support ( $\beta = -0.09, t = -1.65$ ) demonstrates a significant negative relationship while organizational culture dissimilarity ( $\beta = 0.12, t = 1.88$ ) demonstrates a significant positive relationship with TTP. Those five antecedents explain 23 % of the variance of the TTP. H1a-e are therefore all supported.

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

### *Hypothesis 2: Assessing Differences in the Mean Value Scores in TTP across HCC*

A variance analysis (Table 3) shows that significant differences are found in the mean scores ( $F = 34.74, p < 0.05$ ) thus supporting H2. The test of Bonferroni ( $p < 0.05$ ) shows that Korean respondents ( $M = 24.90; SD = 10.50$ ) and Scandinavian respondents ( $M = 17.17; SD = 5.83$ ) report longer TTP relative to French respondents ( $M = 11.35; SD = 5.76$ ). Korean respondents also report longer TTP relative to German respondents ( $M = 14.95; SD = 5.78$ ) and Scandinavian respondents ( $M = 17.17; SD = 5.83$ ).

**TABLE 3. TTP MEAN SCORES ACROSS COUNTRY SAMPLES**

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

**Hypotheses 3a-e: Assessing Path differences Across HCC**

The structural model results for the four subsamples are shown in Table 4. Role clarity demonstrates a significant negative relationship with TTP in the French ( $\beta = -0.49, t = 5.65$ ), German ( $\beta = -0.30, t = 3.65$ ) and Korean sub-samples ( $\beta = -0.53, t = 6.46$ ), but a non-significant relationship with TTP in the Scandinavian group ( $\beta = 0.13, t = 1.12$ ). The relationship between discretion and TPP is significant for respondents from two of the four countries: Germany ( $\beta = -0.32, t = 2.67$ ) and Scandinavia ( $\beta = -0.56, t = 4.92$ ). Supervisory support demonstrates a significant negative relationship with TTP for all four sub-samples: France ( $\beta = -0.48, t = 4.75$ ), Germany ( $\beta = -0.29, t = 2.91$ ), Korea ( $\beta = -0.28, t = 2.80$ ) and Scandinavia ( $\beta = -0.29, t = 2.45$ ). In contrast, co-worker support demonstrates a significant negative relationship with TTP for respondents from two countries: Germany ( $\beta = -0.33, t = 4.36$ ) and Korea ( $\beta = -0.35, t = 4.85$ ). Finally, perceived organizational culture dissimilarity demonstrates a significant positive relationship with TTP for German ( $\beta = 0.38, t = 1.91$ ) and Korean ( $\beta = 0.17, t = 2.10$ ) respondents but a non-significant relationship with TTP for French ( $\beta = -0.01, t = 0.21$ ) and Scandinavian respondents ( $\beta = 0.05, t = 0.49$ ). The organizational antecedents of TTP clearly vary across HCCs.

**TABLE 4. PLS STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS FOR THE FOUR SUBSAMPLES**

Antecedents of TTP	France		Germany	
	Path coef.	t-value	Path coef.	t-value
RC	-0.49	5.65***	-0.30	3.65***
RD	-0.09	0.66 n.s.	-0.32	2.67***
SUPS	-0.48	4.75***	-0.29	2.91***
CWS	-0.14	0.81 n.s.	-0.33	4.36***
POCD	-0.01	0.21 n.s.	0.38	1.91**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.56		0.58	

Antecedents of TTP	Korea		Scandinavia	
	Path coef.	t-value	Path coef.	t-value
RC	-0.53	6.46***	0.13	1.12 n.s.
RD	0.06	0.57 n.s.	-0.56	4.92***
SUPS	-0.28	2.80***	-0.29	2.45***
CWS	-0.35	4.85***	-0.02	0.15 n.s.
POCD	0.17	2.10**	0.05	0.49 n.s.
R <sup>2</sup>	0.70		0.59	

Note: \* p-values: \*\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.010$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , n.s not significant

The structural model for each HCC sample was also examined using the level of the R<sup>2</sup> values. In general, R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.25, 0.50 and 0.75 are considered as weak, medium and substantial respectively (Hair et al. 2014). The structural model explains 56% of the variance in TTP in the French expatriate group, 58% in the German expatriate group, 70% in the Korean expatriate group and 59% in the Scandinavian expatriate group. These R<sup>2</sup> values demonstrate that

the variance explained in TTP across all four countries is significant. In addition to evaluating the  $R^2$  value for TTP, the change in  $R^2$  when a specified exogenous construct is omitted from the model was used to evaluate whether the committed construct had a substantial impact on TTP. This is referred to as the  $f^2$  effect size and was calculated as follows:

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

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

**TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

	France		Germany		Korea		Scandinavia	
	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect	$R^2$	$f^2$ effect
RC	0.34	0.49	0.49	0.21	0.47	0.78	0.58	0.03
RD	0.55	0.01	0.49	0.21	0.70	0.01	0.40	0.48
SUPS	0.37	0.41	0.50	0.19	0.65	0.17	0.55	0.11
CWS	0.54	0.04	0.48	0.23	0.60	0.34	0.59	0.00
POCD	0.56	0.00	0.44	0.32	0.68	0.08	0.59	0.01

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

Differences between significant path coefficients across the four subsamples were analyzed using path coefficients' comparison (Chin 2009). The explained variances and the  $t$  values for the differences between respondents ( $t$  value diff.) using Chin's (2009) procedure are shown in Table 6. A comparison of significant path coefficients across countries highlights a number of interesting observations ( $p < .05$ ). First, the negative effect of role clarity on TTP is significantly stronger for the French ( $t = -1.91$ ) and Korean sub-samples ( $t = 1.99$ ) relative to those from Germany. Second, the negative relationship between role discretion and TTP is significantly stronger for expatriates from Scandinavia ( $t = 1.87$ ) relative to those from Germany.

Third, there is no statistically significant differences in the size of the path coefficients across the four expatriate groups when comparing the effect of supervisory support on TTP. Finally, there is no significant difference in the size of the path coefficients when comparing the effects of co-worker support and organizational dissimilarity on TTP in the German and Korean sub-samples. In summary, not only do the organizational antecedents vary significantly across HCC samples, but the significant impact of some organizational antecedents of TTP is stronger in some HCCs relative to other organizational antecedents.

**TABLE 6. DIFFERENCES IN PATH COEFFICIENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES**

	F	G	Diff. in path coef.	t-value diff.	F	K	Diff. in path coef.	t-value diff.
RC	-0.49	-0.30	0.19	-1.91	-0.49	-0.53	-0.04	0.34
RD	-0.09	-0.32	-0.23	1.29	-0.09	0.06	-0.15	-0.92
SUPS	-0.48	-0.29	0.19	1.35	-0.48	-0.28	0.20	-1.43
CWS	-0.14	-0.33	-0.19	1.04	-0.14	-0.35	-0.21	1.20
POCD	-0.01	0.38	-0.39	-1.77	-0.01	0.17	-0.18	-1.36

	F	S	Diff. in path coef.	t-value diff.	G	K	Diff. in path coef.	t-value diff.
RC	-0.49	0.13	-0.62	-4.19	-0.30	-0.53	-0.23	1.99
RD	-0.09	-0.56	-0.47	2.69	-0.32	0.06	0.38	-2.53
SUPS	-0.48	-0.29	0.19	-1.21	-0.29	-0.28	0.01	-0.07
CWS	-0.14	-0.02	0.12	-0.60	-0.33	-0.35	-0.02	0.19
POCD	-0.01	0.05	-0.06	-0.39	0.38	0.17	0.21	1.04

	G	S	Diff. in path coef.	t-value diff.	K	S	Diff. in path coef.	t-value diff.
RC	-0.30	0.13	0.43	-2.96	-0.53	0.13	0.66	-4.65
RD	-0.32	-0.56	-0.24	1.87	0.06	-0.56	0.62	4.19
SUPS	-0.29	-0.29	0.00	0.00	-0.28	-0.29	-0.01	0.07
CWS	-0.33	-0.02	0.31	-2.25	-0.35	-0.02	0.33	-2.48
POCD	0.38	0.05	0.33	1.52	0.17	0.05	0.12	0.89

Notes: F=France, G=Germany, K=Korea, S=Scandinavia.

## DISCUSSIONS

The first part of our analysis sets the baseline for our original contribution on country of origin. Our five organizational antecedents, role clarity and discretion (H1a and H1b) supervisory and co-workers' support (H1c, H1d) and perceived organizational dissimilarity (H1e) were all significant predictors of TTP on the global sample. So far, although interesting and adding a new context and



new group of expatriates to the analysis, our findings confirm the results of previous studies.

Our contribution on the effect of HCC on TTP is new. First, our findings demonstrate that TTP mean scores vary significantly across HCCs. The results are broadly consistent with GLOBE (eds. House et al. 2004) and Hofstede's (1991) cultural distances to India: French, German and Scandinavian respondents report increasing TTP (respectively 11.35, 14.95 and 17.11 weeks). Thus, in our sample, the larger the cultural distance, the longer the TTP. Koreans are the exception: their reported TTP is longer than the Scandinavians (24.9 weeks), although their cultural distance to India is smaller in both Hofstede and GLOBE. This exception is perhaps to be explained by the fact that the international exposure of Koreans is relatively recent in comparison to the Europeans. Or Koreans may be more likely, given the highly competitive nature of their education system, to be more self-critical in terms of proficiency. Conversely, and perhaps controversially, it could demonstrate that certain nationalities are more likely than others to be successful as expatriates; perhaps their national culture makes them either more adaptive or less certain of their home-learned ways. Although there seems little doubt that country of origin has a significant effect on time to proficiency in our sample, the relationship is complicated by the incompatibility of the data in the various studies of cultural distance.

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

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Our study constitutes one of a small number of attempts to study expatriate TTP and its antecedents across different country samples. In summary, we demonstrated that HCC impacts the TTP means score, and that HCC affects which organizational antecedents play a role in the explanation of expatriates' TTP, and to what degree.

## **Practical Implications**

The results of this research have important implications for the management of expatriates, especially in the fields of recruitment, staffing policies and support policies. Knowledge that

HCC/ cultural distance is a significant predictor of TTP suggests that organizations may need to reconsider their international staffing policies, by for example, selecting third country nationals for whom the culture of assignment is not that different culturally from their own (Parker and McEvoy 1993). In order to avoid discrimination, employers would have to test the individual expatriate's cultural distance to the destination country. Another possibility would be to hire bi-cultural employees (Furusawa and Brewster 2014) who bridge the two cultures. Finally, since the antecedents of TTP are not the same across national groups of expatriates, policies for different groups of expatriates might include different support variables to facilitate their integration to their new positions abroad. Effective support of expatriates should take account of their cultural and personal needs.

### **Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

The first limitations relate to our research model. Our measure of TTP is a self-perceived measure of proficiency. Future studies should use other measures of expatriates' job performance and should attempt to collect additional objective and subjective data from different sources (colleagues, supervisor). Our model does not claim to be comprehensive and other antecedents might increase understanding of TTP: It would be interesting to examine individual antecedents of TTP, such as the expatriates' adaptability, and other contextual antecedents, such as family/partner adjustment, expatriation management practices and the roles of local and expatriate communities. Further research is also needed to examine the effects of culture on expatriates' TTP in more details. Whilst our findings on the effect of HCC are unequivocal, the relationship between that and the measures of culture and cultural distances is less clear. Our limited sample is another limitation. Future studies should include more countries and more respondents per country. Moreover, our sample only includes expatriates who were sufficiently proficient to stay in their positions, so excluding those who left before the research or before the end of their contract. Other limitations relate to our data collection methods. First, the questionnaire was distributed in English, a foreign language for all the respondents, even though it was the language in which they were all conducting business while in India. Second, this study presents a potential problem of retrospective rationality since our dependent and independent variables were collected simultaneously via a single questionnaire from individual respondents, at a single point in time. However, our analysis has identified that there were no problem of common source bias in the results.

Finally, this paper focused on corporate expatriates, but future research could examine TTP of other kinds of international transferees, such as public sector expatriates, self-initiated expatriates and international students. Further work here could add significantly to our knowledge.

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