



ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT: ROLE OF GENDER

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Abstract

In this era of globalization doing business has become a challenging proposition. So, an organization needs a new generation of managers, who are culturally sensitive and are able to adjust themselves in culturally different situations. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the impact of emotional intelligence on cross-cultural adjustment. Further, role played by gender in between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment relationship. Data have been gathered from 530 managers working in Nationalized Banks operating in New Delhi (North India). Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis have been conducted to explore and validate the factor of different constructs. Hypotheses have been tested through structural equation modeling. The study reveals that emotional intelligence significantly affect cross-cultural adjustment. Further, gender act as moderator between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment relationship. Implications and limitations of the study have also been discussed.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, Cross-cultural adjustment, Gender, Structural equation modeling.*

Introduction

In the era of globalization doing business has become a challenging proposition. So, an organization needs a new generation of managers, who are culturally sensitive and are able to adjust themselves in culturally different situations. Organizations send their most talented employees on international assignments to implement organizational culture change, knowledge transfer and control systems overseas (Crocitto et al., 2005; Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Kamoche, 2000). Managers experience not only excitement and curiosity in their new cultural settings but also face misunderstanding, conflicts and frustration (Shi & Franklin, 2013). Therefore, managers should develop understanding, which can occur when managers can interpret messages such that the communicative goals of interactors are attained (Cai & Rodríguez, 1996). Therefore, managers should be able to adjust themselves in diverse environment. More and more organizations are expressing the need for managers, “who quickly adjust to multiple cultures and work well in multinational teams” (Early & Peterson, 2004, p.100) as organizations are sending their employees to out of home state assignment to increase their market share and to have sustainable competitive advantage (Black & Gregersen, 1999). A primary determinant of expatriates’ effectiveness is how well they adjust their behavior to function appropriately in the host culture (Harrison et al., 1996). It has been found that poorly adjusted employees often return prematurely from out of home state assignment, whereas well-adjusted employees are generally more effective and more accepted (Black & Mendenhall, 1989). Therefore, to succeed in out of home state assignment managers needs to be adjustable to cross-cultural situations. Cross-cultural adjustment, is the degree of psychological adjustment experienced by an individual, or the degree of comfort, familiarity and ease that an individual feels toward the new cultural environment (Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). Managers when send to out of home state assignment they go through lot of difficulty and hence they require adaptability skills which helps them to face the challenges of host environment. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to examine the factors or traits (cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence and personality traits) that contribute to adjustment (within the nation) in a new culture, or the process of becoming an intercultural or bi-cultural manager and also to find the moderating role of language proficiency in between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment and moderating role played by gender in between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment relationship in Indian context to generalize the concept as India is a diverse country and managers encounters problem to adjust themselves in culturally different settings. We can find diversity in almost every aspect in India (religion, region, food, clothing, languages, gesture, tone, etc.). Therefore, managers have to adjust themselves to this diversity when they are posted outside home state. Employees from different culture often work together in the same organization and this cultural diversity brings cultural shocks and misunderstanding, because of lack of adjustment skills.

Literature Review

Cross-Cultural Adjustment (CCA)

Expatriate adjustment refers to the process through which an expatriate comes to feel psychologically comfortable with a new environment and culture and harmonizes with it (Huang et al., 2005). It is a temporal and primary outcome in an expatriate assignment that would influence the development of secondary or more distal expatriate adjustment such as strain (Hechanova et al., 2003), job satisfaction (Takeuchi et al., 2002), organisational commitment (Nauman, 1993; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998), performance (Shay & Baack, 2006; Kim & Slocum, 2008), and turnover intentions (Hechanova et al., 2003). Culturally adjusted individuals are open to the host culture and able to add new behaviours, norms and rules to the foundation

provided by home cultures (Church, 1982). Wang (2002) viewed out that expatriates with higher psychological well-being exhibit good sense of the local environment, self-confidence, have established relationships with host country nationals, and have a clear sense of their personal goals and career development. There are three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment distinguished in literature (Black & Stephens, 1989) are i) General adjustment: It is the degree of comfort with general living conditions, such as climate, health facilities and food; ii) Interaction adjustment: It is the interaction with the host country nationals and iii) Work adjustment: It includes performance standards, job and supervisory responsibilities. CCA has been suggested to be a key indicator as well as a determinant of expatriate success in their international assignments (Templer et al., 2006). Since CQ is a person's capability to adapt effectively to a new cultural context, individuals high in CQ are expected to adjust better in a new cultural environment (Ang et al., 2007).

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

The term "Emotional Intelligence" was first used by Salovey and Mayer (1990). It is conceptualized as a set of mental processes including appraising and expressing emotions in self and others, regulating emotion in self and others and using emotions in adaptive ways (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.6). It is the ability to recognize and regulate emotion in oneself and others (Spector, 2005). Emotionally intelligent people have a deep rooted sense of self, which helps them in understanding other people, keeping them in proportion, retaining of focus and understanding what is important. EQ is not a trait like personality characteristics that are consistent over time, but it is a state like CQ that is developed over time (Ang et al., 2006). A person with high intelligence and understanding about emotions is capable to receive and process emotional information and use this information as a tool to face problems and different behaviors. EQ is a multidimensional construct (Schutte et al., 1998) comprising: i) Self-Appraisal: It refers to having clear perception of one's own personality, including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivation, and emotions; ii) Appraisal of others emotions: It refers to the competencies associated with being socially aware of, understanding the other person's emotions, needs and concern and the ability to understand and meet the needs of others; iii) Self-Management: It refers to methods, skills, and strategies by which individuals can effectively direct their own activities toward the achievement and includes goal setting and iv) Utilisation of Emotions: It refers to the ability to open feeling and to modulate them in oneself and others so as to promote personal understanding and growth.

Hypotheses Development

Emotional Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Previous research has identified the importance of considering emotional intelligence when selecting expatriate managers (Jassawalla et al., 2004). It has been found that emotional intelligence positively influences cross-cultural adjustment (Hassan & Diallo, 2013; Jassawalla et al., 2004; Lopes et al., 2006; Lii & Wong, 2008). Managers with high emotional intelligence are capable of managing stress, supporting each other, and building considerable paces in setting up the necessary balance in the new working environment (Musten et al., 2003). Emotional intelligence is important for expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment, as it help them to cope with uncertainty and the complexity of the surrounding environment (Koveshnikov et al., 2014). The ability to appraise their own and others emotions, show empathy and accommodate the feelings and emotions of others may allow them to be perceived as warm and caring by coworkers, which will have a positive effect on an expatriate's interpersonal interactions in and outside of work (Koveshnikov et al., 2014, p. 364). Further, emotional intelligence help individual expatriates achieve their goals in the new environment, control negative emotional experiences and stresses caused by interactions with locals, and reinforce positive experiences instead (Koveshnikov et al., 2014, p. 364). Managers who can control their emotions are better able to interact with local organizational members and locals people, as well as coping with new rules and regulations of their host region environment.

Hypothesis 1: Emotional Intelligence positively influences Cross-cultural Adjustment.

Emotional Intelligence, Gender and Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Emotion plays a significant role in the adjustment process. Research has found that gender moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment (Koveshnikov et al., 2014). Earlier research has found that gender has no direct influence on cross-cultural adjustment (Koveshnikov et al., 2014, p. 369). Women are more adaptive than men to stressors and use emotion-focused strategies whenever required (Deane et al., 2001). Women are emotionally stronger than men (Schutte et al., 1998; Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Ciarrochi et al., 2000). According to Selmer and Leung (2003) female expatriates have higher interactional and work-related adjustment than their male colleagues. In contrast to this there are studies which revealed that men are emotionally stronger than women and are better able to adjust themselves in cross-cultural situations (Koveshnikov et al., 2014). Higher levels of the ability to appraise and express emotions are relatively more useful for male than for female expatriates cross-cultural adjustment (Koveshnikov et al., 2014, p. 369). Therefore, it can be concluded from above discussion that gender moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment.

Hypothesis 2: Gender moderates the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Cross-cultural Adjustment.

Proposed Model

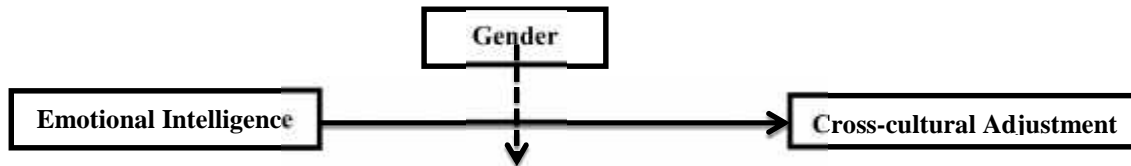


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Sample

The population for the study consisted of 530 managers working in nationalized banks operating in Delhi (North India). There are 2539 Nationalized banks operating in Delhi out of which 10% have been selected with the help of random number table. From each selected bank two managers (on the basis of hierarchy) have been contacted personally for data generation. All branch managers and immediate junior managers have been contacted for data collection but in some banks there were only one manager in that case one extra branch has been contacted. Therefore, total 265 banks have been contacted. Structured questionnaire was used as a research tool for collecting the data. In order to establish normality of the data 18 respondents have been deleted by inspecting boxplots (Hair et al., 2010). The retained data exhibited normal distributed (skewness = .066; Kurtosis = -.101) are within the range. Therefore, the effective sample came to 512. Structured questionnaire was used for collecting the data.

The sample included 286 (56%) male and majority of the managers (88%) are married. About 29% managers are in the age group 35-40 years followed by 31-34 years (17%). Majority of managers (43%) have 6-10 years of experience of working outside their home state. About 55% of managers can speak 4-5 languages. Majority of managers have 6-10 years of total work experience (24%).

Measures

Five point Likert scale was used for the sake of uniformity in measuring the variables ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Cross-cultural adjustment has been measured with the help of 14-items (Black and Porter, 1991). Emotional intelligence has been measured with the help of 13-items (Lane et al., 2009).

Control Variables

Age and experience of working outside home state have been taken as control variables.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA has been conducted to identify the dimensions of different scales used in the present study. Principle component analysis with varimax rotation has been used. The test of appropriateness of a factor analysis has been verified through KMO measure of sampling adequacy, where values greater than 0.50 are acceptable (Hair et al., 2010), which indicated its relevance for further analysis. The statement with factor loading less than 0.50 have been deleted (Hair et al., 2010). The CCA scale consisted of 14 items that got reduced to 10 items and converged under three factors (viz., general adjustment, work adjustment and interaction adjustment). Similarly, EQ scale initially consisted of 13 items that got reduced to 12 items and converged under the three factors (viz., utilization of emotions, self-appraisal, appraisal of other's emotions and self-management). The KMO value of all the constructs is above 0.80 and total variance explained for all the constructs is above eighty percent (Hair et al., 2010).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Before using the inferential analysis we assessed the validity and reliability of the construct with the help of CFA. Two stage procedures have been used to test the theoretical framework (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In the first phase measurement models were tested to assess the convergent and discriminant validity. In the second stage structural equation modeling analysis has been used for testing the theoretical model.

Second order factor models have been designed for all the scales as multiple factors emerged after EFA. Fit indices of all the second order models are within the prescribed limit (Table 1) i.e. GFI, CFI are greater than 0.90 and RMR, RMSEA are less than 0.05 and 0.08 respectively (Hair et al., 2010). Standardized regression weights (>0.60) and average variance extracted (>0.70) established the convergent validity (Table 2). Further, discriminant validity has also been proved by comparing the

variance extracted with squared correlations amongst different constructs (Fornell&Larcker 1981). The average variance extracted for all the constructs is higher than the squared correlation thereby proving discriminant validity (Table 3). Reliability of the constructs has been checked through Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability. Alpha values equal to or greater than 0.70 indicate good reliability (Nunally, 1970; O’Leary-Kelly &Vokurka, 1998). In the present study alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs are greater than 0.70 (Table 2). Thus, the Cronbach’s alphaand composite constructreliability indicate that the scales are quite reliable.

Table 1. Model Summary of fit Indices of Second Order Factor Models

Constructs	χ^2/df	RMR	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Emotional Intelligence	4.016	0.033	0.937	0.902	0.962	0.077
Cross-cultural Adjustment	4.950	0.030	0.948	0.907	0.962	0.088

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

Constructs	M	SD	SRW	AVE	CR	Cronbach Alpha
Emotional Intelligence	4.04	0.76		0.98	0.99	0.93
• Appraisal of other’s emotions	4.08	0.77	0.96			
• Utilization of emotions	4.11	0.80	0.98			
• Self-appraisal	3.90	0.96	0.92			
• Self-management	4.06	0.49	0.97			
Cultural-cultural Adjustment	4.14	0.83		0.97	0.99	0.91
• General Adjustment	4.15	0.72	0.98			
• Interaction Adjustment	4.07	0.85	0.91			
• Work Adjustment	4.21	0.70	0.98			

Key: M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation, SWR= Standard regression weight, AVE= Average variance extracted, CR= Composite reliability.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Constructs	Emotional Intelligence	Cross-cultural Adjustment
Emotional Intelligence	1	
Cross-cultural Adjustment	(0.29) 0.54**	1

Note: Values in the parentheses represent squared correlation and values below the parentheses represent correlation. **p< 0.01

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Cross-cultural Adjustment: Role of Gender

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has been used to check various relations proposed, it is a multivariate technique that seeks to explain the relationship among multiple variables (Kaplan, 2000). In the present study, the relationship between EQ, cross-cultural adjustmentand gender have been assessed. A model has been framed where EQ is the antecedents of cross-cultural adjustment. The analysis of path revealed that EQ positively impact CCA (SRW = 0.54, p<0.001, Figure 2).

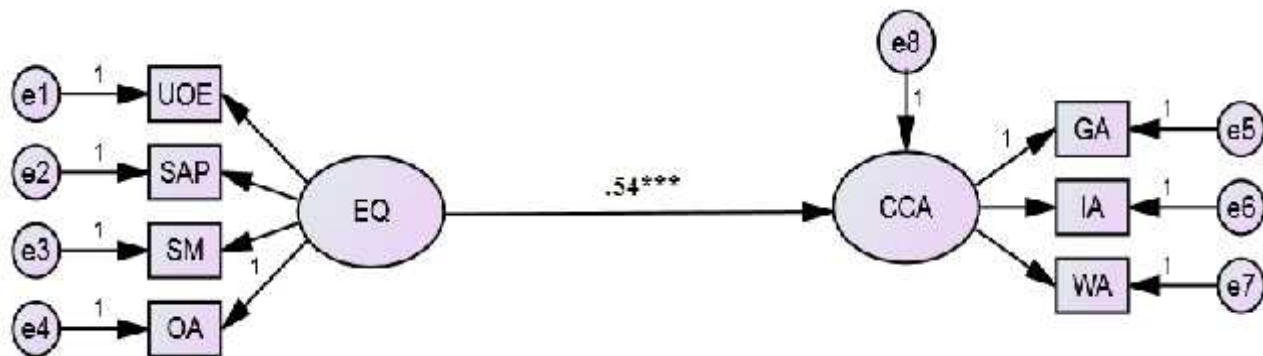


Figure2: Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Cross-cultural Adjustment

Key: EQ= Emotional Intelligence, CCA= Cross-cultural Adjustment, OA= Appraisal of others emotions, UOE= Utilization of emotions, SAP= Self-Appraisal and SM= Self-Management, GA= General Adjustment, IA= Interaction Adjustment and WA= Work Adjustment

In this study we have gender as moderating variables (non-metric variable). In order to check the moderation of non-metric variable multi-group analysis has been done (Little et al., 2007, p. 223). The sample has been split into two groups. One group consisted of male managers and other group consisted of female managers. Table 4 revealed that the relationship between EQ and CCA is significant and positive for both the groups. Thus, gender moderates the relationship between EQ and CCA (Table 4). Although, the relationship between EQ and CCA is positive for both the groups, but this relationship is stronger and significant for female managers. Further, the chi-square difference test revealed that the two models, i.e. constrained and unconstrained model are different in both the groups ($p < .05$, Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of Constrained and Unconstrained Models

	Overall Model	Gender	
		Male	Female
Emotional Intelligence → Cross-cultural adjustment	0.54***	0.46***	0.60***
R ²	0.29	0.21	0.36
² Constrained Model		59.101	41.001
² Unconstrained Model		43.698	34.533
²		15.403***	6.468**

Discussion

The study highlights, the importance of EQ in enhancing JP. The study has explored three issues: i) the impact EQ on CCA, and iii) the moderating role played by gender in between EQ and CCA relationship.

The study revealed emotional intelligence has positive impact on cross-cultural adjustment. Managers who are emotionally intelligent understand other's emotions which help them to adjust themselves in cross-cultural situations. They understand the emotions of host region people which help them to establish interpersonal relationships. Managers who can control and manage their emotions in host region environment are more adaptive to culturally different situations as they can establish strong interpersonal bonds with locals which help them to perform better. Emotionally intelligent managers adjust themselves to working and general environment of the host region as they can appraise their own and others emotions. Managers who are flexible and , imaginative are more likely to learn new things, and are creative and motivated in new settings (Koveshnikov et al., 2014, p. 364).

Further, the paper discusses the strengthening role played by gender between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment relationship. The results revealed that women are better able to adjust themselves better in cross-cultural environment than men as they are emotionally strong. The result is consistent with previous findings (Selmer & Leung, 2003; Adler, 1987; Caligiuri & Tung, 1998; Taylor & Napier, 1996). It has found that female managers have higher level of adjustment as compared to men because the former have high social and emotional skill. Women are better at perceiving non-verbal emotional cues (McClure, 2000) which help them to adapt in new and unfamiliar settings. Female managers are emotionally more intelligent and are able to interact effectively in host region. They have strong social and emotional skills, which give them the confidence to interact in cross-cultural situation. Therefore, the relationship between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment is higher for women. To conclude, emotional intelligence positively influences cross-cultural adjustment. Further, gender moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The present study shows important implication for the conceptual development of cross-cultural adjustment concept. The study cements theoretical development of CCA concept. Further, it confirmed the reliability and construct validity of the three factor model of CCA and four factor model of EQ within a diverse cultural country like India, which increased the generalizability of the CCA scale. It further, adds to EQ – CCA literature. Further, the study revealed that gender moderates the relationship between EQ and CCA. It has found that women are better able to adjust themselves better in cross-cultural environment as they are emotionally stronger. Further, the study provides the integrative model of the relationships i.e. EQ significantly affect CCA. Further, gender act as moderators between EQ and CCA relationship.

Practical Implications

The theory presented here will be of interest to organizations as it helps organization to achieve its goal. During the selection process, the Human Resource Department can make use of psychological tests for managers. The CCA scale is a good example of an instrument that may be used to measure the ability of an expatriate to effectively adapt to new cultural environments. Organizations can develop training programs, which increase the manager's capability to adjust in cross-cultural settings. In training programs the managers should be made familiar with the basic knowledge about the country and company's culture, which is important to develop interpersonal skills. These programs will prepare managers to deal with unfamiliar cross-cultural situations. Further, training programs could include a module on motivational and behavioral component of CCA rather than focusing primarily on knowledge or cognitive training (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Before sending the managers to out of home state assignment, organizations should give pre-departure language training to managers, which helps them to interact with locals of that region, which in turn will help to improve their adaptation process. Organizations should encourage their managers to interact with people from different cultures and should motivate managers' desire to learn about diverse cultures. The misunderstandings, or stress, created by a different culture can be reduced. Selecting linguistically proficient managers, with the positive experience of the host region helps the managers to adapt in culturally diverse settings. Further, organizations should also arrange informal gathering that increase inter-cultural interactions. This supportive environment will also contribute in term of helping managers to adjust themselves better to the local culture. Further, organizations should identify emotionally intelligent individuals to send on expatriate assignments. It shows that high levels of EQ positively impact expatriates' CCA in a new environment that in turn positively affects expatriates' performance. The study revealed that women are emotionally more intelligent, which implies that organizations can benefit substantially by sending women on expatriate assignments. Lastly, organizations can use CCA as criteria for evaluation and service compensation. Managers who, successfully succeed in both domestic and out of home state assignment should be compensated more to retain such managers (talented) in the organizations as they are capable of generating sustainable competitive advantage for the organization. Managers who have language ability should be given incentives and bonus for such assignment, which motivate them to opt more of such assignments.

Limitation and Future Research

The paper has certain limitations, which shall be kept in mind in the future. Firstly, the study is cross sectional in nature; in future longitudinal study can be conducted for better causal relationship analysis. Secondly, more antecedents of CCA can be taken into consideration in the future for better understanding of the concept. Further, the role of other variables like perceived social support, language proficiency and organizational commitment can be explored between EQ and CCA.

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