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Abstract

Purpose: Despite the strong impact of cultural distance in international contexts, it has not yet received fair attention in the literature on expatriates in general, and from hospitality expatriates in the Middle East in particular. Drawing on the cultural distance perspective, this study examined the influence of cultural distance on hospitality expatriates' cultural adjustment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the Middle East as a rapidly growing hospitality market.

Originality/value: Investigating the influence of cultural distance on hospitality expatriates in the Middle Eastern countries is the distinguished exception of the present study than the general norm.

Relevance of the topic: Expatriates' perceptions of cultural differences between the parent and host country may significantly impact their personal interaction with the locals and their adjustment in the foreign society, which may subsequently influence their performance and turnover intentions. Given that the Middle East hospitality industry is growing tremendously, and given that cultural distance can affect expatriate experience in this region due to the difficulties that those expatriates encounter in attaining insights on social cues and creating a shared understanding with Middle Eastern nationals, the results of this study can be used as reference for international hospitality companies to better manage their expatriates around the world in general, and in the growing Middle East region in particular.

Design/methodology/approach: An online survey was conducted using *Qualtrics*. A total of 217 surveys were received from expatriates working in hospitality industry in Middle Eastern countries, with 63 usable participants used in analysis.

Key findings: Multiple regression analyses results indicated that cultural distance exerts a significant effect on hospitality expatriates' cultural adjustment and job satisfaction in the Middle East. Cultural adjustment also has a significant effect on job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Moreover, job satisfaction was found to have a significant effect on turnover intentions.

Implications for practice and policy: The present study suggests that challenges that are related to cultural distance may be reduced by pre-departure and on-site training of expatriates. Middle Eastern employees working with expatriates should also be given opportunities by their companies to become familiar with the cultural characteristics of the expatriates through cultural-diversity training. In addition, headquarters can assign other expatriates who had been on similar assignment as advisors for expatriates who are going to work in this region. Hospitality enterprises should recognize expatriates who stay longer at their jobs in the Middle East; they are recommended to provide career ladders, communication and training programs to make hospitality workplace for their expatriates in a Middle Eastern country more attractive. Research limitations are presented.

Key Words: cultural distance, cultural adjustment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, Middle East

Introduction

One vital issue within the scope of international human resource management is expatriation. Expatriate managers are not nationals of the country in which they are working, but are employed because of their specialized management abilities or expert knowledge of the organization[1]. Expatriates encounter the challenges of successfully carrying out international missions under different cultures, values, languages and living environments. Due to their work in a high-contact and people-oriented industry[2], hospitality expatriates tend to encounter even more cross-cultural issues while on their international assignments. The study of intercultural interaction and it linkages to job satisfaction of expatriates is presumed to be useful, especially that expatriates' inability to adjust to host-country cultures and interact with host-country nationals are more problematic when compared to task-related issues[3]. Cultural differences that represent hallmarks of one's social identity make it more defying for expatriates to build social relationships with host-country nationals and establish a position amidst information and

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[1] Pine, R. (2000). Definition of expatriate. *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, 214.
[2] Chow, I. H. S., Lo, T. W. C., Sha, Z., & Hong, J. (2006). The impact of developmental experience, empowerment, and organizational support on catering service staff performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 25(3), 478-495.
[3] Paik, Y., & Sohn, J. D. (2004). Expatriate managers and MNC's ability to control international subsidiaries: the case of Japanese MNCs. *Journal of World Business*, 39(1), 61-71.

influence ties in foreign subsidiaries[4]. Thus, expatriates' perceptions of cultural differences between the parent and host country may significantly impact their personal interaction with the locals and their adjustment in the foreign society, which may subsequently influence their performance.

When companies decide to expand to foreign markets, they need to make a decision as to the extent to which they need to adjust to a foreign national culture of those markets and at the same time be prepared for challenges, such as differences in language, lifestyles, cultural standards, and consumer preferences[5,6,7]. Cultural distance refers to the differences or similarities between two cultures in terms of their physical (e.g., climate) and social (e.g., language, education, religion) characteristics[8]. It has been suggested that, for people who live abroad, some countries maybe harder to adjust to than others when it comes to "cultural barriers"[9], or "culture toughness"[10]. Cultural distance proposes that the greater the gap between home and host cultures, the more difficulties newcomers will experience[11]. A previous study has examined a large sample of international students enrolled in a Midwestern university in the U.S and concluded that a higher degree of cultural distance was associated with higher difficulty in social integration[12]. They found that it was easier for British, European, and South American students to be integrated into the U.S. society than students from North Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. This is presumably because of the larger perceived cultural distance of the latter groups.

Background

Expatriates experienced high levels of dissatisfaction on their international assignments for several regions, including the Middle East.[13] The areas of job satisfaction encountered by those expatriates included levels of stress, health care, housing, entertainment, food, and skill of co-workers. Interestingly, additional cultural obstacles were reported for Southeast Asia, Japan,

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[4] Toh, S. M., & Denisi, A. S. (2007). Host country nationals as socializing agents: A social identity approach. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *28*(3), 281.

[5] Albaum, G., & Tse, D. K. (2001). Adaptation of international marketing strategy components, competitive advantage, and firm performance: A study of Hong Kong exporters. *Journal of international marketing*, *9*(4), 59-81.

[6] Lu, J. W., & Beamish, P. W. (2001). The internationalization and performance of SMEs. *Strategic management journal*, 22(6-7), 565-586.

[7] Sousa, C. M., & Bradley, F. (2005). Global markets: does psychic distance matter?. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *13*(1), 43-59.

[8] Babiker, I. E., Cox, J. L., & Miller, P. M. (1980). The measurement of cultural distance and its relationship to medical consultations, symptomatology and examination performance of overseas students at Edinburgh University. *Social Psychiatry*, *15*(3), 109-116.

[9] Torbiörn, I. (1982). *Living abroad: Personal adjustment and personnel policy in the overseas setting*. John Wiley & Sons.

[10] Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1985). The dimensions of expatriate acculturation: A review. *Academy of Management Review*, *10*(1), 39-47.

[11] Ward, C. A., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock*. Psychology Press.

[12] Redmond, M. V., & Bunyi, J. M. (1993). The relationship of intercultural communication competence with stress and the handling of stress as reported by international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *17*(2), 235-254.

[13] Torbiörn, I. (1982). *Living abroad: Personal adjustment and personnel policy in the overseas setting*. John Wiley & Sons.

Africa, and the Middle East than for other world regions. However, prior research has investigated several issues encountered by expatriates around the world, most of which have concentrated on specific regions such as Hong Kong, China, Japan and North America[14]. Continuously, managers from the West when assigned to work in the Middle East find themselves dealing with employees with drastically different work backgrounds. Due to those work differences, some managers find that working with colleagues from different cultures lead to difficulties such as uncertainty, disagreements and other forms of conflict[15].

The Middle East region remains, generally, among the fastest growing hospitality development markets. Even though the share of Middle East of the worldwide travel market is presently only about 5%, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) anticipates the region will grow at an average annual rate of 7%, the highest in the world[16]. In the Middle East, countries such as United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan have experienced continued economic growth, creating interest by international investors as well as major hotel brands that see expansion into the region as a source of future growth. Obviously, the importance of the region for the global hospitality sector cannot be overlooked. With world events coming up, such as the Expo 2020 in UAE and the World Cup 2022 in Qatar, increasingly more hotel properties are being developed. Saudi Arabia continues to invest in its hospitality industry, mainly due to growing religious tourism in Makkah and Medina. More international hotels mean more expatriates. However, the international management literature has obviously ignored the Arab world[17]. Similarly, cross-cultural training (CCT), even though has been studied over the years, has only hardly mentioned the Arab world[18]. Little empirical research exists on the role cultural distance plays in the journey of expatriates in the Middle East. Despite the importance of expatriates to the hospitality industry, there is a lack of empirical investigations addressing the influence of cultural distance on expatriates to better accommodate their needs when assigned to that region. This gap in research underscores the purpose of this study, which is to examine the

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[14] Black, J. S. (1988). Work role transitions: A study of American expatriate managers in Japan. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 277-294.

[15] Wright, N. S., & Bennett, H. (2008). Harmony and participation in Arab and Western teams. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 1(4), 230-243.

[16] WTO (2006). *Tourism Highlights Edition* 2006. World Tourism Organization: Madrid.

[17] Weir, D. (2000). Management in the Arab World: A Fourth Paradigm?' *Arab Business: The Globalisation Imperative*, eds. A. Al-Shamali and J. Denton, Kuwait: Wiley, pp. 60-76.

[18] Littrell, L. N., Salas, E., Hess, K. P., Paley, M., & Riedel, S. (2006). Expatriate preparation: A critical analysis of 25 years of cross-cultural training research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 5(3), 355-388.

influence of cultural distance on expatriates' experience in the Middle East. We proposed the following hypotheses:

H1: Cultural distance has a negative impact on hospitality expatriates' cultural adjustment in the Middle East.

H2: Cultural distance has a negative impact on expatriates' job satisfaction in the Middle East.

H3: Higher levels of cultural adjustment of hospitality expatriates will be associated with lower levels of turnover intentions in the Middle East.

H4: Higher levels of cultural adjustment of hospitality expatriates will be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction in the Middle East.

H5: Higher levels of job satisfaction of hospitality expatriates will be associated with lower levels of turnover intentions in the Middle East.

Research Methods

Sample and Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred from December 10, 2014 to September 21, 2015. Data were collected from hospitality expatriates who currently work on an international assignment, as well as those who had previously been on such an assignment, in the Middle East, via an online survey using *Qualtrics*. Developed based on a thorough review of pertinent literature and identification of the relevant variables, the first version of the survey was sent to a group of academics and industry professionals for review and feedback.

Several sources were used to identify participants. First, a list of expatriation-focused web sources such as Allo' Expat and ExpatExchange were prepared in advance. Once these websites were identified, the admins of those websites were contacted and asked for permission to post the survey link on the websites. Second, a list of hotel properties in the participating countries that can be found through Internet searching was prepared. Then, the e-mail addresses of hotel properties spreading through the participating countries were compiled. Next, each hotel property's Director of Human Resources in the list was sent an e-mail asking for assistance in forwarding the survey link to the expatriates in the hotel, if any. LinkedIn was also used as a supplemental method to gather data from participants in what thought would be a convenient mode for them to participate in the present study. Those who accepted the invitation to participate were sent a message explaining the purpose of the study and asking them to complete the survey. They were also asked to recommend other colleagues who might qualify as

participants in the survey – snowball sampling. A total of 217 surveys were collected from potential participants, of which 63 were usable for analysis.

Instrument Development

The empirical study was conducted using a survey instrument comprised of several parts. The instrument contained screening questions to ensure the eligibility and suitability of the participants, and a section addressing the demographic information of respondents. The main part of the survey was comprised of 30 questions relating to the main constructs under investigation. Cultural distance (CD) was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Extremely Similar, 5= Extremely Different) and consisted of eight statements[19]. Cultural adjustment (CA) was measured by 14-statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Very Unadjusted, 5= Very Adjusted)[20]. Job satisfaction (JS) was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree) to measure the respondent's level of agreement with five statements[21]. Turnover intentions (TI) was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree) and comprised three items[22].

Findings and Solutions

Demographic Profile of Participants

Among all 63 participants, 49 (77.8%) are currently on an expatriate assignment in the Middle East, while the remaining 14 (22.2%) had been on an expatriate assignment in the Middle East before. Table 1 reveals the demographic profile of the sample.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Participants (n=63)

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[19] Torbiörn, I. (1982). *Living abroad: Personal adjustment and personnel policy in the overseas setting*. John Wiley & Sons.
[20] Black, J. S., & Stephens, G. K. (1989). The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management, 15*(4), 529-544.
[21] Smith, P. C., Kendall, L. M., & Hulin, C. (1969). *The measurement of satisfaction in work and behavior*. Chicago: Raud McNally.
[22] Blomme, R. J., Van Rheede, A., & Tromp, D. M. (2010). Work-family conflict as a cause for turnover intentions in the hospitality industry. *Tourism and Hospitality Research, 10*(4), 269-285.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	45	71.4
Female	18	28.6
Total	63	100
Age		
19-25	1	1.6
26 – 35	29	46.0
36 – 45	24	38.1
46 – 55	6	9.5
41 & Older	3	4.8
Total	63	100
Marital Status		
Single	9	14.3
Engaged	5	7.9
Married	45	71.4
Divorced	4	6.3
Total	63	100
Nationality		
North America	29	46.03
Europe	31	49.21
Australia	3	4.76
Total	63	100
Highest Education Obtained		
High school or less	4	6.3
Diploma	11	17.5
Bachelor	33	52.4
Masters	11	17.5
PHD	4	6.3
Total	63	100
Position in the Current Company		
General Manager	8	12.7
Consultant	12	19.0
Middle Management	34	54.0
Other	9	14.3
Total	63	100

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations for the study variables. Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency of the scales. Alpha values ranged from .829 to .876, all exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of .70[23].

Table 2 Means, standard deviations, reliability, and correlation coefficients among study variables (N=63)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	α
1 CD	3.66	.75	-				.829
2 CA	3.55	.65	-.577**	-			.876
3 JS	3.63	.74	-.448**	.580**	-		.834
4 TI	3.24	.98	.244	-.311*	-.404**	-	.863

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

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[23] Hair J. F. Jr., Anderson, R. E., Tatham R. L., & Black W. C. (1995). *Multivariate data analysis (4th edn.)*. Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the impact of cultural distance on cultural adjustment of hospitality expatriates. As shown in Table 3, cultural distance is negatively related with cultural adjustment (β = -.577, p < .05), suggesting that the higher-level cultural distance that hospitality expatriates perceive, the lower level of cultural adjustment they have. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Table 3 Regression Results (n=63)

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables and Standardized Regression Weights	
	CA	
CD	-.577**	H1 is supported

Notes: **. p＜.001. *. p＜.05.

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used for testing H2 through H5. Composite scores for each of the constructs were calculated by averaging item scores representing each particular construct. For H3 and H5, cultural adjustment was entered in Step 1 and job satisfaction in Step 2 to predict turnover intentions. As Table 4 shows, the result regarding the relationship between cultural adjustment and turnover intentions is in the hypothesized direction (β= -.311, p < .05). The higher level of cultural adjustment hospitality expatriates exhibit, the lower level of turnover intention they will have. Therefore, H3 is supported. The result pertaining to the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions is also in the hypothesized direction (β= -.341, p < .05). The more satisfied the hospitality expatriates with their job, the lower turnover intention they tend to have. Thus, H5 is supported.

Table 4 Hierarchical Multiple Regression of turnover intentions (n=63)

Independent	Dependent Variables and Standardized Regression Weights (TI)			
Variables	β	R²	Δ R²	
Model 1		.097	.097*	
ΔCA	-.311*			H3 is supported
Model 2		.174	.077*	
ΔCA	-.113			H5 is supported
ΔJS	-.341*			
Notes: **. p<.001. *. p<.05.				

For H2 and H4, cultural distance was entered in Step 1 and cultural adjustment in Step 2 to predict job satisfaction. As shown in Table 5, the result regarding the relationship between cultural distance and job satisfaction is supported ($\beta = -.438, p < .001$), which means the higher level cultural distance hospitality expatriates perceive, the lower level of job satisfaction they will have in the Middle East, hence H2 is supported. The result pertaining to the relationship between cultural adjustment and job satisfaction is also supported ($\beta = .503, p < .001$), suggesting that the higher level of cultural adjustment will result in hospitality expatriates' higher level of job satisfaction. Therefore, H4 is supported.

Table 5 Hierarchical Multiple Regression of job satisfaction (n=63)

Independent	Dependent Variables and Standardized Regression Weights (JS)			
Variables	β	R²	Δ R²	
Model 1		.192	.192**	
ΔCD	-.438**			H2 is supported
Model 2		.360	.169**	
ΔCD	.148			H4 is supported
ΔCA	.503**			
Notes: **. p<.001. *. p<.05.				

Implications for Practice

This study applied the cultural distance perspective to better understand hospitality expatriates' cultural adjustment, job satisfaction and turnover intentions in the Middle East

region. As hypothesized, culture distance had a negative impact on expatriate cultural adjustment and job satisfaction, indicating that international hospitality enterprises should carefully consider the differences between the West and the East when assigning expatriates to Middle Eastern countries particularly. In addition, the current study found that there is a negative relationship between cultural adjustment and job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Job satisfaction was also found to be negatively associated with turnover intentions.

The findings of this study have several practical implications. First, problems that are related to culture distance could be reduced by the pre-departure training and the on-site training offered to expatriates. Pre-departure training enhances expatriate cultural adjustment as it ensures that expatriates have the necessary abilities to fit in the culture during their assignments. Prior research indicates that the need to develop cross-cultural skills in expatriates becomes greater when the gap between cultures is wide[24]. Multinational hospitality companies should make the optimal use of their workforce by assigning expatriates for assignments in UAE, Qatar, KSA and possibly any place in the region where there are well-established expatriate communities to provide support and ease their cultural adjustment. To obtain the best use out of these communities, multinational hospitality businesses that employ expatriates should develop associations with the expatriate networks by sponsoring and supporting local networking events or coordinating welcoming programs for newcomers.

On the other hand, host country employees should also be provided with opportunities by their companies to become familiar with the cultural and personality characteristics of the expatriate through cultural-diversity training. Hospitality enterprises should facilitate and maintain high-quality relationships between expatriates and their local employees by providing the latter with training on the challenges of cross-cultural adjustment. In addition, headquarters can assign other expatriates who had been on assignment as advisors for expatriates who work in this region to get harmonized to the conditions prevailing in the host countries. These mentors can help by providing expatriates with hands-on training in cultural behavior, business contacts, and assistance in interpreting business situations. Doing so is helpful in establishing an expatriate's cross-cultural skills and competencies, which will lead to positive work outcomes especially in culturally distant countries such those in the Middle East. Since the Middle East has different and relatively difficult working environment in terms of the tough living circumstances,

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[24] Forster, N. (2000). Expatriates and the impact of cross   cultural training. *Human Resource Management Journal, 10*(3), 63-78.

harsh climate and opposite cultural differences, Middle Eastern countries could be perceived as hardship postings. This implies that expatriates should be aware of several practices and codes of conduct that contrast with the West. Expatriates and their families in Middle Eastern countries should observe caution of the locally unacceptable behaviors, such as consuming alcoholic beverages in public except for specially licensed places.

Secondly, an expatriate's relocation to an unfamiliar environment is a stressful feeling. Previous research has found a negative relationship between perceptions of national culture novelty and expatriate adjustment and it also found that support for expatriates' adjustment is positively related to job performance[25]. A qualitative study of British expatriates in the Middle East suggested that success of expatriates does not totally depend on their ability but also on organizational support and assistance that they receive prior to and during the assignment[26]. Organizational support therefore is fundamental; it helps to decrease the amount of time spent on these issues and simplifies adjustment to the new work-related domains[27]. That includes issues such as issuing visa processes, work permits, housing, school for children, and medical insurance. Another type of support hospitality firms can provide its expatriates in this area is social support, which includes mobilizing psychological resources and further provides feelings of recognition and affirmation[28,29].This support could stem from family, host national colleagues, or in some instances expatriates from other countries. Particularly on the work front, expatriates should be provided with clear information on the do's and the don'ts especially if the organizational culture novelty between the home and the host country subsidiary is high as this study has found. Studies suggest that social support has a positive impact on expatriates' abilities to adapt to the new environment[30,31].

Whereas most people in individualistic countries in the West have grown up seeing the world as separate individuals, people in the Middle East have been socialized to perceive

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[25] Kraimer, M. L., Wayne, S. J., & Jaworski, R. A. A. (2001). Sources of support and expatriate performance: The mediating role of expatriate adjustment. *Personnel Psychology, 54*(1), 71-99.

[26] Konanahalli, A., Oyedele, L. O., Coates, R., von Meding, J., & Spillane, J. (2012). International projects and cross-cultural adjustments of British expatriates in Middle East: A qualitative investigation of influencing factors. *Australasian Journal of Construction Economics and Building, 12*(3), 31.

[27] Aycan, Z. (1997). Expatriate adjustment as a multifaceted phenomenon: Individual and organizational level predictors. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 8*(4), 434-456.

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[29] Rook, K. S. (1984). Research on social support, loneliness, and social isolation: Toward an integration. *Review of Personality & Social Psychology.*

[30] Coyle, W., & Shortland, S. M. (1992). *International relocation: A global perspective.* Butterworth-Heinemann.

[31] Brewster, C., & Scullion, H. (1997). A review and agenda for expatriate HRM. *Human Resource Management Journal, 7*(3), 32-41.

themselves as a part of the whole[32]. Middle Eastern people can thus misperceive the self-oriented behavior by expatriates from countries with individualistic value orientations, while these expatriates can become bothered with the endless formalities response patterns that are exhibited by people in the Middle East. Expatriates posted to work on such assignments need to comprehend that the design standards, systems, tools, techniques and labor skills in some cases can be distinctly different from their home countries. Striking cultural differences between their own culture and the Middle East region suggest that hospitality enterprises could lessen anxiety by preparing the expatriate and his/her family through cultural training. Additional factors highlighted during the selection interviews, that need organizational consideration, may include clarity of job roles and responsibilities and mentoring support especially for junior staff.

Job satisfaction was negatively associated with expatriates' turnover intentions. This implies that it is crucial that hospitality practitioners gain a better understanding of the causes of job dissatisfaction in the hospitality workplace in order to develop effective retention strategies. We suggest that hospitality enterprises should recognize expatriates who stay longer at their jobs in the Middle East.

Lastly, the revolutions that have caused the current political instability in the Middle East continue to create negative perceptions of the region. Therefore, this state of unrest may create a couple of thoughtful restrictions on the life of expatriates working in the area. Since the scope of the present study is expatriates, it is essential that hospitality organizations familiarize expatriates of the social and political dynamics of the region so they can better adjust and develop a realistic overview of the country in which they are assigned to. Factors such as the methods used for selecting expatriates, tailor-made training programs, and logistical and social support are important issues that may significantly affect expatriates' adjustment. In a qualitative study of British expatriates in the Middle East, it was found that the current political revolution in the region has been considered as a main reason of concern for expatriates and has seriously influenced their movement.[33]

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[32] Hofstede, G. (1980). Cultural dimensions of collectivism/individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity/masculinity will be applied. *Organizational Dynamics, 10,* 35-49.
[33] Konanahalli, A., Oyedele, L. O., Coates, R., von Meding, J., & Spillane, J. (2012). International projects and cross-cultural adjustments of British expatriates in Middle East: A qualitative investigation of influencing factors. *Australasian Journal of Construction Economics and Building, 12*(3), 31.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study has been carried out carefully, there are some unavoidable limitations. The UAE, Qatar and KSA are the places more participants have expatriated to. This could potentially affect the results, given that these countries have accumulated better experiences hosting expatriates, which may lead to these expatriates reporting more positive responses than expatriates in other countries in the same region. Another limitation is that only 63 respondents participated in this study. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results of this study beyond its scope. In addition, some of the respondents completed the survey by reflecting on their past expatriation experiences in the Middle East. The information they provided may not be as accurate as those who are currently on assignment, which can be another limitation of this study. Lastly, given the lack of previous research addressing the issue of hospitality expatriates in the Middle East, this study should be considered exploratory in nature, thus limiting the application of the results to other populations outside of the one investigated here.

Annex 1

Theoretical Underpinnings

Conceptual Framework

Cultural distance and cultural adjustment

Cross-cultural adjustment is defined as "the degree of psychological comfort and familiarity that the individual has for the new environment" (Black, 1990, p. 111). The process of cross-cultural adjustment to another culture has been conceptualized as multidimensional; comprising three facets (general, interaction, and work adjustment) (e.g., Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). Galchenko and Vijver (2007) in Russia, investigated a sample of exchange students from East Asia (e.g., China & North Korea), Africa (e.g., Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, & Cameroon), and Soviet Union (e.g., Armenia & Georgia) and found that a larger perceived cultural distance between the original and the host cultures was associated with less psychological and sociocultural adaption. A previous study shows that expatriates working in countries high in collectivism will be required to perform more relationship-oriented behaviors than those in countries high in individualism (Shin, Morgeson & Campion, 2007).

Molinsky (2007) suggests that instead of performing solely within the cultural setting in which they were born and raised, individuals are expected to be capable of functioning properly in a wide range of foreign cultural environments, many of which may have different cultural customs for appropriate behavior that do not have to be consistent with their own core values and beliefs. In most of the substantive body of theory and research on sojourner adjustment (Brein & David, 1971; Church, 1982) as well as in the literature on international adjustment of expatriate managers (Black et al., 1991; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Torbiörn, 1982), the assumption is that growing cultural dissimilarity between host and home culture, "cultural distance" will increase adjustment difficulties. With the theoretical backing and confirming evidence in previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Cultural distance has a negative impact on hospitality expatriates' cultural adjustment in the Middle East.

Cultural distance and job satisfaction

Dissimilar expectations of work relations reduce expatriate job satisfaction in foreign countries (Maurer & Li, 2006; Paik & Sohn, 2004). Because these different expectations are country or region specific, Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) proposed that more attention should be paid to the cultural characteristics of the host country. The present study focuses on the Middle East because of the region's cultural distance and the challenge it poses to expatriates due to differences in cultural values and communication patterns and the difficulty in social integration. The cultural values of individualism and collectivism are likely to influence expatriate job satisfaction. There is a tendency among people in Middle Eastern countries to show the 'appropriate' attitudes, behavioral patterns, and values in order to fit into the group. Therefore, this study proposes the following:

H2: Cultural distance has a negative impact on expatriates' job satisfaction in the Middle East.

Cultural adjustment and turnover intentions

Expatriates who have the ability to adjust to the new environment are both effective and experience low turnover intentions (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003). For expatriates, satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with

the general environment (non-work aspect) is likely to play a vital role in influencing their intentions to return early (Black & Gregersen, 1990; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). International relocation is associated with substantial changes in one's daily activities (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994) that are likely to influence satisfaction with the general setting. Black and Gregersen (1990) found a significant negative relationship between satisfaction with living conditions in general and expatriates' intentions to leave. Shaffer and Harrison (1998) also found a significant negative relationship between satisfaction with non-work domains of living abroad and expatriates' intentions to terminate their assignments.

Due to the cultural differences, hospitality expatriates may realize that behaviors that are suitable in their home nations are not considered the same in the Middle East. For example, people in some societies perceive that work relations are determined largely by job descriptions and task-related responsibilities (Maurer & Li, 2006). Since these boundaries are less clear in the Middle East, expatriates from different countries need to invest time and resources in forming and maintaining social relationships with host country nationals to be regarded as effective subordinates. Such differences are likely to increase misunderstandings and complicate work relationships, and thereby lower expatriate job satisfaction. Therefore, this study expects to find the following:

H3: Higher levels of cultural adjustment of hospitality expatriates will be associated with lower levels of turnover intentions in the Middle East.

Cultural adjustment and job satisfaction

When expatriates experience problems adjusting to the new environment, they experience added stress in their non-work life. For example, their living residences may not be adequate to provide for the family needs of security and comfort. Their disappointment may be directed toward the host country in general for not offering for what they believe as sufficient standards of living. This feeling of frustration can be carried over to work and may negatively impact expatriates' satisfaction with their jobs. On the other hand, if the expatriates are comfortable with their general surroundings, feelings toward the host country are likely to be more positive. If expatriates successfully adjust to their work situations and are able to cultivate relationships with host country nationals who provide social support at work, enhanced adjustment experienced at

work can be expected to spill over into the non-work aspect to produce greater general satisfaction with living in the foreign culture. Accordingly, we predicted the following.

H4: Higher levels of cultural adjustment of hospitality expatriates will be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction in the Middle East.

Job satisfaction and turnover intentions

The relationship between job satisfaction and intention to turnover has been well researched within the domestic turnover literature (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992). Likewise, several scholars have identified a negative relationship between expatriates' job satisfaction and their intention to terminate the assignment or to return early (Black & Gregersen, 1990; Parker & McEvoy, 1993; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Consequently, the following relationship has been proposed:

H5: Higher levels of job satisfaction of hospitality expatriates will be associated with lower levels of turnover intentions in the Middle East.

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