

# FACTORS AFFECTING BRITISH EXPATRIATES' ADJUSTMENT IN THAILAND

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## Abstract

Building on literature relating to expatriate adjustment, this study attempted to identify factors that affect individualistic expatriate responses to cross-cultural adjustment in a collectivist culture. This study examines empirically the degree to which 387 British expatriates have adjusted themselves in terms of interaction, general/cultural and work adjustment in Thailand. It also analyzes the expatriates' adjustment antecedents which are personal factors, work related factors and cultural factors. Multiple regression analysis exhibited that expatriates' work related adjustment were affected by spouse and family adjustment, social support and role discretion. The cultural factors showed no effects on all dimensions of British expatriates' adjustment. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** Expatriate Adjustment, Self-efficacy, Language Fluency, Culture Novelty, Cultural Intelligence

## บทคัดย่อ

สืบเนื่องจากรวมกันที่เกี่ยวกับการปรับตัวของชาวต่างชาติ ได้นำสู่วัตถุประสงค์ของการทำการศึกษาครั้งนี้ เพื่อหาปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อชาวต่างชาติในการปรับตัวทางด้านวัฒนธรรมที่ต่างกัน จากการศึกษาชาวอังกฤษ 387 คน ในหัวข้อ การปรับตัวเองในแง่การปฏิสัมพันธ์ต่อคนทั่วไป การปรับตัวต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมทั่ว ๆ ไปหรือในแง่วัฒนธรรม และการปรับตัวเองในด้านการทำงานในประเทศไทย การศึกษานี้ได้วิเคราะห์ถึงปัจจัยส่วนบุคคล ปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการทำงาน และปัจจัยทางด้านวัฒนธรรม จากผลการวิเคราะห์ได้แสดงให้เห็นถึง 3 ปัจจัยหลักที่มีผลกระทบต่อการทำงานของชาวต่างชาติคือ การปรับตัวของคู่สมรสและครอบครัว การได้รับการสนับสนุนทางสังคม และจากบทบาทการทำงาน โดยคุณพินิจ จากผลการวิเคราะห์ยังได้แสดงว่าปัจจัยทางวัฒนธรรมไม่มีผลต่อทุกมิติของการปรับตัวของชาวอังกฤษ ผลกระทบจากการศึกษาที่จะนำไปสู่การทำวิจัยในอนาคตและการปฏิบัติได้มีกล่าวถึงในช่วงท้าย

**คำสำคัญ:** การปรับตัวของชาวต่างชาติ, ประสิทธิภาพในตนเอง, คล่องภาษา, ความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม, การปรับตัวทางวัฒนธรรม

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization has created opportunities for Multinational Companies (MNCs) to expand businesses ranging from exporting to foreign direct investment (FDI) (Phatak, Bhagat, & Kashlak, 2009). MNCs implement an expatriation strategy to ensure successful competitive outcomes (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008; Perkins, 1994; Tung, 1982) which are to control and coordinate their international business operations (Harzing, 2001), to develop a potential employees as a career advancement (Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005), to

transfer technology, knowledge and skills (Huang, Chi, & Lawler, 2005), and to establish new foreign markets (Scullion & Brewster, 2001).

During an international assignment, expatriates have to live and work in a new cultural setting, and experience different role behaviors that local people might expect from them. To perform their work and live comfortably in the new cultural society, expatriates need to be culturally sensitive (Moran, Harris & Moran, 2007). To manage cultural differences, Ang, Van dyne, Koh, Ng, Templer and Tay (2007) recommended the concept of cultural intelligence. A cultural intelligent expatriate

is aware of the cultural differences by carefully observing the host cultural practices, decodes cultural messages from locals, and responds correctly to local people. Expatriates who respond to local employees with different behaviors might face the discomfort of being treated as outsiders.

According to Wang (2001), there is a lack of research regarding the expatriate's interpersonal interactions within the local culture. In addition, the cultural distance between the expatriates and the locals can cause difficulties to expatriate adjustment (Peltokorpi, 2008; Rarick, 2002). However, the difficulties caused by the distance between cultures can be solved by being a culturally intelligent expatriate who is aware of cultural differences, knowledgeable of both cultures, and motivated to behave appropriately in the particular culture. Thus, the expatriate's social support and cultural intelligence will be integrated into the proposed framework to test for the most influential factors that affect expatriate adjustment in this study.

Many European based MNCs have increased their presence and significance to counteract global competition (Scullion & Brewster, 2001). UK products imported to Thailand grew by double digits for 4 consecutive years (British Chamber of Commerce Thailand [BCCT], 2012). In 2011, the bilateral trade and investment between two countries reached just under £5 billion. UK investors ranked number one in terms of the number of expatriates among the European countries (Department Of Employment, 2011). The United Kingdom is ranked as the largest EU investors in Thailand (BCCT, 2012). It is necessary to understand various factors that facilitate the cross-cultural adjustment of the British expatriates in Thailand. Therefore, the problems here are the extent to which British expatriates adjust to Thai culture and which factors among personal factors, work factors and cultural factors are most influential to their cross-cultural adjustment in Thailand.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Huang et al., (2005), expatriate adjustment is a process of experience adjustment or the process through which an expatriate feels comfortable with a new environment and harmonizes with it. According to Selmer (2006a), expatriate adjustment can be referred not only to the

ability to fit in to new environment but also the capability to interact effectively with the locals. But the expatriates should be psychologically comfortable in dealing with work in that environment (Aryee & Stone, 1996; Fenner & Selmer, 2008). Relocating expatriate employees to work in other countries exposes them to different cultures. They need to adjust to live and to work in different cultural settings. Hence, the terms expatriate adjustment and cross-cultural adjustment are sometimes used interchangeably.

The concept of adjustment has been discussed and empirically confirmed to be multi-dimensional in the expatriation literature (Aycan, 1997; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Expatriate's adjustment can be divided into three distinct facets: work adjustment, cultural adjustment and interaction adjustment (Black, 1988; Black & Gregersen, 1999; Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Black & Porter, 1991). The 'work adjustment' occurs when an individual needs to adjust to new work and role requirements, work responsibilities, work difficulties and work abilities (Black, 1988; Black et al., 1991). The 'cultural adjustment' which Black (1988) termed 'general adjustment', includes living conditions and cultural differences and refers to non-work issues such as food, weather, transportation, school and entertainment. The 'interaction adjustment' refers to interpersonal relationship by socializing with the local people. Black et al. (1991) strongly suggested that each dimension of international adjustment should be treated separately from others as a multidimensional concept (Selmer, 1999). However, the three facets of expatriate adjustment are the main predicted variables emphasized in this study.

Black et al., (1991) proposed a framework to integrate many sets of variables that could predict the three facets of expatriate adjustment. This framework has been tested by many researchers in order to confirm the ability of the three facets to predict expatriate adjustment. Those independent variables are personal factors, work and non-work factors, organization culture and socialization factors. Shaffer et al. (1999) extended the model with some of the moderating factors which are positional factors and two additional personal factors and empirically tested the whole concept. This study's proposed framework integrates the models by both Black et al. (1991) and Shaffer et al. (1999). Additionally, this research framework also

includes social support factors and cultural intelligence factors to examine the significant variables that affect British expatriates in Thailand.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/HYPOTHESES

The main objective of this research is to examine the personal factors, work factors and cultural factors that can influence the cross-cultural adjustment of British expatriates in Thailand. The personal factors include self-efficacy, spouse/family adjustment, previous overseas experience, and host-country language fluency. The work factors that influence work adjustment in this study include work role clarity, work role discretion, work role conflict, work role novelty, work role overload, social supports, and hierarchical level. The cultural factors included in this study are cultural novelty and expatriate's cultural intelligence.

### Factors Hypothesized to Influence Expatriates' Adjustment

Self-efficacy is found to have a positive association with expatriate psychological adjustment (Fenner & Selmer, 2008), social adjustment (Gong & Fan, 2006) and is a strong predictor of the role change to achieve high job performance (Nicholson & Imaizumi, 1993). Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, and Luk (2004) found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and interaction adjustment but not work adjustment. Expatriates who have self-efficacy or belief in their abilities to adjust to new cultural environments will have better work adjustment, general adjustment and interaction adjustment. Thus,

*Hypothesis 1: Self-efficacy has a positive influence on the general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment of British expatriates in Thailand.*

It is widely accepted in the expatriate literature that spouse adjustment is a very important factor in the expatriate's adjustment (Aycan, 1997; Black, 1988; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Nicholson & Imaizumi, 1993). The study done by Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, (2001) reported no relationship of spousal support on expatriate adjustment. Caligiuri (2000) found that family adjustment was significantly related to expatriate's general adjust-

ment. The result from Lee and Liu's (2006) study found spouses adjustment to have a significant positive relationship with the expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. However, spouse/family adjustment was also reported to have a weak positive relationship with interaction adjustment and work adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2004). Therefore, the family/spouse adjustment is expected to have an influence on the cross-cultural adjustment of the expatriate. Hence,

*Hypothesis 2: Family/spouse adjustment has a positive influence on the general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment of British expatriates in Thailand.*

In the expatriate literature, overseas experiences such as living and working in foreign environment provide expatriates with confidence, skills and abilities to adjust to the general living environment and to interact and behave to meet the expectations of the locals. Parker and McEvoy's (1993) study found that the previous overseas experiences had a significant positive relationship with general adjustment but the overseas experiences showed no significant relationship with the work adjustment. Fenner and Selmer (2008) also reported no significant relationship between overseas experiences to expatriate's psychological adjustment. Another research found that previous overseas experience has significant positive relationship to work and interaction adjustment only (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2004). Thus,

*Hypothesis 3: British expatriates' previous overseas experiences have a positive influence on their general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment in Thailand.*

Knowing the host country language will facilitate the interaction with the locals and help obtain general information regarding the host environment and work related information (Black et al., 1991; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). It also involves learning the culture which helps expatriates to overcome cultural barriers (Takeuchi, Yun, & Telsuk, 2002). Freeman and Olson-Buchanan's (2013) online survey of expatriates in 30 countries found that local language fluency has predicted all three expatriate adjustment. Selmer (2006b) studied the Western expatriates in China and found that de-

spite the local language fluency's strong positive relationships with interaction and general adjustment, it had a weak relationship with work adjustment. However, Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2004) found the host country language fluency to have positive relationship with both general living adjustment and interaction adjustment but not with work adjustment. Thus,

*Hypothesis 4: British expatriates' Thai language fluency has a positive influence on their general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment.*

There are five work roles related to expatriate work adjustment. Role clarity involves the clarity of expatriate's scope of responsibility and others' expectations of expatriate's performance. Morley and Flynn's (2003) study shows role ambiguity (lack of role clarity) has a significantly negative relationship with work adjustment (Black, 1988; Forster, 1990) but not on the expatriate general and interaction adjustment. Shaffer et al.'s (1999) study found the strongest positive effect of role clarity on expatriate work adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2004). This study also predicted positive relationship between work role clarity and expatriate adjustment. Thus,

*Hypothesis 5: British expatriates' role clarity has a positive influence on their work adjustment in Thailand.*

Role discretion is defined as the expatriate's opportunities to change the components and relationships of role demands (Black, 1988), or the degree that expatriates is allowed to change the new work role to fit his/her abilities (Andreason, 2008). Fenner and Selmer (2008) reported a significant positive association between role discretion and the expatriate's psychological adjustment. Selmer and Fenner (2009) who studied personnel from public sector found no relationship between role discretion and work adjustment. Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2004) found very strong relationship between role discretion and work adjustment. Therefore, role discretion is expected to have a positive relationship with work adjustment. Thus,

*Hypothesis 6: British expatriate's role discretion has a positive influence on their work adjustment in Thailand.*

Role conflict is referred to as conflicting ex-

pectations regarding work role or the expatriate's expected behaviors do not fit the new culture (Andreason, 2008). Morley and Flynn (2003) found the negative relationship between role conflict and work adjustment (Aryee & Stone, 1996; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2004; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Black & Gregersen, 1991). Some studies found no relationship between role conflict and work adjustment (Selmer & Fenner, 2009; Shaffer et al., 1999). This study therefore hypothesizes the role conflict as:

*Hypothesis 7: British expatriates' role conflict has a negative influence on their work adjustment in Thailand.*

Role novelty is defined as the role differences between the current foreign assignment and the previous one (Andreason, 2008; Nicholson & Imaizumi, 1993). Role novelty was reported to have no significant relationship with work adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2004; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Black, 1988; Shaffer et al., 1999). In contrast to Nicholson and Imaizumi's (1993) study, the result of this research showed that role novelty had a negative relationship with work adjustment. Hence,

*Hypothesis 8: British expatriates' role novelty has a negative influence on their work adjustment in Thailand.*

The most obvious cause of stress for expatriate's work adjustment is overload demands that rise from the expatriate's new position (Morley & Flynn, 2003) or when the expatriate might not have the ability to comply with the work demands (Karasek, 1979). Role overload was reported to have a weak negative relationship with the expatriate adjustment (Fenner & Selmer, 2008). The inconsistent results showed no relationship between role overload and work adjustment in the studies of Black (1988) and Morley & Flynn, (2003).

*Hypothesis 9: British expatriates' role overload has a negative influence on their work adjustment in Thailand.*

Social support from multiple sources in the host country will be very useful in adjusting to the new culture. Caligiuri's (2000) study found a negative linear relation between the amount of contact with host nationals and the adjustment which indicated that social supports from other expatriates are pref-

erable as compared to host nationals. On the other hand, many studies found positive cross-cultural adjustment with social support from the host country's supervisors and coworkers (Shaffer et al., 1999; Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002; Lee & Van Vorst 2010) and Thus,

*Hypothesis 10: Social support has a positive influence on the general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment of British expatriates in Thailand.*

The hierarchical power of authorities can have an influence on how the work role would require expatriates to interact with host country nationals. The level of hierarchy and type of functional work was found to have a moderating effect between the predictors and the expatriate work adjustment and interaction adjustment (Andreason, 2008; Feldman & Tompson, 1993). However, the higher the level of hierarchy or greater the number of workers/subordinates to manage, to interact and to work with, the more the stress and difficulty for expatriates to adjust. Hence, the hypothesis set for hierarchical level to have negative relationship to all three facets of adjustment is,

*Hypothesis 11: Hierarchical power has a negative influence on the general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment of British expatriates in Thailand.*

The result from Caligiuri (2000) study showed that cultural difficulty had no relationship with the cross-cultural adjustment (Selmer, 2006b). Takeuchi et al. (2002) found that cultural novelty was negatively related to the work adjustment. In Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2004) the meta-analysis reported that cultural novelty had a significant negative relationship with the three dimensions of expatriate adjustment. Zhou and Qin's (2009) study found no significant correlation between work adjustment and cultural distance but negative association between cultural distance, general adjustment (Manev & Stevenson, 2001) and interaction adjustment. Ward and Kennedy (1993) found cultural distance was significantly related to socio-cultural adjustment. Hence,

*Hypothesis 12: Cultural novelty has a negative influence on the general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work*

*adjustment of British expatriates in Thailand.*

Cultural intelligence has been identified as a multidimensional construct consisting of metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ and behavioral CQ (Ang et al., 2007; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009). Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar (2006) studied the motivational CQ and had found significantly positive relationship with cross-cultural adjustment. Motivational CQ seems to be the most important factor to gain confidence to initiate contacts, and to be persistent to overcome cultural obstacles. Thus,

*Hypothesis 13: Cultural intelligence has a positive influence on the general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment of British expatriates in Thailand.*

## METHODOLOGY

Data were obtained from expatriates by a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling and the snow ball method. The samples were 387 British expatriates currently working in Thailand. Two hundred and seventy (69.8%) of the respondents are males, 34.7 percent of the expatriates are in the age group between 30 and 39 and nearly 80 percent of the respondents are below 50 years old and 198 were single (51%). There are 218 (56.3%) respondents who claimed that they are able to communicate in Thai adequately. Two hundred forty nine (64.3%) respondents said they had previous overseas experience and 219 (56.5%) expatriates had tenure in Thailand for more than 4 years.

The original measure for expatriate adjustment consisted of 11 items which were taken from Black (1988). Additional 11 items were added to apply Thai culture. Response scale ranged from '1 = very difficult to adjust' to '5 = very easy to adjust'. The 22 individual items were factor analyzed and revealed three distinct factors. The 12 item of expatriate work adjustment reports Cronbach's Alpha of 0.885. The 7 item expatriate interaction and socialization adjustment (EXIS) with scale's alpha reliability of 0.874. The expatriate general environment adjustment (EXEN) contains 3 items and

Cronbach's Alpha is 0.697.

The 8 items of the self-efficacy scale was taken from Chen, Gully and Eden (2001). A statement sample is "I can do most tasks very well". Response options ranged from '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'. This factor has high reliability coefficient of 0.833. Spouse/family adjustment measure consisted of 15 questions, seven items of which were taken from Black (1988). In this study, eight more items were added in order to apply Thai culture into the study. This factor has a relatively high reliability coefficient of 0.933. Previous overseas experience is considered as an important personal factor (Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Burgi, 2001), a direct question was asked "Do you have experience living or working in any foreign countries?" The responses, 249 answered "Yes" and 138 answered "No". Expatriates were asked to rate their ability to speak Thai language in 3 levels: "not at all or very few words", "adequately as ordering food and can give directions to taxi drivers" and "fluent in communicating and giving orders to Thai workers".

Work role construct is composed of five work roles: work role discretion, work role clarity, work role conflict, work role novelty and work role overload. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point scale; '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'. The 5-item scale of work role clarity (RCR) revealed Cronbach's Alpha of 0.819. The 8-item scale of work role discretion factor was taken from Gregersen and Black (1992) and reported Cronbach's Alpha of 0.875. The work role conflict (RCF) scale included some objective wordings such as: "things should be done differently" and "incompatible requests from many people". The answers to this scale were reverse coded. The scale was taken from Rizzo et al., (1970). The reliability coefficient test on 8 item factor reports Cronbach's Alpha of 0.853.

The six item scale for the work role novelty (RNV) includes statements regarding expected patterns of work behavior altered from the previous work role. For example: "I have changed the way I do my work". The reverse score was done for this item scale and reliability test indicated Cronbach's Alpha of 0.804. The three item work role overload (ROL) was taken from Black (1988). The key words in the scale are "excessive work load" and "demand excessive time". The reliabil-

ity test on three items indicated Cronbach's Alpha of 0.896.

Social support scale taken from Wang (2001) consisted of 20 items. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point scale; '1 = strongly-disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'. Sample item is 'your friends, colleagues and supervisors gave you information about Thai environment activities'. The Cronbach's Alpha of 0.925 showed high reliability of the items. A single question was asked to assess hierarchical power, whether British expatriates have any subordinates who work under their supervision. The response could be either "yes" or "no".

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A review of the Table 1 reveals the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of variables and shows that mean scores of the variables are significantly higher than the mid-level point (3.00 out of a maximum score of 5). The mean scores of three dimensions of expatriate adjustment which are general adjustment (3.62), interaction adjustment (3.76), and work adjustment (3.89) indicate that British respondents are well adjusted to working and living in Thailand. As shown in Table 2 the results of personal factors indicate that British expatriates in Thailand can adjust themselves well mainly due to one of the four personal predictors' significant positive effect of spouse and family adjustment on expatriates' general adjustment, expatriates' interaction adjustment and expatriates' work adjustment.

Hypothesis 1 stated that self-efficacy has a positive influence on all three dimensions of expatriates' adjustment. The results in Table 2 show that Hypothesis 1 is not supported. Hypothesis 2, on the other hand, shows a highly significant positive influence on expatriates' adjustment. The data in Table 2 show that neither previous overseas experiences nor expatriates' Thai language ability significantly influences xpatriates' adjustment. Hence, Hypothesis 3 and 4 are not supported.

Consistent with previous findings (Aryee & Stone, 1996; Shaffer et al., 1999) work related predictors of expatriates' adjustment indicate that British expatriates experience work role conflict in Thailand and even more complexity when expatriates have more hierarchical power which might

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of study variables (N=387)**

| Variables                | Means | Std. D | 1      | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9       | 10      | 11      | 12      | 13      | 14      | 15      | 16 |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----|
| 1 General Adjustment     | 3.62  | .77    | 1      |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 2 Interaction Adjustment | 3.76  | .70    | .350** | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 3 Work Adjustment        | 3.89  | .56    | .418** | .696**  | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 4 Self-efficacy          | 4.29  | .48    | -.007  | .327**  | .444**  | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 5 Spouse Adjustment      | 4.11  | .57    | .426** | .637**  | .600**  | .390**  | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 6 Previous Experiences   | 1.36  | .48    | -.074  | -.210** | -.238** | -.252** | -.294** | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 7 Thai Language Ability  | 2.06  | .66    | .207** | .252**  | .354**  | .230**  | .174*   | -.131*  | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 8 Role Clarity           | 4.02  | .66    | .299** | .494**  | .561**  | .395**  | .522**  | -.192** | .301**  | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 9 Role Discretion        | 3.82  | .64    | .336** | .529**  | .603**  | .375**  | .508**  | -.239** | .321**  | .749**  | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 10 Role Conflict         | 2.84  | .79    | -.082  | -.351** | -.410** | -.241** | -.256** | .172**  | -.269** | -.237** | -.315** | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 11 Role Novelty          | 3.19  | .77    | -.119* | -.296** | -.332** | -.143** | -.228** | .165**  | -.258** | -.197** | -.283** | .549**  | 1       |         |         |         |         |    |
| 12 Role Overload         | 2.83  | .97    | -.048  | -.318** | -.339** | -.212** | -.308** | .155**  | -.255** | -.247** | -.288** | .487**  | .468**  | 1       |         |         |         |    |
| 13 Social Support        | 2.67  | .51    | .397** | .595**  | .663**  | .291**  | .497**  | -.195** | .348**  | .480**  | .534**  | -.262** | -.293** | -.334** | 1       |         |         |    |
| 14 Hierarchical Power    | 1.47  | .50    | -.052  | -.155** | -.250** | -.092   | -.139   | .171**  | -.194** | -.102*  | -.133** | .159**  | .146**  | .199**  | -.271** | 1       |         |    |
| 15 Culture Novelty       | 3.77  | .67    | -.127* | -.401** | -.355** | -.151** | -.369** | .181**  | -.266** | -.250** | -.261** | .301**  | .319**  | .336**  | -.312** | .133**  | 1       |    |
| 16 Cultural Intelligence | 3.59  | .54    | .330** | .516**  | .562**  | .289**  | .358**  | -.099   | .393**  | .377**  | .410**  | -.268** | -.282** | -.345** | .654**  | -.233** | -.289** | 1  |

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

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

hinder British expatriates' work adjustment (Table 2). The conflicting signals related to work roles can be a source of stress and cause lesser work adjustment of British expatriates. As earlier hypothesized that work role conflict and hierarchical power have negative influence on expatriates' work adjustment, the results (Table 2) show this to be the case. Thus, Hypotheses 7 and 11 are supported.

However, support received from friends, colleagues and supervisors strongly facilitate British expatriates' interaction and work adjustment. Work role discretion of British expatriates also has a positive effect on British expatriates' work adjustment. This is supported by Black and Gregersen's (1991) study that work role discretion provide opportunities and authorities for expatriates to control work related processes which enable them to continue their previous work experiences and behavioral patterns. Work role discretion and social support show significant positive influence on expatriates' work adjustment, confirming Hypotheses 6 and 10. Work role clarity (Table 1) shows positive correlation while work role novelty and work role overload are negatively correlated with expatriates' work adjustment, but all three work roles show no statistically significant influence (Table 2) on expatriates' work adjustment, thus generally providing no support for Hypotheses 5, 8 and 9.

The zero-correlation results showed cultural novelty to be significantly negatively related to

expatriates' adjustment, and cultural intelligence to be significantly positively related to expatriates' adjustment. The regression analyses revealed none to be significant, thus generally providing no support for Hypotheses 12 and 13. The nonsignificant effect of both cultural factors on British expatriates' adjustment could stem from British expatriates' expectation of Thai culture shock. The results from this research revealed that British expatriates are well aware of the cultural differences and acquired Thai cultural knowledge from reading books, taking cultural orientation courses, and getting advice from their compatriots to improve their understanding of Thai culture.

### Practical Implications

The implication of the significant relationship between spouse/family adjustment and British expatriates' adjustment is that MNCs should provide spouse and family support programs during expatriates' overseas assignment to facilitate spouse and family adjustment. These support programs should also include interviews with their families during selection of expatriates, family preparation in terms of cultural and environmental training before taking international assignments and the provision of organizational supporting programs to the expatriates' families during international assignments (Andreason, 2003; Black & Stephens, 1989).

**Table 2: Results of Standard Multiple Regression Analyses of Expatriate Adjustment**

| Independent Variables   |                          | Dependent Variables |                        |                 |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
|                         |                          | General Adjustment  | Interaction Adjustment | Work Adjustment |
| Personal Factor:        | Self-efficacy            | -.099               | .064                   | .087            |
|                         | Spouse/family Adjustment | .408***             | .317***                | .227***         |
|                         | Previous Experiences     | .029                | -.020                  | .015            |
|                         | Thai Language Ability    | .032                | .027                   | .054            |
| Work related Factor     | Role Clarity             | .088                | .078                   | .064            |
|                         | Role Discretion          | .089                | .124                   | .144*           |
|                         | Role Conflict            | .164*               | -.106                  | -.144*          |
|                         | Role Novelty             | -.001               | .050                   | .000            |
|                         | Role Overload            | .099                | .032                   | .088            |
|                         | Social Support           | .069                | .195*                  | .275***         |
|                         | Hierarchical Power       | -.015               | -.054                  | -.116*          |
|                         | Cultural Factor          | Culture Novelty     | .072                   | -.111           |
|                         | Cultural Intelligence    | .084                | .082                   | .094            |
| R <sup>2</sup>          |                          | .266                | .581                   | .646            |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> |                          | .211                | .550                   | .619            |
|                         |                          | 4.828***            | 18.473***              | 24.278***       |

Another implication of the significant relationship between social support and British expatriates' work adjustment and interaction adjustment is that British expatriates' work adjustment requires them to be sociable or culturally intelligent which is the natural ability to understand and interact with local people. The Human Resources Department that has the duty to select the right candidate for overseas job posting needs to match the level of position to the characteristics of job and expatriates who have high level of social intelligence (Brislin, Worthley, & Macnab, 2006), and possess personality trait of openness (Caligiuri, 2000). MNCs should also provide support programs to improve the level of expatriates' adjustment by providing intense cross-cultural training, introducing mentors both from head office and in-country compatriots, and providing support in joining in business associations in Thailand.

For the immediate supervisors whose duty is to delegate types of work and to assign workload, the implication of the significant relationship between work role discretion, work role conflict and British expatriates' work adjustment would help them to better choose the right kind of work or work characteristics suitable for the expatriates.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

A limitation of this study is that during four months of data collection there was major flooding throughout Thailand, which might have had some impacts on the expatriates' adjustment. A cross-sectional study might not reflect the real relationship of expatriates' adjustment; therefore, a longitudinal study is recommended.

A second limitation is the self-response survey could be susceptible to bias. The study asked respondents to rate their spouse/family adjustment to general living conditions and their interaction to people in Thailand. This may have biased the statistical conclusions of spouse and family adjustment. Therefore, in future research the spouses or family members should answer the questionnaire.

A third limitation of this study is the sample frame identified. There are 52.8 % of the respondents who work in the management and supervisory positions and 57% of British respondents have worked in Thailand for more than 4 years. These respondents have high positions and have more

overseas experience than the other expatriates. Therefore, they may have more accurate perception of how to live and work in Thailand and are able to adjust better to the living conditions of the country. Future research should cover and represent a good number of the British expatriate population.

A fourth limitation of this study is the sample frame of British expatriates in Thailand. This study's results may not be generalizable to other samples. Conducting research in other countries may yield different results. Expatriates from other nations in Thailand may have different perception of the degree of adjustment.

A fifth limitation of this study is the theoretical framework used which originated from Black et al., (1991). This study focuses only on the in-country adjustment and does not include the pre-departure adjustment in terms of training and selection criteria. This study also excludes the personal skill of establishing relationship, perception skills and socialization tactics and contents.

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