INTERNATIONAL FACULTY MEMBER SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND INTENTION TO STAY: EVIDENCE FROM NORTH CYPRUS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how sociocultural adjustment of international faculty members working in universities in North Cyprus may relate to their intention to stay. The antecedents of sociocultural adjustment are also investigated. The study used a questionnaire administered to a sample of 85 international faculty members working at five universities in North Cyprus in order to investigate the factors that influence their cultural adjustment in terms of work, interaction and general adjustment. The study also investigates how the facets of socio cultural adjustment may influence a faculty member's intention to stay in their current institution. Data analysis and hypothesis testing was carried out using a path analysis in SPSS AMOS 20. Previous international work experiences were found to influence and facilitate all facets of cultural adjustment. Perceived cultural similarity was linked to work and interaction adjustment. The strongest predictor of intention to remain in the current country and institution was interaction adjustment. General and work adjustment's influence on intention to stay is mediated by interaction adjustment. The results indicate that academic institutions that rely on international academics need to develop effective selection systems. The selection and recruitment systems should not only focus on technical skills but also on the characteristics and experiences that will facilitate adjustment to a new culture. Academic institutions should also ensure that orientation and mentoring programs are provided that facilitate adjustment not only to the organisation but also to the culture.

Keywords: sociocultural adjustment, academic careers, intention to stay, North Cyprus

INTRODUCTION

The demand in higher education in developing nations is increasing rapidly and higher education institutions are becoming international with larger numbers of international faculty members and students. This results in both movements of students and faculty members across nations, which makes the issue of cultural adjustment a critical challenge for university administrators. Although there have

been a large number of studies on cultural adjustment process of expatriate employees that are sent abroad to work in subsidiaries of the multinational companies, the research on the international faculty members are still relatively scarce. International faculty members who are working in universities around the globe are not sent by their universities to work abroad but choose to seek employment in foreign universities. The challenges that this group faces may differ from the challenges of the expatriates sent abroad by their organisations.

This study presents the findings from a location that has been recently becoming an international higher education hub. Northern Cyprus is one partition of the island of Cyprus and is recognised only by Turkey and controlled by Turkish Cypriot whereas the Republic of Cyprus in the south is the internationally recognised state and controlled by the Greek Cypriot. However, regardless of the political issues, higher education institutions in North Cyprus have been able to attract more than 50,000 foreign students. When we take into account the total population in North Cyprus at 250,000 the significance of this can be understood more clearly. The higher education institutions in North Cyprus also recruit large numbers of international faculty members. The high levels of turnover among international faculty members require higher education institutions to understand the factors that influence the turnover intentions (Teknopolis Group, 2012). One of the major factors of the early turnover decision among the international faculty members is the inability to adjust to the social-cultural environment.

Increase in Expatriation

As globalisation increases, the percentage of expatriates in the total workforce is increasing worldwide. There is a dependency on foreign talent in many countries and institutions. To facilitate this trend, several countries have taken measures to recognise professional qualifications gained abroad and have eased the entry of skilled workers (Mittelman, 2000). For example, the United States government has agreed to raise the ceiling of immigrant skilled workers from 54,000 to 140,000 annually. Australia, likewise, have taken measures to allow skilled persons to immigrate into the country. Singapore also pursues active policies aimed at attracting foreign talents from abroad (Mahroum, 1999).

Organisation Initiated Expatriates (OIE) Vs. Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIE)

The internationally mobile workers—as they may be described—could be considered in two categories. The first category refers to the organisational initiated expatriates (OIE) who are personnel sent on assignment to foreign subsidiaries by their organisations. The second category refers to the self-initiated expatriates (SIE) who are individuals that independently look for foreign assignments or employment in places other than their native country. Research

has found that certain characteristics differentiate individuals who may be considered as self-initiated expatriates (SIE) as opposed to organisation initiated expatriates (OIE) (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry, 1997). In SIEs, the initiative to look for employment overseas comes from the individual. In this regard it is likely that the individuals will seek employment outside their own countries for reasons best known to them. For OIEs, the initiative comes from their organisation although that is not to say that expatriates may not ask for such foreign assignments. For SIEs, it is likely that the individuals themselves will finance their journey and expenses that come with settling in a new place. On the contrary, expatriates sent on specific assignments by their organisation have all their expenses paid for. Inkson et al. (1997) also noted that OIEs are sent on foreign assignment for specific periods, while SIEs the duration of their foreign assignment may vary depending on the individual.

Increase in Self-initiated Expatriation

The continuing emergence of knowledge-based economies in more regions of the world has led to the increasing demand of SIEs. Although the presence of SIEs is now common, the majority of the literature on expatriation has mostly studied OIEs (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Their study further points to significant differences between expatriates and self-initiated expatriation. The growing number of SIEs include not only bankers, medical practitioners, scientists, IT professionals but also a growing number of international academics who choose to work across occupational, institutional or cultural boundaries (Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Academic institutions worldwide are not left out in this global trend as they are also on the lookout for better talented and skilled knowledge workers to enhance their need for delivery of world class standard of education.

Boundaryless Careers

Careers in general are becoming boundaryless. Employment relationships are now not restricted to the organisational, geographical and occupational domains (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002). Instead of focusing on advancement within the organisational hierarchy, boundaryless career concept suggests that individuals are moving from one organisation to another to create best opportunities for personal development. This type of career is managed more by the person than by the organisation. The main drive seems to be the personal values and needs. The individual no longer depends on the organisation to feel a sense of success (Yan, Zhu, & Hall, 2002).

In boundaryless careers, skilled knowledge workers independently search and initiate foreign assignments by themselves, becoming self-initiated mobile professionals who manage their own career paths, seizing various opportunities to improve themselves, enhance their careers and increase their chances in a boundaryless career world (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). The traditional careers with vertical mobility are being replaced by boundaryless careers with horizontal mobility across institutional boundaries (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Colakoglu, 2011). Evidence of this can be seen in the increased competition for the services of highly skilled workers (West & Bogumil, 2000). These employees proceed from one institution to another as they transit between research projects in search of "the best opportunities offered by universities" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch & Hall, 2004).

Baruch and Hall (2004) call for additional empirical studies of academic careers in different countries in order to enhance the understanding of boundaryless careers. Much of the research in academic careers have focused on the US, France and Germany, however, academic careers in these countries are quite diverse and may not all fit in the concept of boundaryless careers (Dany, Louvel, & Valette, 2011). This study investigates the sociocultural adjustment of international faculty members as SIEs and their intention to stay in the university and host country. The SIEs are regarded as good examples of individuals with boundaryless careers and we expect that international faculty members will be an even better fit for the model of boundaryless careers.

Majority of the studies of organisational expatriation focuses on the western expatriates that are sent to subsidiaries in the east. On the other hand, the studies on SIEs focus on expatriation from western countries to other western countries (Bozionelos, 2009; Peltokorpi & Jintae Froese, 2009). Although we used to see brain drain from east to west, today with the higher rates of economic growth in many eastern countries, we also witness large numbers of western expatriates going to work in countries in the east (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). The International Monetary Fund reports that Europe and the US have steadily lost significant shares of global GDP to developing regions (Beinhocker, Davis, & Mendonca, 2009). The Gulf countries have become a major importer of expatriates that choose to go to work in the region due to escalating labour demand due to booming oil and gas industry. The number of foreign workers in the United Arab Emirates is reported to be 90% of the total workforce (Al-waqfi, 2012).

The expansion of middle class in many countries has made higher education more affordable for a larger proportion of the population. Growth of business schools is much faster in the emerging regions. University degrees are becoming more valuable assets as economies are becoming more mature and complex.

Another factor indicating rising demand for western style education in emerging regions is the decrease in the number of the Graduate Admission Test (GMAT) takers sending their scores to the US schools from 75% in 2001 to 61% in 2009. This indicates that an increasing number of students are choosing non-US business schools for their postgraduate studies.

Membership of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), an accreditation board for business schools, indicate that there is rapid growth of business schools outside of North America and Western Europe. The faculty member salaries are also becoming very attractive especially in countries such as Saudi Arabia (AACSB, 2011). Thus these trends create a demand for western academics to teach in universities in the emerging markets. There is also a rapid increase in demand for academics to teach in countries other than their own which has resulted in self-initiated expatriation. The antecedents and consequences of the cultural adjustment of this group of SIEs may differ from OIEs.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the sociocultural adjustment of international faculty members working in the universities in North Cyprus and how this may influence their intention to stay with their current university and thus in the country. This allows us to investigate SIEs who are predominantly from western countries working in a less studied but growing non-western academic environment. Furthermore, much of the research related to cross cultural adjustment have focused on the antecedents of adjustment; studies on the consequences of adjustment are still relatively limited (Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). To fill this gap, we investigate how factors such as previous international experience and cultural distance may influence sociocultural adjustment, as well as how sociocultural adjustment may influence the intention to stay for international academics. We also study the dimensionality of cultural adjustment. The findings allow us to make recommendations to higher education institutions that are increasingly relying on international faculty members on how they can develop human resource policies and practices so that they can retain these faculty members for longer periods of time.

Cultural Adjustment

Inkson et al. (1997) suggest that certain characteristics such as motives and initiatives differentiate SIEs from OIEs, therefore the cross-cultural adjustment process of OIEs may not be identical to the cross-cultural adjustment process of international faculty members as SIEs. We use the model of Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) which has been used extensively on OIEs to help us

investigate how well it will explain the process of cultural adjustment of international faculty members as SIEs in this study.

One popular but also widely criticised model of cultural adjustment in international assignments is the "U" curve model (Lysgaard, 1955), which argues that generally we feel a high level of wellbeing at the beginning of an international experience. This is usually followed by a decline as a result of cultural maladjustment, and eventually returns to positive levels with cultural acceptance and adaptation. Oberg (1960) labelled the stages as honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment, while Adler (1975) labelled the stages as contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy and independence. Among the international faculty members teaching in universities in a variety of contexts, the first stage of the adjustment process may indeed be positive compared to OIEs who may not have initiated the decision to move abroad themselves. However, the critics of the "U" curve model argue that it is too general and cannot account for the differences among individuals and contexts that can result in very different processes of adjustment. In addition, studies have not given the model empirical support (Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998). Instead there seems to be more empirical support for a model where the most difficult time is during entry and problems decrease gradually over time.

The Black et al. (1991) model is based on the uncertainty/anxiety reduction theory. According to this model, "factors conducive to increased uncertainty raise the level of stress, and hinders in-country adjustment; while factors decreasing the level of uncertainty at destination, ease in-country adjustment" (Pinto, Cabral-Cardoso, & Werther, 2012, p. 189). Most subsequent research seems to provide empirical evidence to support these propositions (Waxin, 2004). International adjustment as viewed by Black et al. (1991) is reflected in two ways: anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment.

Factors that influence an individual's anticipatory adjustment are training and previous experience, with both these factors determining the accuracy of the workers' expectations. Training in this case, refers to pre-departure programs designed to sensitize personnel to cultural differences in other societies, whereas previous experience suggests past interactions lead to better understanding of foreign cultures, which project accurate expectations. Organisational influences on anticipatory adjustment are related to human resource functions including selecting the right personnel for the job not only in terms of technical competence but also considering a wider array of attributes. Once confronted with the new culture, the employee will face a number of other factors that will affect the degree to which they adjust. These factors are the in-country adjustment factors and include the ability of the individual to develop constructive relations with

members of the new society while maintaining a positive outlook in view of the stressful environment.

Certain antecedents of cultural adjustment as put forward in Black et al. (1991) model of international adjustment, may not hold true with foreign knowledge workers, for example the organisation's pre-departure elements, which suggest that a form of organisation-led cross-cultural training program or selection mechanism to ease cultural adjustment. In this instance, the organisation attempts to screen personnel, prior to appointment with the aim of getting the candidates most likely to succeed. In some organisations, there are personnel who volunteer to go on foreign assignments. With regard to foreign knowledge workers, the precedence of prior screening and training may not apply since they are self-selecting. Although some institutions provide training and orientation after the appointment, many foreign knowledge workers are probably left to rely on individual attributes such as resourcefulness, relational skills and personality traits, and previous cross-cultural interactions to best handle the variances of a new culture.

Facets of Adjustment

Many researchers that have conducted studies on cultural adjustment contend that there are several dimensions linked with the adjustment process. Although earlier studies assumed that the adjustment process is the same for all individuals, Black (1988) views the expatriate adjustment process as having three dimensions, namely, adjustment to work, adjustment to interaction with locals and lastly general adjustment to the foreign culture. Although, some later studies have found some support for additional facets of adjustment (Suutari & Välimaa, 2002), Black and colleagues' (Black, 1988, Black & Gregersen, 1991), original three dimensional model of adjustment with facets that differentiates work, general, and interactional dimensions have been most popular in the literature. In addition, the three dimensional model has subsequently received much empirical support (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). General adjustment facet is the comfort involving the living conditions in the host cultural environment such as climate, food, and transportation. Work adjustment facet is the comfort adjusting to the managerial or work responsibilities in the host culture including performance standards, work values, and expectations. Lastly, interactional adjustment facet is the comfort associated with communicating and establishing relationships with host country nationals (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013).

Intention to Stay

Studies that focus on the antecedents of turnover intention have found that the level of job embeddedness influences employees' decisions to move from one

firm to another. The critical aspects of job embeddedness, as mentioned by Tanova and Holtom (2008) are:

1. the links that people have on and off the job,
2. the fit that they perceive between their self-concept and the environment that they live and work in, and
3. the sacrifices that they would make in giving up their job in terms of how this action would affect the other aspects of their life.

Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) applied this theory to expatriates, and demonstrated that when expatriates are strongly embedded in a host country, they are pulled to remain and have little intent to repatriate. Since host country interactions and establishment of relations will enhance community embeddedness, we expect that international faculty members who are better adjusted to the culture will be less likely to return.

Research Hypotheses

Previous international experience

Theoretically and intuitively, it would be reasonable to expect that those academics who have had exposure to international experiences in their past will be able to adjust to new positions in different cultures (Waxin, 2004). Previous international experience can provide realistic information about what can be expected in the adjustment process (Black, 1988; Church, 1982) and these realistic expectations will act to facilitate adjustment. According to Black and Gregersen (1991) previous international work helps in anticipatory adjustment, which allows expatriates to set realistic expectations and reduce stress upon arrival. Black et al. (1991), also state that there is likely to be a reduction in uncertainty with regard to adjustment in new cultures since the previous experiences would provide more information to the likely state of events in a new environment. However, some studies do not show empirical support for previous international experience (Black & Stephens, 1989; Guðmundsdóttir, 2015) and some researchers argue that international experience only in similar cultural settings to the host country will lead to improved adjustment (Takeuchi, Wang, & Marinova, 2005). In a situation where an individual were to encounter a culture similar to one of previous experience, there will likely be a better foundation of expectation than if in a dissimilar culture. On the other hand, the stress inoculation theory indicates that repeated exposure to a stressor will assist in future responses to a similar stress (Fan & Lai, 2014) and thus international experience even in cultures which differ in cultural characteristics from the host country will also assist in adjustment because of the increased resilience based on the experience. Based on above discussion, we propose:

H1: Number of previous international experiences will improve (1) work, (2) general and (3) interaction facets of cultural adjustment.

Cultural similarity

There have been a large number of studies that have investigated how cultural similarity may be related to cultural adjustment (Selmer, Chiu, & Shenkar, 2007). Hofstede's comprehensive research into the differences in national culture provides an important theoretical and empirical framework in the subject of cross-cultural differences (Yeganeh, 2011). Hofstede argues that there are certain factors that characterize individuals depending on where they come from. He puts forward the notion of culture distance, which is the magnitude of difference between two cultures. Likewise, Black and Gregersen (1991) refer to the distance between host culture and home culture as "culture novelty". They have found culture novelty to be related to cultural adjustment. It is likely that the more unfamiliar a culture is to an individual from his or her own culture, the more difficult it could be to adjust.

Although cultural similarity hypothesis is widely popular in cross cultural adjustment studies, there are some conflicting empirical results. Parker and McEvoy (1993) suggest when expatriates know that they are going to a different culture, they anticipate that there will be many differences and they may prepare by reading and learning about the other culture. They even find support for cultural differences (contrary to cultural similarity) being correlated with general adjustment in their study.

Due to the differing empirical results in the literature, Takeuchi et al. (2002) call for further research on the issue of cultural differences. We believe that if an international faculty member comes from a highly individualistic society where they have gained an appreciation for being distinctive, independent and using personal initiative, they may have difficulties adjusting to the collectivist culture in Cyprus. In collectivist cultures, pressures to being part of the group and suppressing views that may disturb group members can even be found in the academic culture. This may be difficult to accept for those from individualistic cultures who may have been accustomed to "attributes rooted in the liberal tradition of open and diverse thinking, democratic governance, academic freedom in universities" (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014, p. 654). Thus, the difference in cultural values that influence how people interact in the workplace may create anxiety and stress in the international faculty members.

Therefore, in the case of international academics as SIEs, we would expect that they would have an easier time adjusting to the culture in Cyprus if they were from a culturally similar background. Hence:

> H2: The degree of perceived similarity between host culture and home culture will be positively related to (1) work, (2) general and (3) interaction facets of cultural adjustment.

Intention to stay

Among the OIEs the issue of premature return from the assignment has been studied extensively (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Bozionelos, 2009; Peltokorpi & Jintae Froese, 2009; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Shenkar, 2001; Takeuchi & Chen, 2013; Takeuchi et al., 2002) and poor cross-cultural adaptation or adjustment of the employee to the host country has been regarded as the primary cause (Jackson & Manderscheid, 2015). The OIEs are sent abroad for a specified period of time or to complete a specific project by their headquarters. However, since the SIEs act in a relatively more independent manner, they use their own initiative to determine how long they wish to work or negotiate the length of their contract. The intention to stay for SIEs refers to future plans regarding staying in the host country. According to the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), behaviour is guided by our intentions, thus it would be appropriate to suggest that the intention to stay in the host country or to relocate in the future is a valid predictor of whether the SIE will stay or leave.

The SIEs do not have the organisational support that OIEs normally receive in terms of their adjustment. Adjustment to work, general conditions and interaction with the locals would therefore be very critical for the SIEs decision to leave or stay. Previous studies indicate that all three facets of adjustment are related to the intent to return home early (Takeuchi et al., 2002). Therefore:

> H3: (1) Work, (2) interaction and (3) general adjustment will positively influence intention to stay.

Among the facets of adjustment, the interaction adjustment is very important for SIEs. The relationships that they build become a very valuable source of support not only emotionally but also in terms of information (Cao, Hirschi, & Deller, 2014). Lack of activities with host country nationals and developing a social network that only includes other expatriates has been shown to be detrimental for expatriate success (Jackson & Manderscheid, 2015). Therefore, the ability to interact with the locals is expected to influence the decision of the international faculty members to stay in the university and the host country. Work adjustment will in fact facilitate interaction adjustment. The SIEs that are adjusted to work

will be in a position to allocate more effort toward building interpersonal relationships, whereas SIEs that have difficulties in adjusting to work may also have difficulties in maintaining relationships beyond work (Takeuchi et al., 2002). General adjustment will also allow that SIEs to be in a more positive mindset and enjoy social relationships. Thus, the impact of work and general adjustment on the intention to stay will be due to the mediating role of interaction adjustment.

> H4: Interaction adjustment will mediate the relationship between (1) work adjustment and intention to stay and (2) general adjustment and intention to stay.

Study Setting

Cyprus, lying between Africa and Europe, has become a destination for thousands of individuals from more than 100 nationalities continuing their education. North Cyprus hosts individuals from a variety of nationalities seeking education. North Cyprus has nine universities, with faculty members representing 60 nationalities (Güsten, 2014). In North Cyprus, the higher education sector has shown impressive growth in the last decade to such an extent that the sector has helped transform the economy from the traditional agriculture to services orientation. With the establishment of the first university in 1979 as a state supported higher education institution, many students who could not be placed into universities in Turkey came to study in North Cyprus. The demand for higher education in North Cyprus showed a considerable increase by the 1990s, universities recruited students especially from Africa and the Middle East. Many bright students from countries that could have difficulty getting student visas in western countries came to study in North Cyprus. At the beginning of the 2014/2015 academic year, there were 74,000 students studying at these six universities, countries that send most students to study in North Cyprus are Turkey (40,600; 55%), Nigeria (5,290; 7%), Pakistan (1,640; 2%), Iran (1,364; 2%), Azerbaijan (954; 1%), Syria (894; 1%), Iraq (739; 1%) and the remaining 9% are from other countries. Only 22% of the students are local.

Among students pursuing business degrees, the percentage of students from countries other than North Cyprus or Turkey is 55%. This is an impressive figure since the total population in North Cyprus is around 250,000. The expansion of infrastructure and facilities at the universities of North Cyprus continues at an unprecedented rate and may now be compared favourably with international counterparts (Katircioğlu, 2010). It is estimated that universities contribute $ 112 million to the GDP of North Cyprus (Mehmet & Tahiroglu, 2002).

All the universities teach in English language; thus they recruit faculty members from many different parts of the world. Recruiting and retaining international faculty members that will contribute to this growing academic environment is a major challenge. This paper investigates the sociocultural adjustment of international faculty members and their intention to stay.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Lists of international faculty members were prepared using the websites of the six universities in September 2014. A total of 150 full-time foreign academics were identified. All were contacted via email and follow up telephone calls, a total of 90 respondents filled out the online questionnaire resulting in a 60% response rate. Only the data from respondents who are SIEs and that spent at least a year in Cyprus were used. Those that came to Cyprus for reasons other than employment (through marriage to a local spouse) were excluded, which resulted in 85 useable responses. The respondents represented a cross-section of all the faculties of the universities. This indicates a favourable spread of the sample. Sixty per cent (60%) of the respondents came from Europe, 17% from North America, and the rest were evenly spread across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Caucasus. Most of the respondents were male (81.9%). The average age of the respondents was 44 years old and they had been lecturing for an average period of four years.

Measures

According to Black (1988), there are two ways in which to measure adjustment. One way is through an individual's assessment of how adjusted he or she is, and another way is through an independent assessment of the individual's adjustment. Individual assessment is thought to be a better approach for this study, since independent assessors may not always have a complete understanding how adjusted the individual may really feel.

To measure cultural adjustment, a scale developed by Black (1988) was used. The scale was developed to evaluate three dimensions of expatriate adjustment. The scale has six items for general adjustment, four items for work adjustment, and two items for interaction adjustment. For general adjustment, questions such as how adjusted to food, weather, entertainment, and living conditions were asked. The scale reliability was 0.87. Interaction adjustment items assessed the level of adjustment foreign knowledge workers had in interacting with locals within the university as well as working with local outside the university. The

scale reliability was 0.89. For work adjustment, the items measured adjustment in working with local superiors and also subordinates, adjustment towards job and responsibility, and finally working with local co-workers. The scale reliability was 0.89. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of adjustment for all items. The measure ranged from 1 (not adjusted at all) to 7 (very well adjusted).

Respondents were asked several questions based on previous studies on international experience and cross-cultural adjustment to investigate the influence of previous experience to sociocultural adjustment (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013). These included listing countries they had previously stayed in for more than three months, how old they were at these countries, whether they were employed or not, and their length of stay at these locations. The total number of countries lived for more than three months as an employee was used to operationalise previous experience.

There have been a large number of approaches to measuring cultural similarity ranging from economic measures such as gross domestic product to the psychological (e.g., Hofstede, 1980). Some researchers have developed statistical approaches to measure distance between cultural clusters (Waxin, 2004; Yeganeh, 2011). However, in our research we are primarily interested in the cultural similarity as perceived by the international academics. In line with the work of Demes and Geeraert (2014), our denationalisation of cultural similarity is based on the differences or similarities that international academics experienced on a day-today basis in the new culture.In the current study cultural similarity was measured by asking respondents to assess the similarity of their home cultures to the culture in the Northern Cyprus on a seven-point scale ranging from not similar at all to very similar.

Intention to stay was measured with a single item adapted from the work of Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) and Cao, Hirschi and Deller (2013), who had three and two items measuring intention to stay in the host country. Although it is common to use scales with multiple items to measure psychological concepts, there is evidence that for intention to stay, a single item has high validity and if it is not possible to obtain information about actual turnover a single item can serve as a proxy (Christensen, 2009). The measure ranged from 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire also sought to determine other factors that may inhibit adjustment. In an open ended question, the respondents were asked to state the sort of difficulties they faced when in a new cultural setting.

Preliminary Analysis and Measurement Model

In order to check for common method bias, we followed the method used by Wilkins, Mohsin, and Kratochvil, 2015) and performed Harman's one-factor test for common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on one fixed factor revealed that this factor only explained 27% of variance of the variables compared to the six factor solution that explained 70%. This has been used as an indication that CMV bias is not present. Subsequently, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was also conducted using AMOS. The three factor model for the sociocultural adjustment scale has better model fit compared to all items loading on one factor. $\chi^2 (32) = 80.56$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.134) compared to $\chi^2 (35) = 329.31$, CFI = 0.49, TLI = 0.34, RMSEA = 0.316).
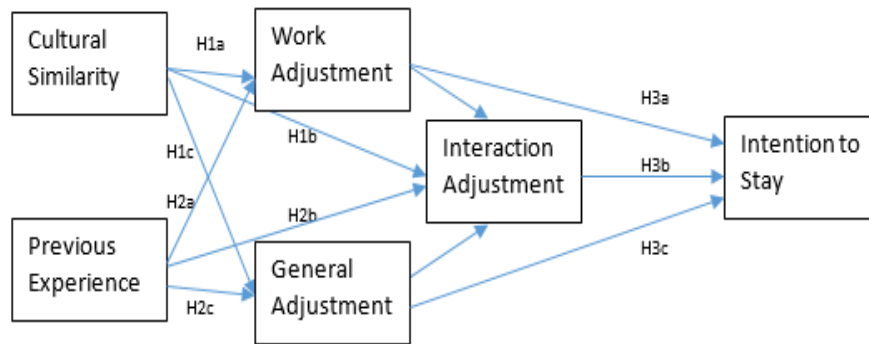

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Table 1
Correlations, means and standard deviations of adjustment, previous experience and cultural similarity

	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Previous international experience	1.53	1.09					
2. Cultural similarity	3.39	1.65	–0.02				
3. General adjustment	26.00	8.08	0.35**	0.14			
4. Work adjustment	20.48	5.27	0.21	0.28**	0.16		
5. Interaction adjustment	9.56	3.06	0.42**	0.38**	0.45**	0.55**	
6. Intention to stay	3.78	1.99	0.16	0.12	0.32**	0.28**	.49**

*Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; N = 85*

RESULTS

The overall model fit values are tested in the structural model using SPSS AMOS 20 applying the Maximum Likelihood technique. Following suggestions in the literature regarding criteria for evaluating SEM models, the fitness indices (GFI and AGFI) should be in the upper 0.90s, and residuals (RMSEA) need to be small (0.08). Results for our modified model χ^2 (7) = 5.59, GFI = 0.89, AGFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.001 showed a good fit. All path coefficients shown in Figure 1 were statistically significant except the paths from general adjustment and work adjustment to intention to stay and the path from cultural similarity to general adjustment.

Table 2
Standardised estimates of the hypothesised relationships

Hypothesis		Std. estimate	Std. error	Critical ratio	*P*	Result
H1a	Number of previous international experiences will improve work adjustment.	0.217	0.495	2.129	0.033	Supported
H1b	Number of previous international experiences will improve interaction adjustment.	0.244	0.231	2.973	0.003	Supported
H1c	Number of previous international experiences will improve general adjustment.	0.355	0.750	3.520	0.001	Supported
H2a	The degree of perceived similarity between host culture and home culture will be positively related to work adjustment.	0.284	0.326	2.788	0.005	Supported
H2b	The degree of perceived similarity between host culture and home culture will be positively related to interaction adjustment.	0.239	0.147	3.012	0.003	Supported
H2c	The degree of perceived similarity between host culture and home culture will be positively related to general adjustment.	0.150	0.494	1.485	0.138	Not supported
H3a	Improvements in work adjustment will positively influence intention to stay.	0.030	0.043	0.262	0.793	Not supported

(*Continued on next page*)

Table 2 (*Continued*)

H3b	Improvements in interaction adjustment will positively influence intention to stay.	0.410	0.081	3.252	0.001	Supported
H3c	Improvements in general adjustment will positively influence intention to stay.	0.134	0.026	1.255	0.209	Not supported

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Previous International Experience

Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c (H1a, H1b, H1c) predicted that number of international experiences would improve work, interaction and general adjustment. The correlations between previous international work experience and work, interaction, and general adjustment are ($r = 0.21$, ns), ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$), ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) respectively. Based on the model in Figure 1, we conducted a path analysis which resulted in standardised path estimates (Table 2) between previous international work experience and work adjustment of $\beta = 0.284$, $p < 0.05$, previous international work experience and interaction adjustment of $\beta = 0.239$, $p < 0.01$, and previous international work experience and general adjustment of $\beta = 0.150$, $p < 0.01$. Our data demonstrate that the number of previous international work experiences where the international faculty member has spent more than three months employed will improve all three facets of their sociocultural adjustment in Cyprus, thus H1a, H1b and H1c are supported.

Cultural Similarity

Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c (H2a, H2b, H2c) argued that the degree of perceived similarity between host culture and home culture will be positively related to work, interaction and general adjustment. The correlations between perceived cultural similarity and work, interaction, and general adjustment are ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$), ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), ($r = 0.14$, ns) respectively (Table 1). Based on the model in Figure 1, we conducted a path analysis which resulted in standardised path estimates between cultural similarity and facets of adjustment. The standardised path estimate with work adjustment was $\beta = 0.217$, $p < 0.01$, with interaction adjustment it was $\beta = 0.244$, $p < 0.01$, and with general adjustment it was $\beta = 0.355$, ns. The data shows that when the cultures are perceived to be more similar to this results in improved work and interaction adjustment, however the relationship is not significant with adjustment to general factors such as climate, food, and infrastructure. We found support for H2a, H2b, but not for H2c.

Intention to Stay

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c (H3a, H3b, H3c) argued that improvements in work, interaction and general adjustment will positively influence intention to stay. The correlations between work adjustment and intention to stay is $r = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$, interaction adjustment and intention to stay is $r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$, and general adjustment and intention to stay is $r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$ (Table 1). However, we also observe that interaction adjustment is related to work adjustment and general adjustment. The path analysis results in Table 2 based on the conceptual model in Figure 1, reveal that the standardised path estimates from work adjustment to intention to stay is $\beta = 0.030$, ns and from interaction adjustment to intention to stay is $\beta = 0.410$, $p < 0.001$, and from general adjustment to intention to stay is $\beta = 0.134$, ns. The results indicate that only interaction adjustment is related to intention to stay. The relationships that correlation table indicates between intention to stay and work adjustment or general adjustment becomes insignificant when we enter all the facets into the regression model together. Thus H3a and H3c are not supported while H3b is supported.

In the analysis of hypotheses 4a and 4b (H4a, H4b), we wanted to investigate the direct and indirect relationships between the adjustment facets and intention to stay. Using the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach, we see that condition 1, that that the causal variable is correlated with the outcome, is satisfied (work adjustment and intention to stay are correlated as well as general adjustment and intention to stay). Condition 2, that that the causal variable is correlated with the mediator is also satisfied (work adjustment and interaction adjustment are correlated as well as general adjustment and interaction adjustment). Condition 3, that the mediator affects the outcome variable is satisfied (interaction adjustment is correlated with intention to stay). And finally when we controlled for the mediator (interaction adjustment) we observe that the path from work adjustment to intention to stay became insignificant. Similarly, when controlling for the mediator (interaction adjustment), we saw that the path from general adjustment to intention to stay lost its significance.

We also estimated mediation by using bootstrapping by extracting 2000 bootstrap samples with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. To assess the mediating effect of interaction adjustment on the relationship between work adjustment and intention to stay as well as on the relationship between general adjustment and intention to stay, we examine the relevant significance of direct and indirect effects. The results indicate that effect size of the direct relationship for work adjustment and intention to stay is not significant but the indirect effect is significant. This suggests that there is a mediating effect of interaction adjustment on the relationship between work adjustment and intention to stay. Similarly, the effect size of the direct relationship for general adjustment and intention to stay is

not significant but the indirect effect is significant, suggesting that there is a mediating effect of interaction adjustment on the relationship between general adjustment and intention to stay.

Table 3
Direct and indirect effects of work and general adjustment on intention to stay

Hypothesis	Direct relationship	Mediator	Direct effect	*p*	Indirect effect	Lower bound 95% CI	Upper bound 95% CI	*p*	Mediation
H4a	Work adjustment and intention to stay	Interaction adjustment	0.03	0.747	0.161	0.075	0.301	0.001	Full
H4b	General adjustment and intention to stay	Interaction adjustment	0.134	0.259	0.109	0.053	0.202	0.003	Full

Responses to Open Ended Questions

The responses on the open ended question related to specific difficulties in adjustment varied, ranging from difficulty in communication, language problems, to the cuisine. Forty-five percent (45%) indicated that they had problems in communicating with the locals, 38% cited language problems with officials, 24% reported difficulty with understanding and dealing with the laid back mentality of the locals, 15% mentioned loneliness and not being able to form friendships, 11% referred to bureaucratic problems, and 2%–10% cited climate, transportation system, dealing with stereotypes, cuisine, corruption and nepotism. Although issues of corruption and nepotism were not stated by the majority of the respondents, these can serve as strong triggers or shocks that can lead to turnover decisions.

DISCUSSION

This study focused on international faculty members as SIEs, who unlike OIEs, have to deal with expatriation without the support of MNCs. The international faculty members that choose to work in universities abroad are a growing group due to the growth of universities in the Middle East and Asia. The first step was to explore the adjustment process of the self-initiated expatriates using the better-researched organisation initiated expatriate adjustment model. Existing differences between OIEs and SIEs were taken into consideration, after which the model of the sociocultural adjustment process was used as a basis to test the cultural adjustment of the international academics employed in universities in North Cyprus.

Our results reveal that as hypothesised the previous experiences of SIE international academics lead to improved adjustment to their work environment, to their interactions with the local community and to the general differences in cuisine, climate, and transportation systems.

This result differs from Black (1988) and Parker and McEvoy (1993) who found that prior international experience was related only to general adjustment, but not to interaction and work adjustment. Takeuchi and Chen (2013) found that the relationship between adjustment and prior experience might not be linear. They argue using the U curve hypothesis, that during the initial phase (honeymoon), those with previous experience may be more realistic and not be as happy as those who have not had previous experience. On the other hand, after the initial euphoria passes and those who have not had previous experience begin to feel stressed, those who have had previous experience will be less stressed. Repeated exposure to a stressor will assist in future responses to a similar stress (Fan & Lai, 2014). In this sample, all participants had at least one year of living in North Cyprus, thus this may be the reason that we found the hypothesised relationship between previous experience and adjustment.

Previous research had found inconclusive results with regard to cultural similarity and sociocultural adjustment. This study found that cultural similarity is related to both interaction adjustment and work adjustment but relationship between cultural similarity and general adjustment was not significant. Perhaps cultural similarity facilitates the understanding of work related norms and the social conventions in communications, therefore the work and interaction adjustment are significantly related to cultural similarity. On the other hand, the general adjustment that includes issues of adjusting to the external environment is less influenced by cultural similarity.

Interaction adjustment seems to be the strongest predictor of intention to stay in the country longer. However, we see that interaction adjustment has spillovers from work adjustment and general adjustment. The mediation analysis shows that work adjustment and general adjustment help to improve interaction adjustment which in turn improves intention to stay. The adjustment to work may allow more time and energy to be spent to understand and acquire appropriate behaviours for interpersonal relationships and interaction beyond work related conversations (Takeuchi et al., 2002). In addition, better general adjustment may strengthen the interaction adjustment by reducing the amount of stress caused by difficulties in adjusting to the environment, thus providing the faculty member to be more positive in establishing and nurturing social relationships.

Limitations and future research suggestions

This study has several limitations. First, the data were cross-sectional and from a single source. This study was not able to include possible moderating effects of personal and organisational characteristics. Future studies should consider how different types of international experience may influence adjustment. Also the issue of how personal characteristics such as personality and cultural intelligence and organisational characteristics such as organisational support and presence of certain human resource management policies may influence how cultural similarity and sociocultural adjustment as well as previous experience and sociocultural adjustment may be related. Instead of the perceived cultural similarity as used in the current study, researchers may use a different measure of cultural similarity based on the cultural distance index measured based on Hofstede's or Schwatz's frameworks between home and host countries as proposed by Yeganeh (2011).

Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to the voluntary turnover literature by demonstrating that cultural adjustment is a factor influences intention to leave or to stay and that the SIEs may leave an organisation not due to job related issues but due to problems they face outside of work. It is possible that a similar process takes place in domestic turnover decisions. The non-work factors have largely been ignored in the turnover literature (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005). The study supports the job embeddedness theory which argues that major determinants of turnover decision will not only be the fit that employees perceive between their self-concept and their job and the sacrifices they would make in giving up their job but also the links that they have on and off the job.

The study also contributes to international adjustment model of Black et al. (1991) and the uncertainty or anxiety reduction theory demonstrating that culturally different environments and lack of international experience will lead to increased uncertainty and raise the level of stress, and hinder in-country adjustment and experiences that reduce uncertainty will improve adjustment. Previous review studies and meta analyses using OIEs had found only a weak relationship between previous experience and sociocultural adjustment (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013). However, our study using SIE international faculty members have found a much stronger link. The way that previous international experience is conceptualised and measured seems to differ in different studies. The context of the international experience needs to be taken into account. Perhaps the nature of the international experience for SIEs differs from that of OIEs.

The study also contributes to the debate on the changing career concept. The traditional careers with vertical mobility are being replaced by boundaryless careers with horizontal mobility across institutional boundaries (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Colakoglu, 2011). Improving our understanding of how the sociocultural adjustment of SIEs may influence the way they move across national and institutional boundaries, may help us not only in understanding SIEs but also the future of careers.

Practical Implications

Newly established universities have to compete with universities that have been operating for centuries. They need to offer not only attractive salaries, research facilities, and benefits to attract international faculty members, but they also need to provide programs to help their international faculty to adjust to their new environment.

Universities that are recruiting international faculty members need to take measures to assist in the adjustment of these faculty members. These institutions need to ensure that in their recruitment and selection processes, they can target the international faculty members that not only have the technical expertise demonstrated by their qualifications such as doctoral degrees and a record of publications, but also take into consideration the international experiences the faculty members have had. These experiences do not only have to be teaching experience in other countries but also could be exchange programs that they have participated in as students.

Recruitment may also target those that have familiarity with the culture and language competence. However, the cultural diversity that enriches the campus should also be taken into consideration and universities should not focus too much on recruiting culturally similar individuals.

This means that training and development programs should be developed for the international faculty members. Orientation programs should not only focus on helping faculty members to adjust to the institution, but also introduce the international faculty members to the culture of the country. The developmental programs such as mentoring programs may be used especially partnering new faculty with faculty who know the local language and customs. Studies recommend formal mentoring programs instead of training arguing that mentoring programs work more effectively compared to cross cultural training programs since they provide an ongoing support (Bozionelos, 2009).

In general, SIEs do not always assume that they will have the full organisational support that OIEs have been provided. They usually understand that they have the responsibility for their move, however, when the universities that employ them provide support for adjustment; this may result in high level of appreciation and willingness to reciprocate by providing more effort and loyalty in return.

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