

Impact of Personality on International Adjustment of Indian Expatriates in USA

Shavina Goyal* and Navjot Kaur**

* *School of Management Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala*

** *School of Management Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala*

Abstract

The study explored the impact of personality traits on the different dimensions of adjustment of Indian expatriates living and working in USA. We focused in particular on the Big Five personality traits : extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. Based on sample of 76 Indian expatriates working in USA, it was found that an Indian expatriate's general living adjustment in USA is positively related to his or her degree of extroversion and conscientiousness. The results showed that interaction adjustment is positively related to extroversion. Furthermore, an Indian expatriate's work adjustment is positively related to his or her degree of extroversion, agreeableness and openness to experience. The findings of this study has practical implications for Indian expatriates and organizations in the area of selection and training.

Key Words

Personality, Expatriate, Adjustment

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of globalization has drastically changed the world in which we live. In the past, the idea of "going abroad" was the domain of affluent individuals and corporate powerhouses. Punnet (1997) suggested that global mobility is a reality and a necessity in today's worldwide business surroundings. An increasing number of people are spending part of their lives living and working in foreign countries (OECD International Migration Outlook 2007). These people are frequently

either traditional transfers, often defined as organizational expatriates (OEs), who are dispatched by their home companies to international posts (Edstrom and Galbraith 1977), or self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), who themselves make the decision to move and work abroad (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle and Barry 1997; Suutari and Brewster 2000; Inkson and Myers 2003; Lee 2005; Myers and Pringle 2005; Vance 2005).

Although expatriation has been studied for over four decades now, the challenge of the management of expatriates seems more urgent and important than ever before because of the wide array of issues brought with globalization and international expansion (Baruch & Altman, 2002). The one element that distinguishes expatriate jobs from other jobs with high complexity and high responsibility is the added complexity of the intercultural environment which causes adjustment issues for both expatriate and family. In the last decade the expatriate adjustment process has become the focus of extensive research interest and this is reflected in a growing body of literature on International Human Resources Management

As enterprises develop globally, there is a growing challenge to utilize expatriates on international assignments to complete strategically significant tasks (Firewster 1998; Downes and Thomas 1999; Gregersen and Black 1996). Multinational corporations (MNCs) utilize expatriates, not only for reasons of corporate organization and expertise in critical global markets, but also to smooth the process of entry into new markets or to extend international management abilities (Bird and Dunbar 1991; Boyacigiller 1991; Forster 2000; Rosenzweig 1994; Shaffer, Harrison and Gilley 1999). For that reason, in order to remain competitive in today's international marketplace, enterprises not only acknowledge that transferring, competent employees adds crucial skill and knowledge to their overseas performances, enabling them to compete more efficiently in all international positions, but also expatriate employees, particularly managerial and professional employees, are vital to the success of overseas assignments such as implementing international corporate tactics and managing and coordinating subsidiaries (Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall 1992). Expatriates are able to play tremendously significant roles during worldwide assignments. Particularly, successful expatriate assignments are indispensable to MNCs (multinational corporations) for both developmental and functional reasons (Adler 1983; Brake *et al.* 1994; Dowling *et al.* 1998; Mendenhall and Oddou 1985; Stroh and Caligiuri 1998; Tung and Miller 1990).

The expatriates depart from their own nation with the intention of an eventual return. They immerse themselves in new cultural surroundings that may be unfamiliar and unpredictable in almost all imaginable ways. They undertake executive practices in an unfamiliar work context; deal with a different mode of life and experience profound personal transformation. 'Culture shock', the stress and

alienation experienced when confronted with normally incomprehensible surroundings (Oberg 1960), sets the expatriate job apart from other jobs and is repeatedly revealed as the primary cause of an ineffective or unsuccessful expatriate assignment. As a result, a great deal of the expatriate management literature has paid attention to the management of cross-cultural adjustment (Berry, Kim and Boski 1988; Black and Gregerson 1991; Harris and Moran 1989). This focus appears reasonable when the high cost of expatriate failure, attributed to incapability to adjust (Adler 1986), is well-considered.

Adjustment literature (Black 1988; Nicholson and Imaizumi 1993; Shaffer and Harrison 1998) suggests that expatriates who do not adjust satisfactorily to their international assignments will not function well, will withdraw psychologically, and will almost certainly return prematurely. A number of factors may contribute to this phenomenon, including difficulty in adjusting to different physical or cultural environments, family-related problems, personality or emotional maturity issues, job-related technical competence, and lack of motivation to work overseas. For both employees and their families, adjusting to life overseas can be regarded as a significant barrier (Black and Gregersen 1991; Tung 1988). The better adjusted expatriates are, the more likely they will be to complete their overseas assignment (Kramer, Wayne and Jaworski 2001; Stroh, Dennis and Cramer 1994). Accordingly, well-adjusted expatriates will be more competent in and committed to their new job because they experience less stress and better cultural integration (Aycan 1997b). An expatriate's successful adjustment to the host cultural environment is shown over and over again to be the leading determinant of expatriates' job performance. For this reason, it is important to comprehend the influential factors that help expatriates adjust to the host culture. Research identifying the correlates/predictors of expatriate CCA found factors related to individual, job, organizational, and situational are important contributing elements (Black *et al.*, 1991; Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley, 1999; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005).

In this research realm, individual differences of personality trait appear to have gained considerable attention (Caligiuri, 2000b; Ward, Leong & Low, 2004; Huang, Chi & Lawler, 2005; Swagler & Jome, 2005; Shaffer *et al.*, 2006). This paper is concerned with how personality trait affects the adjustment of Indian expatriates in USA. While other studies have examined the role of personality traits as related to expatriate adjustment, these studies have most often been adjuncts to larger and more complex adjustment models. Therefore, the overall legacy of research on the effect of expatriates' personality traits on their adjustment to a new country is unclear. Despite the fact that there is a large physical presence of Indian expatriates in various parts of USA yet practically no study has been conducted for Indian

expatriates concerning their problems and adjustment issues. This study fills a gap in the research on the effects of personality traits on cross-cultural adjustment, through the examination of the effects of the Big Five personality traits in expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. There is a huge presence of Indian expatriates in USA who spread across various parts reflecting the multiplicity and variety of the social, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the country. Indians are in demand because of their high levels of literacy, knowledge of English language and experience with democracy in their home country. Indian expatriates are found in the high profile occupations and sectors of medicine, engineering, law, information technology, international finance, management, higher education, mainstream and ethnic journalism, writing, film and music. Successful corporations in USA have Indians working in senior positions. Indian professionals are becoming synonymous with information technology (IT). Amongst the most popular types of Indian IT professionals are software engineers and systems analysts. Both of the jobs require a high standard in mathematics. These are the qualifications currently lacking in countries like USA but are more easily available in India. IT people coming from India are highly proficient in mathematics. According to one study 34 per cent of employees at Microsoft and 36 per cent of scientists at NASA are Indians. More than 300,000 Indians worked in technology firms in California's Silicon Valley, with their average income estimated at \$125,000 a year. Indians, along with other immigrant groups, make up 43% of the New York City workforce. A report on the New York City immigrant profile, released by the department of city planning, states that 41% of working Indian males are in professional and managerial positions. Also, 58 % of working Indian females are in professional or managerial positions. According to the US Census Bureau, the Indian median family annual income stands at \$60,000 as against the national average of \$38,885 and the estimated annual buying power of Indians working abroad stands at \$20 billion.

For that reason this paper can make important contribution to research and guide in recruiting, selecting and assigning the right people with relevant competencies and personal characteristics for the benefits of both expatriates and the organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Expatriates

Conceptually, an expatriate is a person temporarily or permanently residing in a country and culture other than that of the person's upbringing. The word comes from the Latin terms *ex* ("out of") and *patria* ("country, fatherland").

Many scholars also have tried to give definitions of the concept.

An expatriate is a person who lives or works outside of his or her own home country on a non-permanent basis (Andreason, 2003; Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). An 'expatriate' is a voluntary, temporary migrant who resides abroad for a particular purpose and ultimately goes back to his or her home country (Cohen, 1977). There is no set definition and usage does vary depending on context and individual preferences and prejudices.

Traditionally, the term "expatriate" refers to those employees who are assigned to offices outside of their home country for a period of months or years. More recently, the term has come to include those individuals who are not assigned abroad but who themselves make the decision to live and work abroad (Suutari and Brewster, 2000). They are known as self-initiating expatriates. Due to talent shortages in many countries and the increasing demand for inter-culturally flexible employees with more differentiated skill sets (Deloitte, 2010), SIEs are strategically valuable human resources for multinational corporations (MNCs; Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010), and growing numbers are employed by organizations (Jokinen *et al.*, 2008).

For the purpose of the present study an expatriate is defined as someone who has chosen to live in a country other than the one of which he or she is a citizen. So all the people who are Indian citizens and are residing and working in other countries are Indian Expatriates.

Professional

A professional is a person who is paid to undertake a specialized set of tasks and to complete them for a fee. The traditional professions were doctors, engineers, lawyers, architects and commissioned military officers. Today, the term is applied to nurses, accountants, educators, scientists, technology experts, social workers, artists and many more.

According to Macmillan Dictionary, a professional is someone who has special skills or qualifications. A professional is a person formally certified by a professional body of belonging to a specific profession by virtue of having completed a required course of studies and or practice. And whose competence can usually be measured against an established set of standards.

The main criterion for a professional is expert and specialized knowledge in field which one is practicing professionally. In narrow usage, not all expertise is considered a profession. (Although sometimes referred to as professions, occupations such as skilled construction and maintenance work are more generally thought of as trades or crafts. The completion of an apprenticeship is generally associated with skilled labor or trades such as carpenter, electrician, mason, painter, plumber and

other similar occupations. A related distinction would be that a professional does mainly mental or administrative work, as opposed to engaging in physical work.

Expatriate Adjustment

In general, adjustment is the perceived degree of comfort a person has with his or her surroundings (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou 1991). This definition can be expanded by Brett's (1980) assertion that one of the primary processes of adjustment is that of reducing uncertainty.

Expatriate adjustment refers to the degree to which expatriates are psychologically comfortable and familiar with different aspects of a foreign environment (Black 1988), and can be understood as the degree of ease or difficulty expatriates have with various issues related to life and work abroad (Takeuchi, Marinova, Lepak and Liu 2005). During the three decades of research in this area, an enormous amount of substitute definitions of international adjustment have been applied. Researchers have used job satisfaction (Abe and Wiseman 1983; Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman 1978; Torbiorn 1985), life satisfaction (Cui and Van den Berg 1991), acquisition of language or cross-cultural skills (Bochner, Mcleod and Lin 1977), and ratings of depression (Armes and Ward 1989) as replacement options for cross-cultural adjustment. Others suggest that international adjustment is an internal, psychological and emotional state, and should be measured from the perspective of the individual experiencing the overseas culture. International adjustment involves uncertainty reduction and change through which expatriates begin to feel more comfortable with the new culture and harmonize with it. Expatriates are able to reduce uncertainty by imitating and/or learning behaviours that are appropriate in the new culture. Basically, there are three specific areas of international adjustment as distinguished in the literature (Black & Stephens, 1989). These are adjustment to (1) general environment (degree of comfort with general living conditions, such as climate, health facilities, and food); (2) interaction with host country nationals; and (3) work (performance standards, job, and supervisory responsibilities).

Personality

Personality, defined as enduring emotional, interpersonal, experiential, attitudinal, and motivational style that explains individual's behaviour in different situations (McCrae & Costa, 1989). A review of the Industrial/Organizational psychology literature suggests that the sum of all personality characteristics can be categorized in five basic trait dimensions- extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience and neuroticism. These five trait

dimensions subsequently labelled as the Big Five Personality (Hough, 1992; Digman, 1997).

The first dimension extroversion is the degree to which a person is talkative and sociable and enjoys social gatherings (Huang *et al.*, 2005). Individuals high on extraversion tend to be talkative and energetic and generally to be more active and assertive (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Conscientiousness dimension described as a form of conformity to rules and standards, and linked to traits like responsibility, organization, hard work, impulse control, and prudence (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hogan & Ones, 1997). Individuals high on conscientiousness is also dependable and trustworthy (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The third dimension, Agreeableness is the tendency of a person to be interpersonally altruistic and cooperative. Individuals high on agreeableness tend to be more sympathetic towards others, as well as more trusting of the intentions of other people (Costa & McCrae, 1992). According to Laursen, Pulkkinen and Adams (2002), agreeableness trait related to higher levels of social compliance and self-control, and lower levels of aggression. The fourth dimension, Openness to experience is the extent to which a person is aesthetically sensitive and aware of inner feelings and has an active imagination (Goldberg, 1993). Individuals high on openness to experience tend to be open minded, original in thought, intelligent, clear, and non-judgmental. Finally, neuroticism personality is associated with lessened emotional control and stability (Mount & Barrick, 1995). Neurotic individuals tend to have relatively negative core self-evaluations, leading to emotional distress and associated behaviours (Rusting & Larsen, 1998). Neuroticism, also related to a person's general tendency to experience negative effects such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, and disgust (Dalton & Wilson, 2000)

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find the impact of personality traits on the different dimensions of adjustment of Indian expatriates living and working in USA.

Hypotheses Development

In order to establish the relationship between personality and adjustment, we have decided to test the presumed relationship as follows :

Hypothesis 1 : Extroversion of an Indian expatriate is positively related to his or her (a) general living adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment and (c) work adjustment in USA.

Hypothesis 2 : Agreeableness of an Indian expatriate is positively related

to his or her (a) general living adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment and (c) work adjustment in USA.

Hypothesis 3 : Conscientiousness of an Indian expatriate is positively related to his or her (a) general living adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment and (c) work adjustment in USA.

Hypothesis 4 : Neuroticism of an Indian expatriate is positively related to his or her (a) general living adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment and (c) work adjustment in USA.

Hypothesis 5 : Openness to experience of an Indian expatriate is positively related to his or her (a) general living adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment and (c) work adjustment in USA.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The participants in the study were Indian expatriates currently working and residing in USA. The study included only professionals working in USA. Entrepreneurs and people engaged in manual jobs were not a part of the study. However, the study covered both types of expatriates i.e., OEs (Organizational expatriates) and SIEs (Self-initiating expatriates).

Data was obtained from expatriates using a structured questionnaire through mail and online survey. Using the snowball (reference) sampling technique of non-probability sampling 85 questionnaires were received. Out of 85, 9 were unusable responses, resulting in final sample of 76. Of these 48 were SIEs (self-initiated expatriates) and 28 were OEs (organisational expatriates).

The sample included 59 (77.63%) men and 17 (22.37%) women. Participants' age included 22 (28.95%) between 18-30, 44 (57.89%) between 31-40, 9 (11.84%) between 41-50 and 1 (1.32%) above 50 years old. Participants' marital status included 13 (17.11%) single, 60 (78.95%) married and 3 (3.95%) divorced. In terms of prior overseas experience, 35 (46.05%) have previous international experience and 41 (53.95%) have no experience. Participants' education status included 21 (27.63%) with bachelors degree, 52 (68.42%) with masters degree and 3 (3.95%) with doctorate degree. Participants' length of stay in Malaysia ranged from 0.5 to 7 years ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.64$). Tenure with present organization ranged from 0.5 to 10 years ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 2.71$).

Instrumentation

Four background variables (i.e. gender, prior overseas experience, length

of stay in USA and language proficiency) identified as correlates of expatriate attitudes and behaviours controlled in this study (Ramalu Subramaniam *et al.*, 2010; Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). This is to avoid the findings of this study from being spuriously attributed to various background characteristics. The independent variable, personality measured with the 44-item, self-reported Big Five Inventory (BFI) adopted from John and Srivastava (1999). The scale includes eight items for extraversion, nine for agreeableness, nine for conscientiousness, eight for neuroticism, and ten for openness to experience personality dimension. Sample item include "I see myself as someone who generates a lot of enthusiasm" for extraversion; "I see myself as someone who has a forgiving nature" for agreeableness; "I see myself as someone who does a thorough job" for conscientiousness; "I see myself as someone who can be moody" for neuroticism; and "I see myself as someone who is curious about many different things" for openness to experience personality. Respondents were asked to use a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to indicate the extent to which each item describes their characteristic.

In this study, all five had acceptable reliabilities, with coefficient alpha reliabilities of .74 for extroversion, .79 for agreeableness, .72 for conscientiousness, .62 for neuroticism and .69 for openness to experience.

The dependent variable, CCA measured with 14-item, self-reported Expatriate Adjustment Scale adopted from Black and Stephens (1989). Seven items assessed general adjustment (e.g. housing, food, and shopping); four items assessed interactions adjustment (e.g. socializing with people from the host culture); and three items assessed work adjustment (e.g. job responsibilities and performance standards/expectations). Respondents asked to use a five-point Likert-type scale to indicate the extent to which each item indicates their adjustment to various living and working conditions in USA. Response choice alternatives ranged from 1 (very unadjusted) to 5 (completely adjusted).

Each of these scales demonstrated acceptable coefficient alpha reliabilities (.92 for general living adjustment, .78 for interaction adjustment, and .87 for work adjustment).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients and bivariate correlations among the study variables. Correlations between dimensions of personality and dimensions of adjustment reveal that agreeableness personality was correlated positively with general, interaction and work adjustment (r ranges from 0.5 to 0.73, all $ps < 0.01$). Extroversion personality was correlated

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Scale Intercorrelations

Variable	Mean	S.D	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	1.22	0.41	-	1	-0.32	-0.175	-0.075	-0.158	-0.047	-0.096	-0.17	-0.061	-0.004	-0.185	-0.137
2. Prior Experience	1.53	0.5	-	1	-0.185	-0.24	-0.179	-0.154	-0.084	-0.084	-0.125	-0.156	-0.141	-0.006	-0.144
3. Length of Stay in USA	2.97	1.64	-	1	1	0.216	0.139	0.143	0.199	0.166	0.166	-0.003	0.237*	0.016	0.133
4. Language Proficiency	4.18	0.48	-	1	0.145	0.198	0.145	0.198	-0.103	-0.103	0.005	-0.274	0.043	0.093	-0.007
5. Agreeableness	3.24	0.46	0.79	1	0.501	0.563	0.501	0.563	**	**	0.712	0.012	0.634	0.500	0.734
6. Extroversion	3.26	0.46	0.74	1	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	1	0.21	0.645	-0.146	0.557	0.560	0.658
7. Conscientiousness	3.69	0.51	0.72	1	0.681	0.681	0.681	0.681	1	1	**	0.548	0.679	0.436	0.696
8. Openness to Experience	3.5	0.43	0.69	1	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	1	0.218	.699	0.609	0.976
9. Neuroticism	2.5	0.48	0.62	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**	**	**
10. GA	3.99	0.67	0.92	1	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.280*	-0.178	-0.247*
11. IA	3.73	0.84	0.78	1	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666
12. WA	4.05	0.76	0.87	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

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

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

Table 2
Results of Hierarchical Regression

Variable	General		Interaction		Work	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
	β (t)	β (t)	β (t)	β (t)	β (t)	β (t)
Gender	.801(.571)	1.389(1.557)	1.588(1.554)	2.170(2.829)	1.942(.807)	.547(1.088)
Prior Experience	1.224(1.041)	.498(.670)	.340(.397)	.016(.026)	1.8111(.898)	.585(1.398)
Length of Stay in USA	.664(1.928) **	.244(1.117)	.042(.169)	.922(.173)	.522(.884)	.335(1.390)
Language Proficiency	.312(.265)	.087(.113)	.668(.778)	.716(1.078)	1.032(.510)	.171(.769)
Agreeableness		.195(1.742)		.081(.838)		.122(1.939) *
Extroversion		.301(3.273) ***		.197(2.490) **		.128(2.463) **
Conscientiousness		.483(3.240) ***		.062(.487)		-.113(-1.340)
Neuroticism		-.147(-.902)		-.183(-1.300)		.121(1.314)
Openness to Experience		.028(.254)		.163(1.709)		1.047(16.729) ***
R ²	0.071	0.373	0.043	0.2	0.047	0.664
Adj. R ²	0.018	0.328	0.012	0.2	0.008	0.659
R ² change		0.302 ***		0.188 ***		0.617 ***
F	(4,71)	(9,66)	(4,71)	(9,66)	(4,71)	(9,66)
	1.348	14.893 ***	0.783	8.162 ***	0.855	192.406 ***

Note : *p < .05. **p<.01 ***p<.001

Gender and prior experience are dummy-coded categorical variables

positively with general, interaction and work adjustment (r ranges from 0.55 to 0.65, all $ps < 0.01$). Conscientiousness personality was correlated positively with general, interaction and work adjustment (r ranges from 0.43 to 0.69, all $ps < 0.01$). Openness to experience personality was correlated positively with general, interaction and work adjustment (r ranges from 0.6 to 0.97, all $ps < 0.01$). Neuroticism (opposite of emotional stability) personality was correlated negatively with general ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$) and work adjustment ($r = 0.247$, $p < 0.05$). This finding does not assess the independent effects of each personality trait, controlling for the other variables.

A hierarchical regression was conducted to test the hypothesis. Table 2 reports the results of multiple regression. In the first step, when all the control variables were entered we found that length of stay in USA is a positive predictor of general adjustment ($\beta = .664$, $p < 0.05$). All other control variables (i.e. gender, prior experience and language proficiency) were not significantly related to any of the dependent variables i.e. any dimension of adjustment.

In the second step, when all the personality traits were added to the model, the change in R^2 between step 1 and step 2 was significant for all the three dimensions of adjustment, general (change in $\Delta R^2 = .302$), interaction ($\Delta R^2 = .188$) and work adjustment ($\Delta R^2 = .617$) all $p < 0.01$. This indicates that agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience personality together explain an additional 30, 18 and 61 per cent of the variance in general, interaction and work adjustment respectively even when the effect of control variables is statistically controlled.

Agreeableness personality was positively associated with work adjustment ($\beta = 0.122$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of agreeableness personality tended to have higher level of work adjustment.

Extraversion personality was positively associated with all dimensions of adjustment i.e. general ($\beta = .301$, $p < 0.01$), interaction ($\beta = .197$, $p < 0.05$) and work ($\beta = 0.128$, $p < 0.05$) indicating that higher the extraversion personality, higher the overall adjustment will be. Conscientiousness is positively associated with general adjustment ($\beta = 0.483$, $p < 0.01$) openness to experience is positively associated with work adjustment ($\beta = 1.047$, $p < 0.001$) indicating that those higher in openness personality tended to have higher level of work adjustment. These findings partially support hypotheses H1 (a), (b), (c), H2(c), H3 (a), H5(c).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study explored some significant relationships of personality traits with different dimensions of adjustment in context of Indian expatriates living and working in USA. In this study, greater general adjustment among Indian expatriates

in USA is associated with greater extraversion and conscientiousness personality. Greater interaction adjustment is related with greater extroversion while greater work adjustment is related to greater extroversion, agreeableness and openness to experience personality. The findings of the present study are partially consistent with results of prior studies (e.g., Caligiuri, 2000b; Ward *et al.*, 2004; Huang *et al.*, 2005; Swagler and Jome, 2005; Shaffer *et al.*, 2006; Ramalu *et al.*, 2010).

Extraversion trait is found to be significantly positively related with all the dimensions of adjustment i.e. general, interaction and work. The results of this study are in line with findings of Huang *et al.* (2005) and Ramalu *et al.* (2010) that being gregarious, assertive, active and talkative (Barrett and Pietromonaco, 1997), extravert individuals will assert themselves to establish relationships with both host country nationals and other expatriates hence effectively learn the social culture of the host country. The cultural knowledge gained through the interaction process provides a framework for understanding and comparing different cultures (Johnson, Lanartowicz and Apud, 2006). This is, in turn, facilitates general and work adjustment to the new cultural environment in USA. Agreeable personality found positively related to work adjustment, hence, implies that greater the agreeableness personality, greater the work adjustment will be. Individuals, high on agreeable personality, generally have the tendency to get along well in task-oriented settings and hence, facilitate effective relationship with superiors, subordinates and peers. This, in turn, alleviates the stress associated with adapting to various aspects of new work environment.

Conscientiousness personality found positively related to general adjustment in this study while in some previous studies of adjustment in other countries' cultures it was found to be related to work adjustment. We may conclude that highly conscientious expatriates try their best to plan everything in advance leading to a better general living adjustment.

In line with the previous studies, openness to experience personality is positively related to work adjustment. This implies that greater the openness personality, greater the work adjustment will be. According to Huang *et al.* (2005) and Ramalu *et al.* (2010), individuals who are defined as open to experience are generally open-minded, curious, original in thought, intelligent, imaginative and non-judgemental (Mount and Barrick 1995) hence, they tend to be more curious and eager to learn to adapt to work and non-work related aspects in a new cultural environment in USA.

Neuroticism is not found to be significantly related to any dimension of adjustment. This finding may be due to the fact that the living and working

environment in USA tends to tolerate uncontrolled emotional expressions of highly neurotic foreign expatriates.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have certain implications for the Indian expatriates as well as organizations to recruit and select Indians in USA. According to our study results, personality traits should be considered important criteria for the selection process. In addition to selection, cross-cultural training is also an available HR intervention to improve the likelihood of expatriate adjustment. MNC should think of selection based on personality as the precursor to cross-cultural training. This will help in reducing the failure rate of overseas assignments and higher performance in the host country would be expected.

However, it is necessary to consider personality traits in relation to host country culture.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has certain limitations that provide directions for future research. First, self-reported data is used which includes an element of personal biasness and may affect the finding of the study. So, in future studies data can be collected from multiple sources like superiors, subordinates and peers to have the complete information. Secondly, it is a cross-sectional study, this restricts the ability to prove a cause-effect relationship. Future research can consider longitudinal study to improve the cause-effect relationship. Then another limitation is our small sample size. We distributed questionnaires online and through mail but we still had a small sampling frame. Therefore, studies can be conducted using larger samples for better results. Finally, this study did not consider the possible moderating affects of other significant factors like cultural distance, family support, and organisational culture etc. So these factors can be included in future studies.

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