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## The Factors of Expatriate Learning and the Effect to Work Performance

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**Abstract** The increase of global competition and the internationalization of the world market drive toward the speed of international human resource management. The rising number of expatriates has contributed to the internationalization processes that act as one of the main factors in sharing knowledge and ideas through international assignments. In order to improve the function of expatriates in international assignments, it is important to practice effective strategies to ensure that expatriates play their optimal role. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to identify the factors that influence the learning process of expatriates from international assignments, examine the responsibility of the host company towards the expatriate learning process and explain the influence of the learning process during international assignments on expatriate work performance. This study uses qualitative methods to obtain data through open-ended questions given to respondents consisting of seven foreign expatriates who work in multinational companies from various sectors in Malaysia. The findings of this study found that there are four factors that influenced the expatriate learning process, namely expatriate preparation, learning orientation, cultural intelligence and work performance evaluation. Additionally, the implication of this study helps to provide the guide to develop the international trade and business sector which is closely related to the flow of goods and services, capital, technology, human resources and knowledge sharing between two countries. Future research should focus on the influence of the entire learning process on expatriates by identifying the appropriate learning process to be used in helping expatriates to adapt and improve expatriate performance.

**Keywords** Learning Process, Expatriate, Cultural Intelligence, Learning Orientation, Performance Evaluation

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### Introduction

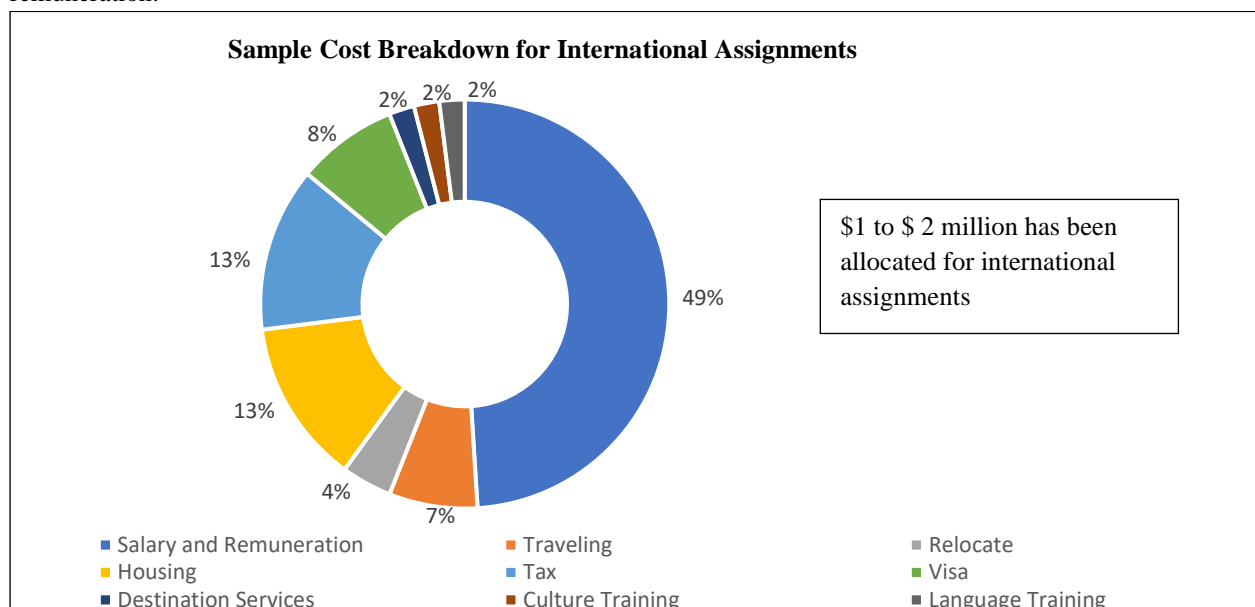
Expatriate learning is the main target of international assignments to enhance the self-development of expatriates especially in improving their work performance. Due to different organizations, environments and cultures from the expatriate's country of origin, they face problems in the learning process in the new environment (Abugre, 2018). Expatriates need time to adjust and learn from new environments. The ability of expatriates to adapt and learn from new environments is important to ensure that they are able to demonstrate better performance development throughout the course of their international assignments (K. T. Wang et al., 2015). Expatriates need to be committed in gaining knowledge throughout their international assignments and be able to develop their skills in professional and social areas such as communicating, managing relationships, leading, decision making, self-motivating and working in teams (Vance & Paik, 2005).



Studies show that the learning process will be more efficient if expatriates are actively involved in the process (DeNisi & Sonesh, 2016). In addition, experiential learning is also an important process that involves behavioral reflection (Veloo & Zolkepli, 2011). Through the experience gained from international assignments will be able to be practiced and shared with the parent company after the expatriates return to their country of origin. The learning process through international assignments can be implemented through a variety of learning methods. The use of orderly and systematic methods and processes can have a learning effect that can have a significant impact on expatriates (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Learning by expatriates is the main target of international assignments to enhance the self-development of expatriates, especially in improving their work performance. Because the organization, environment and culture are different from the country of origin of the expatriate, they face difficulties in the learning process in the new environment (Abugre, 2018).

It is important for expatriates to be involved in the learning process during international assignments to ensure that they are able to perform well during the period. The failure of expatriates to adapt well to the international assignment learning process can indirectly contribute to their failure in completing assignments and can result in them having to return home earlier before the due expiration period (DeNisi & Sonesh, 2016). Part of the benefit of the expatriate learning process is that expatriates are able to link existing skills with newly acquired skills (Cranston, 2018). Existing knowledge helps expatriates relate it to new knowledge and expand existing knowledge (Lakshman & Lakshman, 2017). This can indirectly make it easier for expatriates to continue to learn more new skills and can indirectly help expatriates learn something more quickly over time (DeNisi & Sonesh, 2016).

Learning failures from international assignments among expatriates result in them having to return early from international assignments which can have a significant negative influence on companies and expatriates (Zulkifly et al., 2019). the failure of expatriate learning will cause the reputation of the parent company, host company and expatriate to be tarnished. The skills and knowledge of expatriates in a particular role of their job will then contribute in presenting arguments about the mobility management of knowledgeable workers such as expatriates as well as their experience as they are an important group that will ensure the future success of future generations. In addition, failure to complete international assignments results in the parent company having to incur substantial loss costs (Lueke & Svyantek, 2000). Results from a survey of management found that 42% of expatriates were rated as failing by host company executives. Figure 1.1 shows a total of \$1 to \$ 2 million has been allocated for international assignments and almost half of the costs allocated are for expatriate salaries and remuneration.



Therefore, in order to ensure better outcomes and a clearer understanding of the expatriate learning process in the host country, it is important to know the factors that can influence their learning process. According to previous studies, there are several key factors of the expatriate learning process from international assignments that include preparation before departure (DeNisi & Sonesh, 2016), learning orientation (Mitchell & Coyle, 2019), cultural intelligence (Zulkifly et al., 2019) and assessment achievement (Burmeister & Deller, 2016).

When expatriate begin their foreign assignments, they face many difficulties, ranging from problems due to the transfer of inadequate management practices. Yet, despite the difficulties faced by expatriates, there are some holding companies that still ignore the importance of the process of selection, preparation and preparation of expatriates. Lack of preparation to undertake international assignments can contribute to the failure of expatriates to produce good job performance. Expatriate preparation before undertaking an international assignment is one form of informal learning process that takes place before starting their job at the host company. Expatriates can study and find information about the true picture of their duties as expatriates, a clear picture of the culture of the company and the host country through various initiatives among others through social media and reading. In this way, can help expatriates not feel awkward and not bother them to carry out tasks in the early phase as expatriates.

When expatriates start working at the host company, expatriate will be exposed to a conceptual learning orientation in terms of shared vision, purpose and goals of their international assignment duties. Organization based on oriented learning knowledge and understanding can develop the potential of employees. Furthermore, learning orientation can affect the strength of competition and performance of an organization (English, 2020). In a highly competitive business world, organizations have to work hard to achieve it required goals. Learning is an important factor to survive in an organization, because the higher the learning, the higher the knowledge acquired.

The president of one of the largest Dutch companies in the world said that he was unsuccessful leader while carry his duty in United States. He realized that he was unable to have a discuss with the other expatriates because of culture shock. this is because, every employee who comes from a different cultural and national background is likely to have a different view on some situation differently. Cultural intelligence is the ability of expatriates to act using skills, and according to the values, attitudes and cultures of the individuals interacting. Thus, cultural intelligence can be broadly described as a person's developmental ability to adapt to a wider cultural scope. Training before, during and after expatriate working abroad can help them to understand the cultural differences in management and communication styles.

The term performance appraisal refers to the method or process used by an organization to evaluate an employee's level of achievement. Its main purpose is to improve employee performance. The learning process through performance appraisal occurs through performance feedback. Feedback is 'information' or 'knowledge' sent to the expatriate to make them aware of the level of their work performance. Provide feedback to employees on their performance is a common thing to do in most organizations. Through performance appraisal, expatriates can assess, the pros and cons of each step taken to complete the given task.

This study was conducted to produce a new empirical platform covering what the factors that influence the learning process and the impact on the work performance of expatriates. The objective of the study are as follows:

- 1) Identify factors that influence the learning process of expatriates from international assignments.
- 2) Review the responsibility of the host company towards the expatriate learning process.
- 3) Explain the influence of the learning process during international assignments on the performance of expatriate work.

The results of this study can help to present suggestions and practical ideas either for the management of the parent company or the expatriates themselves on the implementation and approaches to improve the outcomes of the expatriate learning process. This study will provide some contributions for research in the expatriate learning process. In addition, this study aims to broaden the understanding of the collective level as well as the



individual level that will help expatriates to prepare physically and emotionally well as such preparation can help them in their learning process in the host country. Future expatriates can use the results of this study as a framework to develop a better understanding of the challenges they will face during the learning process during international assignments.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Influence of Learning Process on Job Performance**

Job performance is a goal that an expatriate needs to achieve in order to complete a given task successfully. According to (Downes et al., 2020) the concepts of performance and specification also maintain change in line with constant changes in the organization. Job performance is not only important for the organization, but also important for the expatriates themselves (Downes et al., 2020). In other words, job performance is important for the job and administration of an organization. The importance of the learning process can be seen from the work performance of expatriates. However, from the supervisor's point of view, a key element of job performance appraisal outcomes is more needed for expatriates rather than actions that lead to those outcomes (Qian et al., 2019). There are two main elements of job performance namely the skills and ability of expatriates to do the job better through the learning process (Gutiérrez et al., 2020). Good job performance can contribute to good results on the expatriate learning process (Schleicher & Baumann, 2020).

Y.-L. Chen & Chen (2021) argue that effort, skills, learning and type of work environment are combinations that influence job performance. In a changing global economic and work environment, the performance of an organization and an employee is essential in order to be competitive (Y.-L. Chen & Chen, 2021). Therefore, it is very important for expatriates to always find ways to learn and analyze the factors that can contribute to job performance (Broeders & de Haan, 2020). Job performance is known as an outcome that can contribute to the parent company and the host company (Taouab & Issor, 2019). Overall, job performance encompasses the motivation, abilities and opportunities of an expatriate (Fee & Gray, 2020). The learning success of expatriates can be seen through their work performance. Thus, expatriates and local workers need to perform their duties excellently (Y.-L. Chen & Chen, 2021). Through employment rules, the performance of an employee is determined based on their duties (Ahmad et al., 2019). Similarly with expatriates, they tend to perform tasks with caution when accepting assignments that have been assigned to them (Ngo et al., 2020).

In the 1980s, researchers focused more on expatriates' adaptation to new cycles, which typically affect job performance (Sekhar et al., 2017). Based on past research and empirical theory, researchers have argued that there is a relationship between international assignments and expatriate learning (Fee & Gray, 2020). Venkatanagarajan & Kamalanabhan (2018) in his study argued that host companies should review the procedures of the expatriate learning process throughout the performance of assignments in their company. This is because, expatriates should be more exposed to technical skills and skills that involve interpersonal communication (Venkatanagarajan & Kamalanabhan, 2018). Therefore, this study seeks to produce new empirical foundations by making studies of what are the factors an individual learns in the context of learning from their international assignments that effect their work performance.

### **Expatriate Preparation**

The learning process involves the ability of employees to follow activities that have been planned by the parent company (Bayraktar, 2019). Motivation greatly influences their work performance throughout their international assignments. Unfortunately, the process of selection, preparation and preparation of expatriates has not yet been given full attention by the parent company (Wilkins & Neri, 2018). One of the causes of expatriates not being able to complete their assignments is because they do not get comprehensive training before leaving. A study by Tarique & Schuler (2018) argues that lack of preparation before departure for international assignments can cause difficulties for expatriates completing their assignments.



Other than that, Although expatriate selection is more difficult than selecting employees for a domestic post, various experts have suggested techniques to improve the possibilities of expatriate success and efficient expatriate selection (Sokro et al., 2021). Aside from the employees' technical abilities, their families, personal threats, and emotional intelligence must all be taken into account as selection factors. (Bayraktar, 2019). Ramalu & Subramaniam (2019) stated that the methodologies employed should measure characteristics such as intercultural and interpersonal competencies in addition to technical skills.

Companies prefer to concentrate on an individual's technical abilities while overlooking their interpersonal capabilities. Understanding the culture of the host country, the ability to adapt, and language skills are sometimes overlooked or disregarded as minor concerns. When selecting personnel for international assignments, personality attributes and the capacity to adapt to different cultures must be taken into account (Mou, 2018). Fee (2020) argued that expats' success is influenced by their personality attributes while Takeuchi (2018) found that there was a relationship between personality attribute and motivation as well as performance. Conscientiousness and dependability were linked to job performance in a personality assessment study because they might naturally alter one's behaviour (Sokro et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is very important to focus on the process of training and learning about their role as expatriates before leaving for international assignments if companies want to ensure the success of their expatriates there (Reiche et al., 2021). Expatriates who are not prepared to undertake international assignments will face major challenges especially during the initial phase at the host company. Preparation before departures such as briefings on the role as an expatriate, area study, local culture, sensitivity training, fieldwork experience and language training of the host country can reveal a little knowledge to expatriates to understand the culture of the host country (Abugre, 2018).

### **Orientation Learning**

According to Slater & Narver (1995), learning orientation is defined as a theory used by companies that emphasize learning in organizations. Learning orientation is important, especially in the formation of adaptive behaviours in the face of changing environments fraught with uncertainty (Phorncharoen, 2020). Learning-oriented organizations will face a process of continuous improvement and create a better future (Saville, 2021). Therefore, learning orientation is important to achieve goals and improve performance. According to (Funken et al., 2018) market orientation is not enough, yet the ability of organizations to learn faster is the only competitive advantage that should be prioritized. Learning orientation is the key to organizational success in the future.

The concept of learning orientation in this study are in terms of commitment to learning, open mindedness and interpersonal knowledge sharing. Those who are able to adapt to a learning orientation will show flexibility and an open mind to learn from mistakes that have been made, correct them and keep changing (Tarique & Schuler, 2018). While those who are unable to adjust to the learning orientation process will withdraw and shift efforts from situations involving low-performance appraisals or unwanted outputs (Sukoco et al., 2022). Such expatriates do not have the desire to acquire knowledge and learn new skills which are valuable assets for them (Wahyuni & Sara, 2020).

According to psychologists people pursue two different fundamental aims in orientation learning which is workers with a learning attitude develop their abilities and master the tasks they accomplish (Wu et al., 2019). A performance goal leads them to obtain a favourable assessment of their present talents and performance from key stakeholders (Wahyuni & Sara, 2020). Although an individual's learning and work performance are relatively stable, external factors might make a learning or performance goal more important. As a conclusion, these motivational orientations are both traits and states.

### **Cultural Intelligence**

A key factor in the concept of cultural intelligence is the individual's ability in terms of knowledge (Canetta et al., 2019). Cultural intelligence involving knowledge indicates the extent of an individual's knowledge of



cultures and differences between cultures. According to Peretz & Fried (2012), cultural intelligence in terms of individual knowledge concentrates knowledge of organizational cultures, norms and practices in different cultural environments. The knowledge possessed by culturally intelligent individuals includes general knowledge and specific knowledge (Salih, 2020). General knowledge includes knowledge of the cultural differences of others and their own culture. Whereas specialized knowledge encompasses knowledge of behavioural patterns in a particular context (Laland & Rendell, 2019). Examples are ways to respect others. This is so because, each country has a different way of showing respectful behaviour (Akhimien & Adekunle, 2021). The second factor in cultural intelligence is the ability to organize strategies. The intelligence to organize strategies encompasses the awareness to find ways and means to create social interactions (Grill et al., 2021). Expatriates can acquire such ways and methods through the experiences gained by expatriates when interacting between cultures (Nadeem & Mumtaz, 2018). This intelligence also demonstrates the ability to plan for and study cultural differences in the situations encountered and how it develops strategies to adapt to them (Crocitto et al., 2005). Therefore, expatriates are expected to act in accordance with the culture in which they are located. Hughes (2020) states that there are three important steps in organizing strategies for establishing interpersonal relationships with individuals with different cultural backgrounds. The first is to observe cultural differences, the second is to analyse and think strategically to anticipate cultural differences, and the third is to reflect on actions that are and have been performed when interacting between cultures (Banks, 2020). For expatriates, adjusting well on a foreign assignment is more than an issue of psychological well-being; it could also lead to the success of their foreign missions (Zhang et al., 2021). Expats must overcome their cultural shock in order to feel more optimistic, work more effectively, and live a more fulfilling lifestyle (Yu & Ren, 2021). Expatriates must have vital abilities during their initial transition, as well as patience and creativity in coming up with unique solutions to unexpected challenges (Fee, 2020). Cross-cultural training can help them develop these skills as part of their preparation (Kour & Jyoti, 2022). This is due to the fact that various studies have shown a link between cross-cultural training and adjustment (Adler & Aycan, 2021).

### ***Job Performance Appraisal***

An effective performance management system not only takes into account the skills and behaviours of an individual but also their contribution to the overall performance in an organization (Samsudin, 2019). Employees and the top management of the organization need to play an important role in achieving KPI targets to facilitate the process of improvement actions and skills development in the organization (Lai-Bennejean & Beitelspacher, 2021). A comprehensive appraisal system must consider all relevant dimensions of achievement (Kakkar et al., 2020). Evaluation is important in any organization to evaluate expatriate behaviour in the workplace (Memon et al., 2021). Job performance appraisal is known to be an important function of improving the motivation and performance of expatriates (Z. Wang et al., 2021). Another factor influencing the learning process is the anxiety of expatriates if they do not elicit a positive reaction by the parent company and in turn are likely to influence careers in the organization (Na-Nan et al., 2022).

Job performance appraisal emphasizes systematic appraisal. With the existence of a systematic assessment that has been set by the company, expatriates and the company can measure if the learning process that has been provided is either effective or efficient (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2021). In addition, it can also determine whether the activities carried out need to be continued or need improvement in order for existing operations to be better (Safitri et al., 2021). Work effectiveness will be referred to the scale of effectiveness through the job activities selected by the organization (Canet-Giner et al., 2020). Work efficiency refers to the minimal use of resources such as cost or time. Work efficiency is one of the qualities that is not present in all expatriates who have been recruited by any organization. Competence is not a skill. Skills must be learned but efficiency is a natural advantage of an individual (Dipboye, 2018). There are several competencies that can be found in an expatriate that are developed. Among them are skills, advantages, one's attributes, work knowledge, cooperation and good time management (Imran & Atiya, 2020).



## Methodology

This research was a completely qualitative study. This is because, the researcher wants to get experience and views from expatriates on the issues studied. Data collection for this study involved foreign expatriates who are currently working in Malaysia. Grounded Theory has been used in this study to collect and interpret the findings. Open-ended questions have been provided to respondents to look at more in-depth in line with the purpose of the study conducted. The data were fully provided by respondents. The scope of the research questions in this study are:

- 1) What are the factors that influence the learning process of expatriates from international assignments?
- 2) What are the responsibilities of the host company towards the expatriate learning process?
- 3) What is the influence of learning process to expatriate work performance?

## Research Participants

**Table 1: Profile of Participants**

Respondent	Gender	Title and Organization	Age	Duration	Origin
Respondent 1	Female	Sales Manager (Fashion)	36	3 years	Turkey
Respondent 2	Male	Offshore Project Engineer (Oil and Gas)	28	2 years	China
Respondent 3	Female	Marketing Executive (Aviation)	38	1 years	Korea
Respondent 4	Male	Human Resource Executive (Oil and Gas)	30	4 years	Netherland
Respondent 5	Male	EMB Cash Product Analyst (Banking)	29	1 year	Singapore
Respondent 6	Female	Graphic Designer (E-Commerce)	35	3 years	Korea
Respondent 7	Female	Document Controller (Information Management)	31	2 years	Indonesia

The respondents were foreigners who are currently working in Malaysia. They are skilled and competent workers from parent companies who have been assigned as expatriates at big companies in Malaysia. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents because the goal of this study is to acquire a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of expatriate experiences in Malaysia.

The selection of the respondent is based on the criteria as follows: First, the respondent must be men and women foreigners who are currently working in Malaysia as expatriates. Second, the respondents must be aged 25 years old and above, because to make sure that they have enough experience as employees. Third, the respondents must have wide knowledge about the learning process that they have faced during international assignment.

Respondent information is obtained through the human resource management division of their company. Then, the human resources department will inform if there are expatriates in their company who meet the given criteria and the expatriate agrees to be one of the respondents for this study. The number of respondents of 7 people is sufficient as all of them come from different field skills and from different companies.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this study through the distribution of open-ended questions to respondents via email. Recollection of the respondent's answers took 2 months. All the answers given by the respondents will then be arranged more systematically to facilitate the researcher to make an analysis of the respondents' answers that can be used as findings.



## Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the learning process and the impact on the work performance of expatriates. This study uses a qualitative method to obtain data through open-ended questions given to respondents among 7 foreign expatriates working in Malaysia.

### *Expatriate preparation*

All respondents agreed that lack of preparation before carrying out assignments can have a negative impact on expatriates. As a result of the study, the preparation emphasized by the respondents is to understand the host country, be prepared for any challenges that will be faced and training in the parent company. Studying and understanding the host country in more depth is certainly very helpful for expatriates to adapt to the new environment specially to avoid cultural shocks upon arrival in the host country. The findings of this study are in line with the conclusions of the study by (Okpara, 2016) who argued that an individual generally has a desire to reduce the uncertainties that exist in the new environment, especially about things that are appropriately practiced or not accepted by the local community.

Studying and understanding the host country in more depth is certainly very helpful for expatriates to adapt to the new environment specially to avoid cultural shocks upon arrival in the host country. *Respondent 3* commented, “lack of preparation can cause expatriates to face difficulties when they come to the host company. Some will probably experience a culture shock here at the host company”. The findings of this study are in line with the conclusions of the study by Okpara (2016) who argued that an individual generally has a desire to reduce the uncertainties that exist in the new environment, especially about things that are appropriately practiced or not accepted by the local community. Culture shock is a process that occurs at various levels, due to the interaction of individuals with different environments (Abugre, 2018). The findings of the study also found that the need to understand the culture not only involves the host country, but also the work environment of the host company should also be given attention. For expatriates, understanding and learning the culture of a new environment can be very challenging.

In addition, according to the respondents, the preparation that can be done before carrying out international assignments is to make physical and mental preparation. *Respondents 4* stated “You must know what can be done or not in the country. At least the basics. Some countries have strict rules on certain things that are allowed in our country. You have to prepare yourself mentally and physically before you come to a foreign country”. Expatriates who are assigned to work abroad need to make thorough preparations from various aspects. Expatriates working in Malaysia are found to face various cultural challenges due to the diverse Malaysian culture (Nazirah Binti Abdul Rohman, 2017). In addition, another challenge that is likely to be faced is the challenge in terms of financial tensions caused by the failure of expatriates to plan future finances in advance before settling in a foreign country (Davidescu et al., 2020). Expatriates are also advised to have insurance coverage while carrying out international assignments.

Next, the last preparation that needs to be done is training at the parent company. Training before expatriates undertakes international assignments helps them understand cultural differences through management and communication organized by the parent company (Smith, 2019). Respondents also stated that often companies will provide training to expatriates for a day or two. While there are also some companies that provide longer training periods that can cause expatriates to feel overwhelmed.

### *Learning Orientation*

Overall, the findings of the study on the importance of learning orientation to expatriates show the agreement of all respondents by listing the concepts of learning orientation that is the concept as below:





**Table 2:** Respondents' Views on the Concept of Learning Orientation That Should Be Organized by the Host Company

Respondents	Learning Orientation Concept
Respondents 1	Mentor-protégé
Respondents 2	Work Performance
Respondents 3	Cultural Training
Respondents 4	Expatriate Duties
Respondents 5	Individual Development
Respondents 6	Teamwork
Respondents 7	Informal Learning

The mentor-protégé concept. The concept is supported by Crocitto (2005) study who argues that mentor-protégé programs help boost employee morale and motivate them to achieve organizational goals in an era of global competition. *Respondent 4* stated that “mentor can give channel of support to deal with workplace challenges, learn, develop and grow during international assignment”. The concept of effective mentor-protégés is an important expatriate development tool because mentors can pay attention to an expatriate. Mentors are experienced employees who provide advice, direction, introductions and opportunities for growth and development to expatriates (Hansen & Rasmussen, 2016). The concept of effective mentor-protégé requires structure, training and constant attention to benefit the mentor, protégé and company (Hermansson & Kilnes, 2008).

The findings of the study also show that the concept of expatriate work performance is the level at which an individual can help his organization to achieve the set objectives. For this concept, Veloo and Zolkepli (2011) define job performance as behaviors that can be observed under the control of the individual himself. This suggests that expatriates and supervisors are able to evaluate for improvement in job performance. As a person. Based on the findings of the study, the concept of expatriate assignment refers to the assignment-based learning orientation given by the supervisor or host company to the expatriate at an early stage as an introduction. The tasks given by supervisors are to help expatriates identify the skills needed in the host company, help expatriates adjust to the workplace culture as well as foster teamwork (Saville, 2021).

The concept of learning orientation through cultural training refers to learning from workplace situations that encompass the diversity of differences between individuals in an organization. Cultural training helps expatriates adapt to diversity not only of how individuals identify themselves but also how others perceive them (Thiptanamanee & Ussahawanitchakit, 2016). Race, gender, ethnic group, age, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship status, military service, mental and physical condition, and other traits that differ among others are all examples of diversity in the workplace. According to respondents, expatriates who are able to adapt to a more open, diverse and inclusive environment are usually able to do their jobs better. This is so because expatriates can adapt to the workplace. Individuals can only produce the best outcomes when they are at ease in their job, and organizations gain from their workforce. (X. P. Chen et al., 2012).

The concept of learning orientation that emphasizes individual development refers to the learning process based on the improvement of skills and abilities of expatriates in the workplace. This process of individual development provides an opportunity for expatriates to reach their full potential while performing tasks (Thiptanamanee & Ussahawanitchakit, 2016). This is an important part of the expatriate's learning process because it allows them to feel more confident and perform better. Part of this process requires expatriates to assess their strengths and weaknesses. Through this self-development, the expatriate will be more motivated and more skilled in his role.

Finally, the next learning orientation concept is group work that not only emphasizes the skills of getting along with others well, but also helps expatriates to work brilliantly together. *Respondent 2* also added that “Actions and achievements of a group of people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds working together in a co-



operative way, or, the work produced by that group or team”. However, even if the expatriate can work well in a team, that does not guarantee that the expatriate can get input easily. This is because, Thiptanamane & Ussahawanitchakit (2016) found that group work-based learning orientation is one of the skills that are not emphasized in learning orientation. However, this statement contradicts the opinion of Sanyal & Hisam (2018) who argue that group work concept learning orientation should not be underestimated because expatriates can hone their skills when doing tasks with other employees with diverse skills.

### ***Cultural Intelligence***

Based on the findings of the study, all respondents agreed that cultural intelligence helps expatriates in undertaking international assignments. However, there is a need for initiatives to prepare in terms of knowledge of the host country to avoid expatriates feeling overwhelmed by the cultural differences in the host country. *Respondent 1* stated that “Cultural intelligence helps develop a deeper understanding of work styles in different cultures”. He also added “A culturally savvy workforce will foster greater tolerance, trust and understanding among colleagues around the world”.

Based on the findings of the study, each country has a different culture, but there are cultures that have similarities with the culture of the country of origin of expatriates. Thus, among the initiatives that expatriates can take to understand the host country is by contacting people who are in the host country to ask for opinions and advice about the host country (Wong & Wong, 2011). According to C. Y. P. Wang (2019) the use of social media as a communication platform today can create an online community to perform various social activities such as interacting with others, forming friendships, and communicating with others. Social media also brings various benefits especially improving the interaction between users with broader information Huang (2019). In addition, the cost to access information is lower and economical.

In addition, social interaction is also among the initiatives that allow expatriates to expand information about the culture of the host country. According to Garcia-Alexander (2017) social interaction is a social skill that provides a space of introduction between two individuals through a conversation about a minor issue. Through social interaction, expatriates can get info about the culture of the host country more accurately and authentically. In addition, social interaction also provides many advantages to expatriates, including being able to build positive relationships with the community, hone expatriate communication skills and adapt to new environments faster.

Next, based on the findings of the study, among the methods that need to be emphasized to help expatriates adapt through cross-cultural methods. *Respondent 2* stated that “Through cross cultural training, expatriate is exposed to facts and information about new cultures, preconceptions, mentalities and worldviews that they may otherwise not have contemplated”. This method is supported by Kaplina (2020) who argues that cultural intersection teaches local workers and foreign workers to be tolerant and tolerant in order to build understanding between workers. Thus, this shows that the importance of a sense of belonging and responsible attitude among employees to avoid employees feeling uncomfortable with the atmosphere and culture of the company (Bacud, 2020).

Such conditions can affect the productivity and effectiveness of company management. The findings of the study also state that this cross-cultural method should be practiced through working in groups with members from various cultural backgrounds. Based on *Respondent 5* experience, he stated that “When multicultural teams want to collaborate effectively, there are communication constraints due to lack of language skills especially due to cultural misunderstandings”. Lack of understanding between expatriates and colleagues can trigger conflicts and communication problems. Successful team relationships, built on mutual respect, taking time to listen to each team member and take their opinions (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018). Teamwork from a variety of member backgrounds should be leveraged as it connects more knowledge and additional resources to enhance creativity (Jasmi, 2012).



### Job Performance Appraisal

The findings of the study indicate that the work performance appraisal system should be used by companies. Ghafoor (2011) argues that job performance appraisal can shape employee commitment through discussion, encourage employees to work hard, as well as strengthen the manager's relationship with employees. Respondent 3 stated that "More frequent conversations help keep everyone on the same page, develop stronger relationships between employees and managers, and make annual reviews less stressful.". Moreover, in order to overcome the problems faced by employees, supervisors will set new performance expectations for employees to improve their performance (Varma et al., 2020). Most organizations use a performance evaluation system to evaluate job performance, and this system is considered as helping the organization enhance performance by focusing on responsibility, measurement culture, and authenticity (Van Dijk & Schodl, 2015).

The study shows that an effective performance appraisal program can achieve the set goals by involving expatriates in a continuous development program. The findings of the study are supported by Varma (2020) who argues that standards for performance appraisal systems should be formed based on job needs by translating organizational goals and objectives into job needs by determining acceptable and unacceptable levels of performance. The findings of the study also found that each company has a different performance appraisal process. The process listed by the respondents was through tests, interviews, assessments by colleagues, comparing the performance of the expatriate with the set goals and the ability of the expatriate to complete the given task. Respondents 5 give a clear process performance evaluation run by his company.

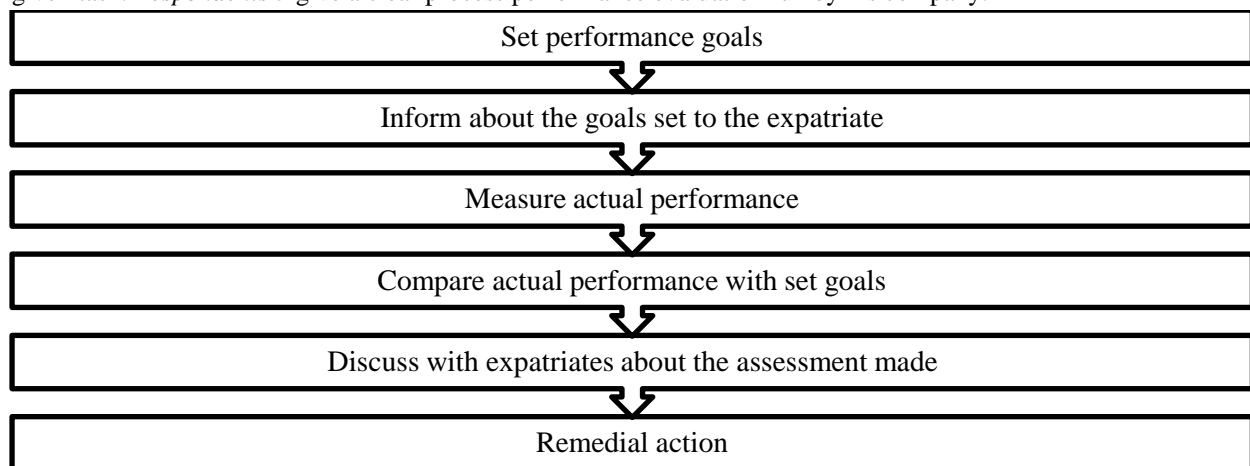


Figure 1: Process of Performance Evaluation

The performance appraisal process conducted by the host company is based on standards that take into account all the responsibilities of an expatriate. Evaluation is conducted by more than one evaluator to avoid bias towards expatriates (Hurlock, 2013). This means, it is not only the manager who can do the appraisal, there are even several other individuals who can appraise the performance of an expatriate. A summary of the performance appraisal process conducted by the respondents found that the performance appraisal process includes 3 evaluation methods, namely the nature method, the behavioral method and the outcome method.

The first method is the properties method. McHugh & Domegan (2017) argue that the trait approach seeks to assess how much an expatriate possesses particular qualities that are thought to be significant in job performance, such as innovation, creativity, leadership, and loyalty. The second method is the behavioral method. Behavioral methods are an approach capable of providing action-oriented information (Ingold et al., 2018). As such, it is particularly suitable for performance appraisal systems used for expatriate development. While the third method is the outcome method that evaluates the results of expatriate work (Longenecker & Fink, 2017). Since this method is evaluated based on the work of expatriates, this method places a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of expatriates and is indirectly able to increase the motivation of expatriates.



The findings of the study also discuss the evaluation of expatriates outside the office. Respondents had different opinions about the assessment. Respondents who agreed argued that it allows expatriates to explore new things and be able to build new relationships outside of the office. *Respondent 4* stated that “Evaluation outside office help expatriates to be more responsible and aware about the image of both parent company and host company”. However, it is desirable if the evaluation of expatriate performance only focuses on the performance of expatriates in the company only. This is because, according to employee activists, Datuk Abdul Halim Mansor in his statement stated that employers or companies should not harass their employees after working hours because they need to respect employees' rest and personal time (Malik, 2021). He added that if the assignment requires an employee to return to work, then the employer must contact the employee, including the payment of overtime rates as it is in the interest of the company.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the expatriate learning process and its impact on job performance. In addition, this study also examines the responsibility of the host company towards the expatriate learning process and explains the influence of the learning process throughout the international assignment on the work performance of the expatriate.

The findings of the study found that the effectiveness of the learning process should involve initiatives from expatriates, parent companies and host companies. Expatriates need to make thorough preparations such as finding information about the culture of the company and the host country before undertaking international assignments. Lack of preparation can cause expatriates to have difficulty adjusting while on duty in the host country. In addition, the parent company also plays an important role in preparing expatriates in communication skills, adaptive skills in a new place, and technical skills to carry out international assignments. Finally, the host company is one of the main pillars in producing excellent employee performance. The concept of learning orientation framed by the host company should focus on appropriate skills that can help improve the work performance of expatriates.

This study has several obstacles to consider. The first hurdle is about data collection through open-ended questions. The open-ended questions for this study were not able to examine the overall factors that influence the expatriate learning process in Malaysia. This open-ended question is written briefly to increase the respondents' interest in answering the question. If the given question is a bit complicated, the result may be different. Another obstacle was due to the delay of respondents to provide feedback. On average, all respondents took two months to return a response via email. The delay of the respondents to return the answers was due to some of them having to undergo quarantine due to being infected with COVID-19 as well as busy work. In addition, there were respondents who did not answer the question in detail. This is due to company policy constraints as well as lack of exposure from the host company.

Future research should focus on the influence of the learning process on expatriates. In addition, future studies should also identify appropriate learning processes to be used in helping expatriates to adapt as well as improve expatriate performance. In addition, expatriates should not place high expectations in the early stages of working in a host company. No doubt expatriates will have difficulty understanding and learning the culture of the new work environment. Thus, expatriates need to seek the help and referral of colleagues to help expatriates adjust to the new environment. Expatriates working in Malaysia should be open and gain knowledge of the culture practiced in Malaysia before coming to Malaysia. Experience and knowledge of Malaysian culture are essential because they can assist expatriates in adjusting to and socializing with the local population, hence avoiding isolation and marginalization from the local community.

The role of the host company is to provide social support, share information about the organization and work culture of the host company to help facilitate expatriates adjust in the workplace. The host company needs to design activities that help expatriates cope with the cultural network in the workplace by explaining the goals set to expatriates and guiding them in order to reduce errors while working. The selection of expatriates to carry out



international assignments should emphasize the skills of the employees. This is because expatriates who do not have sufficient skills will face problems while working in the host company. In addition, the parent company also need to provide expatriate preparation programs prior to departure to the host country. Expatriates should be given clear information on the scope of their duties as expatriates to avoid any confusion and make it easier for expatriates to prepare.

This research contributes to the existing knowledge in the study of the performance of expatriates while carrying out international assignments. Thus, the findings of this study help provide suggestions and ideas to expatriates who will undertake international assignments in the future, parent companies that will send employee representatives for international training, as well as host companies as an important environment for sharing and development of ideas. In addition, this study also indirectly helps to provide ideas for the development of international trade and business sectors that are closely related to the flow of goods and services, capital, technology, human resources and the addition of knowledge between the two countries.

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