

Non-Work Related Adjustment factors-a strong Predictor of Expatriates' Commitment in Mission Hospitals in Kenya: The role of Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

Many organisations worldwide rely on the contributions of expatriates, who are crucial in filling skill gaps in business operations. However, expatriates face challenges that stem from cultural differences. This paper models the relationship between non-work-related adjustment factors and the expatriates' commitment. Previous research provides mixed results on this relationship. Therefore, this paper fills the void by interrogating the influence of transformational leadership on the relationship between non-work adjustment factors and commitment. Based on a sample of 112 expatriates drawn from selected mission hospitals in Kenya, results indicated that non-work-related adjustment factors significantly affected the expatriates' commitment ($\beta=1.277$, $p=0.000$). Transformational leadership also affected expatriate commitment ($\beta=.951$, $p=0.000$), and finally, transformational leadership moderated the relationship between the non-work related adjustment factors and expatriates' commitment ($\beta=1.127$, $p=0.000$). The study recommends that human resource managers in the mission hospitals should set up policies on the non-work related adjustment of expatriates in their hospitals. Also, managers of institutions in the home country should prepare their expatriates on cross-cultural adjustment mechanisms to adapt to their commitment to their host country.

Keywords: Cross-cultural adjustment; non-work adjustment factors; employee commitment and Transformational leadership

Introduction

As a result of the requirement to generate greater output with fewer resources, the new global economy appears to be experiencing a crisis of competent people in both the public and commercial service sectors (Andrew, 2017). This environment has boosted competition for bright people and spurred the employment of many expatriates to run businesses abroad (Okpara & Kabongo, 2010). It is possible to define commitment for expatriates as staying on assignment to the end, achieving performance targets, successfully returning home, and acknowledging their talents and knowledge. Conversely, "expatriates' failure" could be characterized as the early return of the expatriate, the inaptitude to cope with the new environment, the undervaluing of the expatriate's abilities, the failure to accomplish the assignment's goals, and the absence of family assimilation (Lee, 2007).

Cross-cultural adjustment" (CCA), in line with Takeuchi et al. (2005), is the level at which expatriates are psychologically at ease and conversant with certain characteristics of a new environment. Cross-cultural adjustment aims to help immigrants feel more at home and integrate into their new culture. The process of change and a reduction in uncertainty help achieve this. The amount of uncertainty experienced by expatriates can be reduced by their capacity to imitate and/or learn behaviors that are appropriate to their new culture. Cross-cultural adjustment has traditionally been regarded to include three components. The three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment are non-work or general adjustment variables, work-related adjustment factors, and interaction adjustment factors. Non-work/general adjustment factors, or the first dimension, refer to how comfortable a person is with their day-to-day way of life in a new place, including transportation, food, climate, etc. This paper will look at the non-work adjustment factors.

Transformational leadership is also synonymous with charismatic leadership. According to Gathungu et al. (2015), transformational leaders are visionary, motivating, courageous, risk-takers, thoughtful thinkers, and have charismatic appeal. This type of leadership enables leaders to obtain their subordinates' respect for the sentiments and needs of their employees and encourage their colleagues to ponder the most effective solutions to their work problems. On the other hand, it enables employees to deliberate ideal solutions and creativity in the task allotted to them, ultimately resulting in great performance (Chiang & Wang, 2012). In addition, this style makes it possible for the organizational goals and visions of staff members to align with the overarching vision of the organization (Solomon & Steyn, 2017).

Numerous studies have been undertaken in the past to identify factors that affect employee commitment (Andrew, 2017; Rodosavljevic et al., 2017; Maharani & Tampubolon, 2016; Dang et al., 2020 and Buitendach (2012). However, as previously stated, the nature of employee commitment has resulted in different findings in different demographic contexts (Awino & Korir, 2020; Mwaniki et al., 2020). This supports further research in this field, which the current study aims to fill by incorporating transformational leadership as a moderator on the relationship between non-work adjustment factors and expatriate employee commitment.

Literature Review

Non-work adjustment factors and Employee commitment

Feeling at peace with the local food, healthcare options, living circumstances, and general shopping and entertainment options was described as non-work adjustment. General adjustment is when an expatriate adjusts to and feels at ease in his or her new surroundings in the host country (Hongyu, 2015). Several studies on cross-cultural adaptation have been done in the past. In a study, Peltokorpi (2008) looked at how foreigners adapted to Japanese culture. The study found that cultural distance, expatriate gender, language ability, type (organisational or self-initiated expatriates), and stable personality traits (social initiative, emotional stability, cultural empathy, flexibility, and openness) influence non-work and work-related adjustment. This study discovered that both categories of adjustment are positively impacted by expatriates' language competence, personality type, and cultural empathy using hierarchical regression analysis on data from 112 expatriates.

Zhang and Peltokorpi (2016) looked into how fluency in the local tongue affected expats' capacity for cross-cultural adjustment. To contextualise the effects of host country language ability on work and non-work-related adjustment in China, 70 expatriates and their host

country national (HCN) coworkers were interviewed. According to the study's findings, the ability of foreign nationals to communicate in their host country has various implications on HCN interaction, social support, and network-related adjustments to both work and non-work situations. Hesse (2011) examined the variables influencing expatriates' aptitude for cross-cultural adaptation on a different scale. The self-administered online survey aimed to find a relationship between the three CCA components (general, interaction, and labour). The results showed that the most important criteria and those with the strongest association with cross-cultural adaptation were assessed to be language proficiency and marital adaptation.

In a different study, Chai & Rogers (2004) analyzed the intercultural adaptation experiences of American expatriates in Singapore, relying primarily on Kim's (2001) theory of cross-cultural adaptation and Berry's (1994) theory of acculturation. Twenty American expatriates in Singapore and five Singaporeans were interviewed to determine partial support for the two hypotheses under investigation. Results revealed minimal interpersonal contact between US expatriates and host individuals. The combination of living and working in Singapore elevated American expatriates to the upper class of local society. There was no indication of a desire to establish intimate ties with the indigenous population. Expats adopt a "separatist" strategy and seek to preserve their cultural identity at the expense of inter-group relations with the local culture.

H₀₁ Non-work adjustment factors do not affect expatriates' commitment.

Transformational Leadership and Employee Commitment

The links between transformational leadership (TL) and employee commitment (EC) have been well-established in research recently (Shin, 2013; Top et al., 2012; Thamrin, 2012; Saeed et al., 2013; Porter, 2015). Essentially, studies in the past have demonstrated a strong relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment (Shin, 2013; Thamrin, 2012; Mahmood, 2015) in different contexts in Oklahoma, Pakistan, Bandung and Indonesia. In another study in German and Austrian companies, the outcome suggested a desirable relationship between TL and EC. Lo et al. (2009) indicated that TL positively impacted EC in Malaysia's manufacturing industries. In the gas industry and South Africa, Khumalo, 2015 established that TL styles have been used in the industry and directly influenced employees' commitment.

Studies of TL and EC have also been carried out in hospitals. For instance, Avolio et al., 2004 examined the effects of TL on workforce EC in Singapore hospitals and established a clear relationship between the two. Porter, 2015) investigated TL behaviors in organization commitment among workers closest to patient care in Creighton. The study's results revealed a statistically significant relationship between TL and EC. In Kenya, for instance, a study to determine the effect of TL style on EC in technical institutions showed that TL positively affected employee commitment and its dimensions (Njoroge et al., 2015). Mbithi et al. (2016) determined the factors influencing the relationship between TL and performance in a different study. The results showed a statistically significant relationship between TL and employees' outcomes. These studies provide important insights into TL and employee commitment in different Settings. This study, therefore, intended to establish the moderating effects of transformational leadership on cross-cultural adjustment and employee commitment of expatriates working in mission hospitals in Kenya. Therefore, the hypothesis that:

H₀₂ Transformational leadership does not affect employee commitment

The conditional effect of Transformational Leadership and Employee Commitment

The moderator is a variable that influences the magnitude of the interaction between the predictor and the dependent variable (Higuera-Castillo et al., 2019). Researchers are growing interested in identifying the variables that influence the strength of the interaction between exogenous and endogenous variables. The current study investigates how transformational leadership can exert a conditional effect on the relationship between the study variables.

Transformational Leadership (TL) has dominated the attention of leadership studies over the years (Anne, 2011; Bass & Bass, 2008; Chiang & Wang, 2012; Dlamini, 2017; Feizi, 2014; Gulluce et al., 2016; Keskes, 2014; Lo et al., 2009). Importantly, these leaders display certain characteristics and achieve results in several ways (Avolio et al., 2004; Solomon & Steyn, 2017). According to Bass and Bass (2008), the term "transformational leadership" refers to a style of leadership that makes it obvious what the common aims and values of an organisation are and encourages cooperation between the leaders and the workforce of that business.

Several scholars have previously investigated the nexus between transformational leadership and organisational commitment (Avolio, 2004; Anne, 2011; Chiang & Wang, 2012); and cross-cultural adjustment (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012; Solomon & Steyn, 2017; Kerr, 2016; Gulluce et al., 2016) of employees in different context and disciplines. In two separate studies in the banking sector, Anne, 2011) established that TL style was greatly influenced by culture, religion and exposure to Western education in Pakistan. Gulluce's (2016) study revealed a significant (positive) correlation between TL and OC in Turkey. Besides the banking sector, similar studies have not escaped the hospitality industry. For instance, (Chiang & Wang, 2012) investigated the causal relationship among transactional leadership, TL and EC. The study established that TL positively affected EC, moderated via cognitive and affective trust. The choice of transformational leadership as a variable for interaction with other study variables is based on the study of Wang et al. (2019), whose study considered the interaction effects of subjective norms and attitudes and recommended that future studies consider other interaction effects. Based on the above discussion, we hypothesise that;

H₀₃ Transformational leadership does not moderate the relationship between non-work adjustment factors and Expatriate employee performance

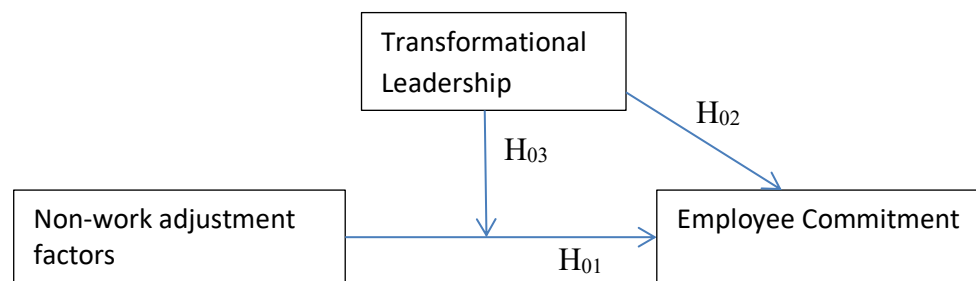


Figure 1. Conceptual Model. Source (Authors, 2023)

Methodology

Sample size and data

The study targeted 156 expatriates in the medical field registered in the foreign doctors' register of medical practitioners and dentist boards in the selected mission hospitals. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to draw a sample size of 112 expatriates using the Taro Yamane formula (1973), as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Target Population and Sample Size

	Mission Hospitals	Total Population	Sample size	Percentage (%)
1.	AIC Kijabe	69	50	45
2	Tenwek	87	62	55
Total		156	112	100

Respondents Demographics

112 questionnaires were self-administered to the respondents, and 105 questionnaires were returned dully filled, making up a 93.75% response rate. The findings revealed more males (64.76%) and only 35.24% females. Results showed that most respondents were 30-39 (62.9%), followed by those below 29 at 29.5%. The respondents who were between 40-49 years were only 7.6%. Finally, most respondents had an undergraduate degree (52.4%); they were followed by those with masters' degrees at (25.7%) those with diplomas constituted 17.1%, while those with PhD were the least at 4.8%.

Instrument Measurement

Variables used in this study were assessed with several items' scales adopted from prior studies with few modifications to suit the current context of the study (Wang et al., 2018). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement for each of the items on a five-point Likert scale by indicating numbers ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree.". The non-work adjustment factors Questionnaire had 18 items adopted from Beil & Mayor (2018). Employee commitment had 18 items and was adopted from Allen and Meyer (1996). The last variable was Transformational leadership, with 18 items adopted from Afshari (2022).

Findings

Descriptive statistics

Table 2 indicates that the variable with the highest mean is non-work adjustment factors at (3.83), followed by transformational leadership at (3.57) and employee commitment at (2.49), respectively. The reliability test for the instrument shows that all of them are above an alpha of 0.7.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and Reliability analysis

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	alpha
Employee Commitment	105	2.4934	.758	0.872
Non-work adjustment factors	105	3.8259	.470	0.976
Transformational Leadership	105	3.5667	.686	0.882
Valid N (listwise)	171			

From the results in Table 3, there is a positive and significant correlation between the independent variables and employee commitment. In Particular, the correlation results showed that non-work adjustment factors have a strong positive and significant relationship with employee commitment ($r = .923$, $p < 0.01$). This means that in the presence of non-work adjustment factors there's a high likelihood that employee commitment will be experienced. Transformational leadership also positively and significantly correlated with employee commitment ($r = .937$, $p < 0.01$) implying that the practice of transformational leadership brought about employee commitment.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

		Employee commitment	Non-work adjustment	Transformational leadership
Zscore (Employee commitment)	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	105		
Zscore (Non-work adjustment)	Pearson Correlation	.923**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	105	105	
Zscore (Transformational Leadership)	Pearson Correlation	.937**	.927**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	105	105	105

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: predicted that there is no significant effect of non-work adjustment factors on employee commitment. Findings in table 4 revealed a positive and significant association between non-work adjustment factors and employee commitment ($\beta = 1.277$, $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05) implying that non-work adjustment factors results in increased employee commitment. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis. These results are in agreement with those of Peltokorpi (2008) who looked at how foreigners adapted to Japanese culture. The study found that cultural distance, expatriate gender, language ability, type (organisational or self-initiated expatriates), and stable personality traits (social initiative, emotional stability, cultural empathy, flexibility, and openness) influence both non-work and work-related adjustment. Although this study is in agreement in many other researchers, it deviates from Chai & Rogers (2004) who analyzed the intercultural adaptation experiences of American expatriates in Singapore, relying primarily on Kim's (2001) theory of cross-cultural adaptation and Berry's (1994) theory of acculturation. Twenty American expatriates in Singapore and five Singaporeans were interviewed to determine partial support for the two hypotheses under investigation. Results revealed minimal interpersonal contact between US expatriates and host individuals. The combination of living and working in Singapore elevated American expatriates to the upper class of local society. There was no indication of a desire to establish intimate ties with the indigenous population. Expats adopt a "separatist" strategy and seek to preserve their cultural identity at the expense of inter-group relations with the local culture. This could be attributed to the difference in the grounding theory used and or the research approach adopted which are different from those of this study.

H₀₂: predicted that there is no significant effect of transformational leadership on employee commitment. Findings in Table 4 revealed a positive significant association between transformational leadership and employee commitment ($\beta = 0.951$, $p = .000$, which is less than 0.05), implying that an increase in transformational leadership increases employee commitment. Thus, reject the null hypothesis. This study's findings agree with a study by Bulitua (2015) on transformational leadership style and organizational commitment, whose findings showed that transformational leadership style had a significant effect on organizational commitment and its three dimensions. In the healthcare environment, Avolio et al., (2004) examined the effects of transformational leadership on workforce employee commitment in Singapore hospitals. They established a clear relationship between the two, thus agreeing with the study's findings. Porter, (2015), in another study investigated transformational leadership behaviors in organizational commitment among workers closest to patient care in Creighton. The results of the study revealed a statistically significant relationship. In the Kenyan context, the findings are re supported by a study to determine the effect of TL style on EC in technical institutions which showed that TL had a positive effect on employee commitment and its dimensions (Njoroge et al., 2015).

H₀₃: Stated that transformational leadership does not moderate the relationship between non-work adjustment factors and employee commitment. Results indicated that transformational leadership positively moderated the relationship between non-work adjustment factors and employee commitment at $\beta = 1.127$, $p = .000$, less than .05. Adjusted R^2 moved from 0.904 to 0.960. This finding agrees with the study conducted by Chi, Lan and Dorjgotov (2012) on the moderating effect of transformational leadership on knowledge management and organizational effectiveness. The results showed that transformational leadership moderates knowledge management and organizational effectiveness. Moreover, another study that agrees with this was conducted by Ugheoke (2019) on organizational culture and employee performance: moderation effect of transformational leadership style. The findings revealed that there was a moderating effect of transformational leadership style.

Table 4. Coefficients of both direct and Moderation effect

		Model 1 β (p value)	Model 2 β (p value)	Model 3 β (p value)
(Constant)	-.817 (.000)	-1.078 (.000)	-.662 (.000)	
Direct Effect				
(Non-work adjustment)		1.277 (0.000)		
Zscore(Transformational Leadership)			0.951 (0.000)	
Interaction term				
X1				1.127 (0.000)
Model Summary				
R Square			.905	.962
Adjusted R Square			.904	.960

Implications

Implications to theory

The study findings of this study indicate that transformational leadership positively moderates the relationship between non-adjustment factors and employee commitment. The findings of this study agree with a study by Bushra et al. (2011) in Pakistan, who found that transformational leadership positively affects job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees. Another study that agrees with this was conducted by Yuan et al. (2022) on transformational leadership and trust in leadership impacts on employee commitment. These results are also in tandem with the international adjustment theory, which states that expatriates will settle and commit to their work in the host country if they adjust in three key areas: work/ non-work and interaction factors (Beil & Mayor, 2018).

In conclusion, the current study theoretically supports existing literature and theory because the data collected provides a model fit to explain the theorised linkage between non-work adjustment factors, transformational leadership and employee commitment. This insightful perspective will aid in promoting and informing future research on expatriates' commitment to their work in the host countries.

Implications to practice and policymakers

Findings from this study are useful to policymakers in designing, developing, and implementing effective policies and strategies that can increase expatriates' commitment to their work. This is because of the challenges of adjusting to the new environment the expatriates face. The leadership of the host institution is therefore mandated to ensure that

they have the proper policies to ease the adjustment process of these expatriates (Beil & Mayor, 2018)

Governments and businesses can use our findings to develop online programs to inform expatriates and potential foreign labor force on adjustment mechanisms, especially the non-work factors. This will inform the expatriates beforehand on the expectations and how to navigate to effectively commit to their workstations.

Conclusion

This study offers an invaluable and important insight into the commitment of expatriates in mission hospitals about their adjustment mechanisms. It aims to expand understanding of the non-work adjustment factors about the expatriates' commitment. The study concludes that employee commitment can be obtained among experts working in selected mission hospitals in Kenya through non-work adjustment elements. These factors include living conditions (housing, transport, healthcare); environmental considerations (weather/ climate); social support (language/ culture/ friendships) and peace and stability (political stability/ currency) of expatriates. As a result, those responsible for managing human resources and formulating healthcare policy in Kenya's hospital industry ought to take this into consideration when going about the process of hiring expats.

Limitations and Suggestions

The sample size used in this study was 112 expatriate employees from two mission hospitals in Kenya. This might have led to potential biases in their responses since it was a self-evaluation of their work. Therefore, a much bigger sample and wider sampling frame should be considered in future research. Furthermore, due to the limited geographical scope of this research, a replication of the same should be done in a broader scope to compare results and get more valuable information. Additionally, the current study only focused on expatriate employees. Future research should consider managers' views to see the effect of non-work adjustment factors on their employee commitment. Finally, while we collected data from respondents using a cross-sectional survey design, a longitudinal research design could be used to provide more evidence for the assumptions made in this study.

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