

## Impact Of Cross Cultural Factors on Expatriates' Effective Execution of International Assignments

### Author's details:

<sup>(1)</sup>Heirmsmac Princess – PhD (ongoing), MSc, BSc-Assistant Lecturer in Human Resource Management, School of Business; College of Business and Social Sciences, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria <sup>(2)</sup>Agwu M. Edwin – PhD, MSc, MBA, BSc (Hons), NCE-Associate Professor of Strategic Management and Marketing, School of Business, Covenant University, Ogun State, Nigeria AND Adjunct Lecturer and External dissertation supervisor for Global MBA students at Manchester Business School, United Kingdom: <sup>(3)</sup>Agumadu Mercy, PhD (ongoing), MSc, BSc-Department of Business Management, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State <sup>(4)</sup>Ohaegbu, V. Awele, PhD (ongoing), MSc, BSc-Department of Business Management, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State

### Abstract

*Expatriates' successful assignment has brought very complex and challenging issues currently faced by multinationals. Failed assignments are reported to be very high among expatriates. In light of this, this study provides new empirical evidence of recent expatriation management practices among oil and gas multinationals, and in particular, of the sources of successful performance factors among expatriates. The majority of the expatriates were dissatisfied with their living conditions and wanted an improvement in cross-cultural training. The major factors influencing expatriates' low performance at work were security, expatriates' maladjustment and culture shock experience. Furthermore, majority of the expatriates reported that they were provided with host country's culture and language training and therefore did not experience so much culture shock, but content analysis evidence showed that they did actually experience adjustment issues and culture shock and more focus was to be put in host country preparation. In conclusion, some recommendations for best practice were made.*

**Keywords:** International assignments, Expatriates, Performance, Adjustment, Culture Shock

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### 1.0 Background of the Study

The competitiveness of multinational corporations (MNCs) and the globalisation of the world have made it very important more than ever for firms operating on a global scale to send expatriates on foreign assignments. There are, at this time, over 850,000 subsidiaries of multinational corporations operating internationally (Harvey and Moeller, 2009), and the use of expatriates by multinationals is incessantly on the increase. The rationale for this research was necessitated by the need to critically review how multinational corporations can manage their expatriate employees on international assignments in order to ensure the success of their internationalization objectives. This research investigates cross-cultural preparation and its relationship with successful expatriation in the Oil industry, using Nigeria as geographical case studies. Research Objectives therefore of this study are as stated below:

- To determine how cross-cultural training and adjustment programmes can improve effectiveness of expatriate performance.
- To establish the influence of culture, adjustment patterns and security in expatriate success.
- To examine how genuinely contented expatriates are with the level of support from organisations and how this affect their commitment to their assignments.

### 2.0 Review of related literature

#### 2.1 Multinational corporations and the use of expatriates

The success of the internationalisation objectives of MNCs lies in its strategic ability to convey valuable knowledge to its foreign subsidiaries (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000). In order to achieve this, MNCs use expatriates in foreign operations. MNCs use expatriates as a means of transferring corporate culture and values to foreign subsidiaries (Peterson, 2003). Expatriate failure (in the form of premature return of expatriates from international assignment) and expatriate turnover has been a recurring problem for multinational corporations (Takeuchi, et al., 2005). Expatriate failure has been estimated to cost a multinational corporation between \$200,000 to \$1.2 million (Solomon, 1996; Swaak, 1995) and the cause of this can be traced to improper management of expatriates before and during the foreign assignment (Dickmann, Brewster and Sparrow, 2008). Previous researches have shown that there are factors which influence expatriate management. These factors include; language barriers and differences in the political, social and economic systems between the home and host countries (Miao et al., 2010, p.3). MNCs' ability to incorporate these factors into their expatriation management processes will have a direct bearing to the success of their internationalisation objectives. Consequently, MNCs must take expatriate management as a serious challenge by

implementing adequate procedures, and granting the necessary support to their expatriates at different phases of their expatriation in order to successfully compete in the international market. Steele and Quantrill (2002) in Dickmann, Brewster and Sparrow (2008) opine that proper expatriate management should consider three distinct stages – (a) Before (pre-departure training, orientate, define job functions and consider family), (b) During (communicate, compensate, maintain dedication and manage anticipations) and (c) After the assignment (successful reintegration into suitable career options after the assignment would minimize perceived reverse culture shock).

## **2.2 Selecting expatriates for overseas assignment**

Research on expatriate management suggests that selecting high-quality expatriates contributes significantly to the successful performance of subsidiaries (Jaw and Liu, 2004) and also contributes to the achievement of their internationalisation objectives (Cheng and Lin, 2008). The high failure rate of international assignments and expatriate failure has been tracked down to inappropriate selection practices, (Anderson, 2005). In most MNCs, selection of personnel for foreign assignments is done haphazardly; systematically sidelining the control of HR professionals whose main responsibility is to seek and recruit staff. Reviewing the work of Klaus (1995), Anderson (2005) brought to mind that in most cases when key positions in a subsidiary become vacant and requires urgent attention, selection of expatriates happens quickly. In most cases, it is the senior management that makes the decision regarding which employee is to be sent to the subsidiary (Anderson, 2005 quoting Shilling, 1993). The selection is usually based on technical and functional expertise leaving out other qualities such as; personal characteristics and perceived adjustment which can contribute to an expatriate's suitability for an international assignment (Cheng and Lin, 2008; Harvey and Novicevic, 2001). Other criteria for selecting expatriates for overseas assignments are as important as technical and job-related skills, but less consideration is usually given to them compared to that given to technical competence (Anderson, 2005). The combination of technical and functional skills, in combination with personal characteristics enables expatriates to adjust more successfully to a new assignment (Webb and Wright, 1996, p.39). In trying to harmonize this selection issue, Dickmann, Brewster and Sparrow (2008) identified the important criteria for selecting expatriates for foreign assignments, asserting that the selection process should seek expatriates with wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural values, ability to work and socialise with other people, enduring and farsighted personality, outstanding skills and educational qualifications. In addition the individual should possess good health, be inspired, resourceful and be able to work with a team-oriented spirit, (Dickmann, Brewster and Sparrow, 2008). When this is achieved, the next logical issue would be to prepare these selected employees for the task ahead.

## **2.3 Pre-Assignment Training and Orientation.**

Following the selection process comes pre-departure training. This training, if properly managed and executed, enhances expatriate's job performance and also enhances their cross-cultural adjustment skills (Black et al., 2000). It is, therefore, pertinent to consider human capital development in expatriation management as this will ensure the foreign assignee's career advancement, ease of adaptation and value to the organisation (Scullion and Collings, 2006). It is believed that an expatriate scheduled for an international assignment should be properly equipped with the necessary resources and training to enable him or her to function efficiently, and minimise the likelihood of a failed assignment in the form of early return; as pre-departure training has been found to correlate positively with expatriate's performance (Brewster and Pickard, 1994; Black et al., 2000). Pre-departure training is seldom practiced in many organisations; this is so because management may consider such training as being protracted, unproductive and expensive (Sims and Schraeder, 2004). It is important to draw attention to the fact that relocating to a foreign country, with its peculiar values and cultural practices, has never been an easy decision for anyone. While this is imperative in achieving the internationalisation objectives of the multinational, it is therefore vital to consider the training requirements of an expatriate before sending him or her on an international assignment. There should be a carefully structured orientation program to keep expatriates abreast of the intricacies regarding local working practices and procedures of the proposed host country. The expatriate's family is an integral and most influential unit of an expatriate's survival means and, as such, should be included in the pre-training programme (Suutari and Burch, 2001). Pre-departure training should include, but not be limited to, cross-cultural and foreign language training. These (cross-culture and foreign language training) represent the two important facets of an expatriate's adjustment in the host country (Hawley, 2009; Ashamalla, 1998).

**2.4 Cross-Cultural Training;** Okpara and Kabongo, (2010) citing (Waxin and Panaccio, 2005; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991) opine that cross-cultural training is aimed at teaching individuals from one culture ways to interrelate with members of another culture in order to be better inclined to the requirements of adjusting to their new positions (p.24). An important aspect of intercultural adaptation, for Earley and Paterson (2004), will be adopting the behaviour that is co-terminus with the target culture. Cultural training according to Maertz and colleagues would include learning

to imbibe and display those behaviours that are in tandem with those of the host community. Such behaviours that would be acceptable in the home culture and will not attract social sanction, banishment or cause conflict (Maertz, Hassan and Magnusson 2009).

**2.5 Foreign language training;** is another aspect of pre-departure training that should not be neglected. It is normal for an expatriate to feel alienated in a peculiar environment especially if the expatriate's language is different from the host country's native language. Foreign language training would assist expatriates in reducing the feeling of uneasiness in a foreign country. Studies by Sims and Schraeder (2004) opine that expatriate's ability and enthusiasm to communicate in the host country's local or native language is an important factor that would help an expatriate overcome culture shock and make successful cross-cultural adjustments. Research has found that a person's enthusiasm to learn a foreign language and his/her eagerness to try communicating in that language has a greater sway on overcoming culture shock than actual fluency in the language (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985 cited in Sims and Schraeder, 2004, p. 82). In this case, Nigeria was colonised by Britain, and so language is not much of a problem as 80% of Nigerians speak fairly good English.

Another aspect of a pre-departure orientation programme designed for expatriates is host country **pre-departure visit**. Some MNCs has this in their expatriation management policy and send expatriates and their family on a familiarisation visit to the intended host country for them to have a feel for their proposed practical job preview and cultural expectations. The aim is to minimize the concerns associated with the foreign assignment. Some studies contend that expatriate's adjustment in his or her new environment follows a U-Curve shape. This U-Curve model represents the time path undergone by expatriates in adjusting to the host country's culture (Haslberger, 2005). This model of expatriate's adjustment has gained wide acceptance by most researchers on this subject matter (Haslberger, 2005; Liu, 2005). Some argue that the U-Curve theory represents the emotional stages of expatriates' adjustment process and have identified three distinct stages namely:

(a) The Honeymoon phase is considered as the period when the expatriate is still an 'outside' observer. He still stands almost aloof assimilating perceptions and creating impressions and social interactions with his new environment (Heyward, 2002 cited in Liu, 2005).

(b) The Culture Shock Phase – this is when the reality of the new environment crystallises on the expatriate. This phase is mostly associated with the feeling of confusion, negative attitude and depression (Haslberger, 2005). Here the expatriate may meet some difficulties in coping within the new environment and needs to learn new ways of doing things and develop a strategy for living in the new environment on a daily basis.

(c) The Adjustment Phase – this represents the phase when the expatriate becomes completely incorporated into the new environment (Liu, 2005). In this phase, the expatriate now understands the role requirements and how to manipulate him or herself within the constraints of the new environment (Martin, 1984 cited in Liu, 2005).

The basis of the above theory suggests that when an expatriate enters a new environment with its inherent culture, he or she experiences a condition of lively enjoyment or pleasant anticipation. Following this phase there is a challenging period of "culture shock". This is when reality of the new environment befalls the expatriates and he or she, over time, will then learn to cope with situations and circumstances within the new environment. This is known as the adjustment phase. Haslberger (2005) reviewed the U-Curve theory and opined that the expatriate adjustment is a function of 'time'. The expatriate will adapt to the new environment and be able to function well within a period of six months (Haslberger, 2005).

## **2.6 Security Issues**

Guardian (2013, 11) reported a British worker who was killed by the alleged Islamist Terrorist group in Nigeria, thereby raising more threats to safety and security issues of expatriates in Nigeria, which has been on-going especially in the oil industry, making it harder for companies to have to coerce workers to carry out assignments in the location and adapt to the harsh insecure environment. Another report from Businessdayonline (2013, p12) reported expatriates in Nigeria to be the highest paid in the world especially in the oil industry because of the perceived risk or danger of going to the location to carry out specific assignment. The report says that a typical expatriate oil and gas executive in Nigeria earns \$454,000 a year trumping packages of those in Libya and Iraq who earn \$354,900, and this research by Hays global recruitment (2013) showed that reasons being that the number of project that need international staff, local skills shortages, big cultural differences, and security matters. The life of moving to work in Nigeria was like "laying down your life for the company's assignment and in return had to be compensated. This shows the huge cost

that goes into the expatriates and why cross-cultural preparation is extremely important as there is a huge difference in national culture which would influence the organisational culture and some modes of operations in the location.

Terrorism is the most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today, and its primary bases and sources of support have generally been located in religious fanaticism and intolerance particularly in Islam dominated states of Nigeria. Terrorism which is a global phenomenon where no one is safe was defined by Sampson and Onuoha (2011) as “the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts”. Terrorism in Nigeria is an Islamic insurgence with a political undertone by a faceless group based in the Northern region of the country, which called itself Boko Haram, which takes into account the legitimate political, social and economic grievances of the Northern population. Nigeria has lost up to 4000 lives in the North since 2009 to the insurgency of this infamous Islamic sect, Boko Haram. Many theories have explained the terrorism challenge in Nigeria both in terms of personal motives of the terrorists, the underlying causes of terrorism, and the values of the communities that host the terrorism and sustain it. The theories commonly linked terrorism in Nigeria to religious, socio-political, economic and cultural parameters. Impliedly, while terrorism may originate in Islamic fanaticism, it is now driven as much by other factors such as inequalities within the country and lack among Nigerians, in terms of livelihood (economic) resources, education or access to education and good values.

The abduction of school girls and horrible videos of killings by terrorist groups in Nigeria, have also caused stress and insecurity regardless of how open minded expatriates are to other cultures, as no individual can be open to anything that may cause harm to them. However, organizations can offer more support in terms of providing security personnel, more frequent trips back to base and offering motivational and stress-free tips to follow, and also to use expatriates who have had prior international experience or those that find it easier than others to blend into a new environment and showing them more positives about carrying out the assignments than the negatives as some have successfully lived and managed in Nigeria and nothing has come their way. Following the review of the relevant literatures considered central to this domain, the researchers seek to analyse the under listed questions using an online survey method:

- How are expatriates selected for overseas assignments and prepared adequately for successful assignment?
- How do pre-departure visits, cultural training and language training relate to culture shock, expatriates' adjustment and security?
- What factors influence expatriate adjustment? Are there any relationships between these adjustments and expatriates' performance?
- Are the expatriates genuinely content with the level of support from organisations and how does this affect their commitment to their assignments?

### **3.0 Methodology**

The scope and nature of this research entailed the collection of data about the thoughts and views of expatriates in order to determine the factors influencing their cross-cultural adaptability to produce results. The Quantitative and Qualitative Methods (Mixed) provided the researcher with the option of asking well-structured questions administered through an online survey questionnaire to a simple random sample of expatriates within the survey organisations (Jobber, 2010). This reduced the time that would have to be spent examining historical data/information or observing the expatriates in the survey companies and it made sense given that the companies were reluctant to grant access to such information (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2006). This research seeks to obtain some sensitive information such as expatriates' perception regarding their training, assignment, cultural adjustment and security, therefore the issue of confidentiality and anonymity of respondents was considered. The use of questionnaire in this research supported the gathering of data using simple 'Yes and No' answers, strongly agree - strongly disagree. The use of questionnaires guarantees the anonymity of the respondents as the questionnaires are issued electronically to the respondents e-mail, (Jobber, 2010; Sekaran, 2003; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). Furthermore, the questionnaire method as used in this research ensured that any researcher's bias is minimised during the data gathering and analysis phases (Jobber, 2010). Additionally, the decision to adopt this method is greatly influenced by the researcher's desire to minimise the constraints of geographical distance between the researcher and the respondents as well as to minimise issues regarding the respondents' busy schedule, (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). The purpose of the research is communicated in a cover letter accompanying the questionnaires in order to fully explain the benefits of carrying out this research as well as the urgency of its response. The letter assures respondents of their confidentiality and anonymity as well as data protection principles which must be considered when processing

personal information. The researcher ensured that responses remain anonymous with no interference from the company by using survey monkey to distribute links to the questionnaires so it could be filled online and the answers returned back to the survey monkey's 'collect responses' box further guaranteeing confidentiality of their responses.

#### **4.0 Critical Analysis of the Research Findings**

The collated data from the survey questionnaires are presented using descriptive statistics such as charts and tables. Two organisations from the oil and gas industry were used as case study for this research. A total of fifty (150) questionnaires were distributed (through Survey Monkey) to the expatriate staff of company 'A' (Shell) and 'B' (Subsea 7), this little number was chosen because it's a specialist group. Of the One-fifty questionnaires issued, one twenty six responses were received (Company 'A' – 70 and Company 'B' – 56) were received from the expatriates of the two companies giving a total response rate of 84%, which could be seen as a good rate considering the poor internet connections available in Nigeria.

**Table 1: Response rate**

Company	Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
A	70	55.56	55.56
B	56	44.44	100
Total	126	100	

Therefore a response rate of 84% lead the researcher to accept the sample population as being representative of the population studied and it also agreed with the assertion of Fink (1995) that a good sample is usually the smaller part of the population under study which represents the total population being studied.

#### **4.1 Analysis of the Expatriate Questionnaire**

##### **4.1.1. Analysis of Part A**

This part of the survey was aimed at achieving the first research objective determining the basis for expatriate selection, training and placement.

##### **Gender**

One-Twenty-Six expatriates sampled in this survey consisted of 77 males at a percentage of 61.11% and 49 females at a percentage of 38.89%, thereby contradicting Adler(1984) assertion's in that women do not want to be international managers; (2) companies refuse to send women abroad; and (3) foreigners' prejudice against women renders them ineffective. It gives validation to Westwood & Leung 1994, who stated that "there is no gender discrimination in expatriation and women participation in expatriation is on the increase".

##### **Marital Status**

Of the One-thirty-six respondents 83 were single at 61.1%, 27 were married at 19.85%, 26 were divorced at 19.12% and none was widowed, showing that they may be a silent criteria or preference for single expatriates to avoid failed assignments from the inability of expatriate spouses to adjust to the environment (Handler, 1995; Harvey, 1985; Tung, 1981, Black and Gregersen 1991) and because of their perceived increased flexibility.

##### **Job Designation**

The survey showed that 75 persons were at Manager level, 10 persons at Senior Manager Levels, 5 persons were Directors and 22 were Team Leads and 24 ticked the box others.

**Table 2: Job designation**

Position	Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Director	5	3.97	3.97
Senior Manager	10	7.94	11.91
Manager	75	59.52	71.43
Team Leads	22	17.46	88.89
Others	14	11.11	100
Total	126		

**Work experience**

The survey showed that 126 respondents, 70 (55.56%) had 1-2 years work experience, 17 (13.49%) had 6months-1year experience , 26 (20.64%) were in each of the two categories less than 6 months and above 5 years, 7 (5.56%) had 2-3 years experience and finally only 4 respondents had 4-5 years experience at (5.04%) which had been served in countries such as Angola, Brazil, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Ghana, South-Africa, Netherlands, Norway and United States of America.

**Number of Assignments**

Survey results showed the greatest percentage of expatriates to be on their first assignment at 76(60.32%), followed by one previous assignment and more than five assignments at 20(15.87%), more than two at 26(20.64%), more than three assignment and one previous assignment having the same percentage at 8(6.35%) and four to five assignments at 6(4.76%).

**Family Accompaniment**

Out of all respondents 66 were accompanied by family of some sort, and 70 were unaccompanied.

**4.2 Part B**

This part of the survey sought to find out how genuinely contented expatriates are with the level of support from organisations and how this affects their commitment to their assignments and determine if the needs of expatriate employees and the organisation are simulated and met.

**Table 3; Pre-departure support by employer;**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Host Country Language Training	18.03% 22	22.95% 28	37.7% 46	6.56% 8	14.75% 18	122
Host Country Cultural Training	24.59% 30	24.59% 30	29.51% 36	13.11% 16	8.2% 10	122
Familiarization Visits	9.84% 12	9.02% 11	32.79% 40	18.85% 23	29.51% 36	122
Family Members Considerations	9.84% 12	5.74% 7	57.38% 70	13.93% 17	13.11% 16	122

One twenty-two respondents in the survey answered this question while four skipped it. The response showed that the majority of respondents were in agreement that they were provided with host country language training, and cultural training, except with familiarization visits and family considerations. A minority of respondents disagreed, validating (Sims and Schraeder, 2004).The expected implication of this was that it would help their adjustment and increase the chances of successful assignments (Maertz, Hassan and Magnusson, 2009).

**Post-departure support by employer**

Furthermore, (71%) 86 respondents confirmed housing arrangements, healthcare, company information, family support programmes, and banking and local facilities upon arrival at their place of overseas assignments whilst (16%) 20 respondents disagreed and (13%) 16 respondents were undecided of the one twenty-two respondents that answered . Lending credence to the assertion of Sims and Schraeder (2004) and Scullion and Collings (2006), it does seem that the provision of post-departure support listed above seems to have assisted the respondents in reducing the anxiety of adapting and settling-in within the host country. It was concluded, therefore, that pre-departure and post-departure support does influence the level of expatriates’ commitment and does contribute to ensuring a soft landing for effectiveness at work.

### ***Basis for selection***

Investigation on how expatriates were chosen for overseas assignments as it assisted in providing answers to the first research question. The respective percentages represent the respondents that agreed with various criteria factors, *Experience (54%), Skills (52%), level of education (50%) and Personal characteristics (48.15%)*. Other criteria for selecting expatriates such as *perceived adjustment(40.74%) and Management's decision (38.46%)* were affirmed but not prominent and *age(28%)* was most disagreed with.

These findings were consistent with the assertions that expatriates selection is usually based on technical and functional expertise (Cheng and Lin, 2008; Harvey and Novicevic, 2001).

### ***Expatriate adjustment***

One-Twenty respondents in the survey answered this question while six skipped it. 78 respondents strongly agreed and 24 agreed that they adjusted well to their location while eighteen were undecided. Regarding spouse and family having adjusted to the host country location, only 41 respondents strongly agreed and 4 agreed representing a very significant difference in comparison with the respondents themselves, a further 7 were undecided, 2 disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed. Although using the U-curve model (Haslberger 2005) and its argument based on timing and phasing, the respondents who agreed, being a majority, may be in their honey-moon stage since the majority of expatriates are in their first assignment at 60.32%(76) or adjustment stage at 20.64%(26), while the undecided respondents and the respondents who disagreed may be in the culture-shock phase at 15.87%, 6.35% and 4.76% of respondents between their second and fourth number of years of assignment.

### **4.3 Analysis of Part C**

This part of the survey had the objective of answering part B of the third research question; are there any relationships between these adjustments and expatriates' performance? It also examines further and provides answers to the second research question; How does cross-cultural preparation relate to culture shock, expatriates' adjustment and security? Finally, it addresses the objective of; establishing the influence of culture, adjustment patterns and security in expatriate success, in practical and meaningful terms.

### ***Culture shock experience and completion of assignment***

120 respondents answered these questions while six skipped it. In order to check if the culture shock and expatriates' adjustment have an influence on expatriates' success, 'I see myself completing my assignment', 'I experienced culture shock' and 'my family experienced culture shock' respectively were asked to compare figures. Results show that 78 respondents experienced did not culture shock, 12 respondents were undecided, and 32 respondents experienced culture shock. This could potentially consist of the single and divorced respondents who don't have to go through spouse or family adjustment issues. The few who are married are most likely to be the ones who experienced culture shock along with some others on their second assignment, it is a strong indication that the level of preparation and adjustment for expatriates is satisfactory but can be improved, as 100% of respondents that they will complete their assignment according to Okpara and Kabongo (2010).

### ***Motivation on assignments***

The majority of respondents indicated that their motivation could be attributed to *Experience gained* (strongly agree +agree= 86 respondents), *Remuneration* (strongly agree + agree = 12 respondents), *Training scheme* (strongly agree+ agree= 6 respondents), career support and promotion prospects (Strongly agree + agree= 18 respondents). Living conditions, however, fell significantly below the average with only 11 respondents selecting Strongly Agree or Agree. This is a strong indicator that improved living conditions could contribute to easier adjustment and successful completion of assignments.

### ***De-motivation***

A majority of respondents at 78% of 120 respondents remained undecided on several factors, which highlights some of the limitations associated with the survey method using questionnaire as opposed to face-to-face interviews. This is a consequence of the fact that interviews allow for a much greater selection of possible answers and help to reduce the number of undecided responses. Interviews also permit facial expressions and other gestures to be observed. Ten (10) respondents agreed that security was a major demotivating factor for them and nine (16) respondents indicated that living conditions were also a demotivation which is understandable given the frequent interruptions to power, internet

and water supplies. Transportation issues and safety concerns are common in Nigeria and it is understandable that employers need to focus on these amenities in an attempt to improve their standard of living rather than focussing on remuneration alone.

### ***Cross-cultural preparation***

The majority of respondents agreed that they had been adequately prepared by their employer for the move to the host country based on the factors established. They had received counselling, made visits to the host country, been provided with cultural training and a potential career path was laid which is understandable in this survey given that most respondents were on their first assignment. A total of 88 expatriates of the 122 respondents pre-visited their host country before the actual relocation. Looking back into, the analysis where out of 78 respondents who experienced no culture shock, 86 agreed that they were provided with host country language training, and host country cultural training, and even agreed to have received adequate cross-cultural preparation in terms of counselling, and cultural training so how come now that majority of expatriates are asking for more pre-departure preparation in these same areas?

### **4.4 Analyses of the expatriates' open-ended questions**

These questions were asked in order to give the respondents the opportunity to express their candid opinion on how they feel with regard to their current assignments and to anticipate their attitudes to future assignments. It also allowed the participants to mention any suggestions they may have regarding potential improvements to existing expatriate arrangements. It was also designed to answer some of the untouched areas of the research questions that may have been silent in other sections. This is especially true with regard to adjustment and performance. It was observed that six (6) respondents did not attempt to answer some questions in this section. However 120 participants responded to these questions giving interesting opinions. These questions were analysed using content analysis.

*Would you accept another overseas posting after your present?* - 83 respondents affirmed that they would accept another overseas assignment after their present. The reasons for accepting another international assignment, as highlighted by most respondents include: (a) to gain more experience and skills, (b) opportunity to explore other geographical locations and (c) opportunity to do new things and more exposure for family, (d) building their career path, and it was observed that majority of these respondents fell within the expatriates on their first assignment. Below are few of the responses;

- *"Yes 1 remuneration 2 experienced gained 3. Training acquired 4. Career prospects."*
- *"Yes please. It exposes more knowledge and improves skills."*
- *"YES, it adds to my experience gained and it progresses towards my perceived career experience."*
- *"Yes. International assignments offer a great opportunity to acquire diverse skills and experience which is necessary for building a strong career."*

However, 23 respondents were not willing to accept another overseas assignment. It was observed that these respondents fall within the age range of 41 – 50 years and 51 years and above. It can be deduced that this group of respondents may be thinking of retiring from active service and as such were not willing to take on another assignment.

*"What aspect of your employer's expatriation process do you think could be improved upon?"*- The responses provide more insight as to how the research objective determining how cross-cultural training and adjustment programmes can improve effectiveness of expatriate performance using current theories, models and frameworks and putting it into practicability such as Harzing and Christensen (2004) international cycle model.

Below are the summary of some thoughts of the expatriates;

- *"Counselling with the right facts and figures."*
- *"cross-cultural training using the kind of personality sets that is bound to be met and security"*
- *"(1) Security (2) Family support (3) Clear cut post assignment career paths (4) Cultural adjustment counselling (5) Intense language pre-training (6) Monthly invitations to families for a weekend etc."*
- *"Movement of personal effects."*
- *"Rotations."*
- *"Adjustment process and living conditions."*
- *"The host aspect: more trainers and Language translators should be provided for on-site workers."*
- *"Career path after the assignment."*



- *“Culture training, pre induction and pre visit to the host countries- as I didn’t have that.”*

These responses indicate that consideration should be given into focussing more on the post-assignment phase, living conditions, security issues, and more counselling.

*How has your ability to adjust to host country conditions, or your difficulties in adjusting to these conditions, affected your performance in this present assignment?*

The responses were broken down to the discovering of relationships between adjustments and expatriates’ performances. Below are some of the responses:

- *“Security is a big issue for me, and sometimes affected my performance.”*
- *“Security issues are a major concern for me especially when having to work on-site.”*
- *“When I arrived at my current location adjusting to the culture and new work ethics affected me a bit.”*
- *“It took a few months to adjust to the weather, language and culture; I therefore had a slow start at work.”*
- *“I have adjusted well to host a country condition which has a positive impact on my performance.”*
- *“I have not fully adjusted, I am still trying to fit into the culture of doing things here and it affects my relationships with the others from Nigeria and it tends to build resentment which makes work life uncomfortable.”*
- *“My ability to adjust was assisted by my team members.”*
- *“Not quite. I adapt easily. So it has not posed a burden so far. Thanks.”*
- *“Adjusting has not affected my performance as i quickly adjust to new environs.”*
- *“I have been able to understand different cultures and it has helped me to work well with different people.”*

The responses validate the arguments of (Black, 1990, Church, 1982, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985 and Shaffer et al., 2006) that international assignees have to be open and receptive to learning the norms of new cultures. That is to initiate contact with host nationals; to gather cultural information, and to handle the higher amounts of stress associated with the ambiguity of their new environments for successful assignments. Security should also be considered as it was a prominent concern for the expatriates and the case studies could consider supplying additional private security to the assignees, so as to make them feel more relaxed when undertaking their assignments. The discussions as presented in this section were critically analysed with a view to answer the research questions posed. Previous studies has it that pre-departure training and orientation in form of host country’s language training, host country’s culture training, social support and pre-departure visits would assist an expatriate in overcoming culture shock thereby adjusting well within the host country (Sims and Schraeder, 2004; Maertz, Hassan and Magnusson, 2009). Security and living conditions were de-motivational factors for the few respondents who answered the question which is understandable given the frequent interruptions to power, internet and water supplies. Transportation issues and safety concerns are common in Nigeria and employers need to focus on these amenities in an attempt to improve their standard of living.

These could be as a result of the following:

- Inadequate training indicating that even though some level of host country language and culture training was done, it was not sufficient as compared to the practicability giving credence to Okpara and Kabongo, (2010) that most training give today are not simulated enough to the kind of conditions available in the host country.
- It could also be that not enough attention is paid to cross-cultural training and focus may be on familiarisation visits, health care etc which are also very important but (Hawley, 2009; Ashamalla, 1998) believe that cross-culture and foreign language training represent the two important facets of an expatriate’s adjustment in the host country so it should not be overlooked.

The importance of pre-departure training and orientation in the areas of host country language training, cultural training and pre-departure visits in reducing culture shock and adjusting well to the host country has been highlighted in the literature review. Findings of this study were consistent with the assertion that organisations seldom offer these pre-departure supports (Sims and Schraeder, 2004) and could adversely affect the expatriates’ adjustment silently.

## 5.0 Conclusions

Previous researchers have cited cultural shock, frustration caused by problems associated with expatriate preparation and adjustment (Liu, 2005), as the reasons for the increase in expatriates’ unsuccessful assignment completion rate, blaming it on mismanagement of expatriation and repatriation processes in the areas of selection, pre-departure orientation, post-departure support and adjustments (Dickmann, Brewster and Sparrow, 2008; Anderson, 2005; Suutari and Burch, 2001; Sims and Schraeder, 2004). The organisations were able to achieve this through strategic

international human resource management, and employee relations policies. Like in previous research, findings showed that expatriates selected based on experience and skills were found to be more likely to quit. Therefore this proved a link between expatriates' selection criteria and successful performance (Scullion and Collings, 2006). Thereby supporting the assertion that skills and experience gained during expatriation enhances their ability to do well as increases their motivation to adapt and adjust (Vidal et al. (2007). Again, this study could not establish a statistical interdependence of culture shock and expatriates' adjustment on pre-departure visits, host country language and cultural training. Even though most of the sampled respondents confirmed that they were not provided with host country culture and language training, survey results suggest that most of them did not experience culture shock, and majority of them adjusted well within their environment. However, statistical findings showed that expatriates' adjustment indeed has a link with duration spent on a particular location (Haslberger, 2005). Therefore, the assertions that pre-departure visits, cross-cultural and language training on their own merit has little impact on expatriates' adjustment and culture shock experience were supported (Okpara and Kabongo, 2010). Findings showed a positive interdependence of expatriates' successful performance on expatriates' adjustment and culture shock experience. The respondents highlighted a number of areas where they would like their employer to consider such as security, internet, and health care. However, realistically, it may be that the organisations take this into consideration when designing the package, but they do not necessarily communicate that well enough. Therefore proper dialoguing between expatriates and their employers would ensure that this delusion is resolved.

### **6.0 Recommendations**

The findings of this study have the following essential suggestions for best practice. Organisations should ensure expatriates are kept in constant communication with the home office in order to minimize re-entry culture shock. This could take the form of granting annual leave to expatriates and ensuring regular visits to their home country. Organisations should perceive repatriation as the beginning of another career progression for their internationally mobile employees bearing in mind that it is the company that suffers the most when a returnee leaves. Harris (1989) argues that corporations would benefit from using their former expatriates as trainers for the new expatriates. Indeed, usage of the newly acquired competencies of expatriates is often neglected, and cross-cultural training constitutes an area where those competencies could easily be put to use. The method of training should be tailored to the cultural distance between each expatriate's country of origin and the host country, and also to the nature of his assignment, to his position, and to the duration of his contract. For instance, if the position is mainly technical, the levels of interaction and general adjustment will have less impact on the success of the expatriation. The training could therefore be less elaborate. On the other hand, a position in marketing, management, or public relations necessarily demands that the expatriate have more contacts with the host-country's inhabitants. The expatriate's level of interaction adjustment will be an important determinant in the success of the assignment. Finally, according to Elumelu (2004) business enterprises can contribute towards the enhancement of security and safety in the country through long-term strategy of creating and providing jobs especially for the unemployed youths and cooperating with regulatory authorities and security agencies in the fight against crime. Business organizations must be socially responsible. When a firm is socially responsible and does not exploit the community where it is operating, it may not experience some of the elements in the insecurity environment. The change that the society expects of businesses and what management believes is its role in society must be given priority. Businesses should not pursue profit only but should also consider social needs which include ethical and discretionary responsibilities (Dionco-Adetayo and Adetayo, 2003). Problems such as pollution, product safety, job discrimination should be taken seriously. Multi-national companies and large businesses can also assist the government in sponsoring the provision of traffic lights on major streets in our cities and the electrification of towns and villages especially where they are operating. In addition, business owners, managers and employees should be security conscious and should deliver security through their everyday actions and decisions.

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