

Print ISSN: 2233-4165 / Online ISSN: 2233-5382
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13106/ijidb.2016.vol7.no4.33>.

Korean Expatriates Adjustments and Job Satisfaction in Malaysia: Analysis of Corporate Cultural Asymmetry

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Received: October 24, 2016. Revised: December 08, 2016. Accepted: December 15, 2016.

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study is to discover how Korean expatriates that are currently employed in Korean subsidiaries operational in Malaysia possibly suffer from career dissatisfaction due to differences between Korean Corporate Culture (KCC) and Malaysian Corporate Culture (MCC). The integration of KCC into MCC is discussed.

Research design, data, and methodology – The analysis herein is via a qualitative research. Forty-six interviewees voluntarily participated in in-depth interviews. Document analysis and qualitative interviews were utilized to develop participant profiles and to generate the framework. Interview data were transcribed and subsequently analysed to facilitate the development of themes and ultimately led to emerging patterns. The framework discusses the following Confucian pillars pronounced in KCC: Control Systems, Power Structures, Organisational Structures, Authority and Harmony and Stories and Myths. Those pillars are analysed and the results of the interviews are discussed in detail.

Results – Korean expatriates on assignment in Malaysia endure struggles in all five selected Confucian pillars as they are not symmetrical with Korean Corporate Culture common at head companies in Korea.

Conclusion - As a consequence, there is substantial disharmony which needs to be rectified if Korean companies are to continue their 'miraculous' economic movement into the country.

Keywords: Expatriates, Job Satisfaction, Culture, Korea, Malaysia.

JEL Classifications: M14, M16, M12.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Managing resources globally is one of the most significant trends of globalization today. Yet, the basics of whom we think we are along with our attitudinal and behavioural manifestations with implementations are often resistant to such a convergence, which is an odd and contradictory basis that has challenged harmonisation.

There are many reasons why expatriates fail in their

international assignments. Projects suffer or experience setbacks such that some expatriates are repatriated well before their assigned period while others maintain their positions yet are not effective in their assignments. Obviously, both are very damaging to the large investments made during the expatriation process. Dissatisfaction of their international assignments results in both tangible and intangible business loss, premature returns, marginal performance, stress which often amplifies emotional problems, and just as importantly, family-related concerns. Some researchers, for example, such as Adler (1986) and Punnett (1997) reported that a significant portion of expatriate candidates are increasingly rejecting overseas assignments. It's obvious that this puts a great strain on business ambitions and also is a direct crimp on target countries to develop their industries. Over the past two decades, a rapid increase in comparative cross-cultural management research in international human resources management could be seen, including research done by

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Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1993) on culture, and Adler (1986; 1991; 1997; 2002), and Tung (1982) on international human resources management. These researchers emphasized cross-cultural differences as a key to enhance efficiency in international operations. Mendenhall et al. (1995) reported that expatriate failures are closely linked with cross-cultural factors. Hodgetts and Luthans (1994) also emphasized the importance of understanding cross-cultural differences, arguing that parochialism that attempts to replicate home country ways in foreign settings clearly does not work. Such ways, they contended, are not usually transferable to other countries.

This paper examines the unique cases between South Korea and Malaysia. Both being Asian countries, one could dangerously assume that the two corporate cultures would blend naturally and harmoniously. Whilst being close geographically and culturally, both in the general sense and more specifically regarding corporate culture, these two are vastly different. One (S. Korea) is 'developed' while the other continues to 'develop'. Thus, this paper examines the success and failures of corporate culturalisation between the two countries, specifically in regard to expatriation.

1.2. Research Rational

The crucial challenge for the expatriate community is not so much on accommodating changes in efficiency and technology for enhancement of technical competence, but to focus more on human or non-work factors, such as personal, family and cross-cultural issues (Black & Gregerson, 1991; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Tung, 1982). As Bell and Harrison (1996) have shown, international human resource management researchers are concentrated on organizational issues such as expatriate selection and training. They further suggest that 'holistic' approaches need to be examined which must extend to managers' families, organisations and communities. As South Korea's economy has been through major transformations from a military dictatorship and textile based economy to a cutting-edge, technologically sophisticated power house within 60 short years, globalisation is a natural movement. The country had attained a more or less self-sufficient economy, with a surplus balance of trade. Even since the beginning of January 2016, markets around the world have plunged drastically and some economists are calling for all to sell 'everything' ahead of the pending crash. Further to this, Lee (2015) contends that the economic growth rate of Korea is at slowest pace in more than two years and is slowing with the recent slide in the Korean Won versus several other currencies. Thus, Malaysia has been of particular interest to Korean firms as it is relatively easy to access, is a growing, stable and business friendly environment and links many other markets that Korean firms have already penetrated.

Lee (2015) states that, over the years Malaysia and

Korea have advanced cooperation in commerce and culture through ASEAN and the United Nations. Malaysia is Korea's fourth-largest trade partner and third-largest investment partner from ASEAN. The two-way trade, which is worth over \$20 billion, is expected to expand and prosper, bolstered by the ASEAN-Korea free trade agreement that entered into force in September 2009 and the ASEAN Economic Community scheduled to be launched in December this year, according to the Korea Herald (Lee, 2015). Y-Sing (2015) has rated Malaysia the world's fifth-most promising emerging market, the only ASEAN country included in the top 10 list. The difficulty, however, lies in Korean corporate culture (KCC) adjusting into Malaysian corporate culture - a focus of this study. Consequently, the researcher has examined, to a great extent, the underlying reasons for Koreans to have such difficulties. Interestingly, little research has been conducted regarding this topic up until now. This research intends to clarify important expatriation challenges for South Korean firms and personnel operating in Malaysia as well as those wishing to expand abroad.

1.3. Research Aims and Objectives

Adjustment of Korean expatriates continues to challenge companies despite the success that Korean firms have had in Malaysia. In this regard, the research aims are as follows: To examine how Korean expatriates adjust and have adjusted into the Malaysian corporate culture; To acknowledge career fulfilment as a result of adjustments; To provide in-depth discussions on specifically what perplexes and challenges corporate operations, processing and also work culture and atmosphere; and To offer advice on what may facilitate the main avenues of conflict and disharmony. Though the paper will hypothesize potential solutions for discord within the corporate climate, the review will be limited and thus will not be extensive or exhaustive.

To address adjustment, the researcher asks Research Questions: How have the expatriates adjusted to experiences while working in Malaysia at Korean firms? To address career satisfaction, the researcher asks: Are these adjustments related to career satisfaction? To address challenges, the researcher asks: What are the specific challenges that face Korean expatriates and consequent working culture (operations) working in Malaysia? To address cures for disharmony and conflict, the researcher asks: What advice could be offered to current firms, expatriates and researchers to alleviate conflict and disharmony?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Key Definitions

Briscoe and Schuler (2004) discuss expatriation (and

repatriation) which should be perceived as a process of movement from the main company or central headquarters to subsidiaries abroad. The main aim of this relocation is to carry out the assigned tasks in the foreign subsidiary of a particular company. Ayoun and Causin (2011) contends that there are three major reasons for expatriation. Those are technical competence, development of management and gaining control of a foreign subsidiary organization. Regarding Korean companies recruiting and sending for management positions in Malaysia, the literature is sparse. According to Black and Gregersen, (1999) between 10% and 20% of all U.S. managers sent abroad returned early because of job dissatisfaction or difficulties in adjusting to a foreign country. Further to this, company selection of an appropriate member to relocate abroad adds to aggravating factors as many expatriates have their own expectations of company treatment when abroad. Some of the challenges that expats struggle with in foreign lands include: Head company expectations, Personal expectations, Family life, Biological/Health Challenges, Target country, Intellectual property, Native employees and degree of company adherence, loyalty, discipline and understanding, Subsidiary infrastructure and Subsidiary expectations. It's common knowledge that emotions affect every day motivation, management, stress and relationships, amongst plethora other daily life factors. Also, the struggles for the expatriates are not the only concern for the relocating member.

2.2. Review of Theories

Cultural Shock: Cultural shock is an important concept in understanding cross-cultural adjustment. According to Oberg (1960), culture shock is 'precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse while recognizing seven symptoms: strain, loss and deprivation, rejection, confusion, surprise, anxiety or disgust, and feelings of impotence.' Cultural Shock in an expatriate context, as described by Adler (1997), is 'the reaction of expatriates to entering a new, unpredictable, and therefore uncertain environment'. Regarding short-term visitor adjustment in terms of impact on expatriate sales performance and turnover, Guy and Patton (1996) reported that all expatriates clearly experience some form of 'culture shock'. This compromises ability to function efficiently. Culture shock can be viewed as 'an adjustment reaction syndrome which affects sojourners intellectually, emotionally, behaviorally and physiologically in cross-cultural settings (Befus, 1988). **Cultural Distance:** Cultural distance defines the extent to which the culture of the home country differs from that of the host country (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1984). Studies show that dissimilar cultures are more difficult to adjust than those of familiar ones (Parker and McEvoy 1993; Redmond 2000).

Cross Cultural Adjustment: Waxin (2004) has shown that culture of origin has a direct influence on cross-cultural

adjustment, influencing job satisfaction, and the propensity to return to their homeland early. Stone (1991) suggested that discovery of the capacity for cultural adjustment should be the most important criteria in expatriate selection in order to assure efficiency of all participants. Palthe (2004) conducted a field study on cross-cultural adjustment of business executives in Japan, the Netherlands and South Korea. Palthe has mentioned that it is the host company socialisation which is the strongest predictor of cross-cultural adjustment. Diversity elements at the work place affects job satisfaction in Malaysia (Omkar & Josiah, 2015).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction here is defined as 'a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences' (Locke, 1976). Bruning and McCaughey (2005) describe it as 'the difference between an employee's perception of what he/she expects to receive and what he/she actually receives at work'. Career fulfilment needs to be discussed from the perspective of Korean workers, for if they expatriate to a target country, the goal posts for all of these factors drastically changes. As such, sources of friction need to be examined through each component of career fulfilment. This paper will discuss the following aspects of career fulfilment: type of work, security, company, advancement, co-workers, pay, supervision, hours, benefits and working conditions.

Type of work: In this context, this is the kind of work that employs the best use of a worker's abilities allowing for a feeling of accomplishment. In South Korea, with a very high level of post-secondary education amongst office workers ~65% for 25-34 year olds (OECD, 2013), many employers strive to fit entrance level positions best with those entering the workforce. Many companies offer training and guidance to the vast majority that enters firms. **Security:** One of the pillars of KCC, company security in job position, and thus holding a position for life, is critical for most Koreans. It's standard to find businessmen and women holding their positions for 30+ years. It's rare to find workers who have switched jobs more than 3 times throughout their careers. However, this is now under threat due to various reforms. **Company:** This is of high regard to all employees. Competition is absolutely fierce. From high school, students are constantly pressured to do their absolute best, from entering a "SKY" university (Seoul National University, Korea University or Yonsei University) to one of the largest chaebols (e.g., Samsung, LG, Lotte, Hyundai, ...). Placing in something lesser than anything after high school stigmatizes not only the student/worker but also extends to the family. Class warfare, though not tangible, is palpable as is shown through Korea having the highest suicide rate out of the OECD countries (2013).

Advancement: Having a very tight labour market, this component is most often sacrificed in lieu of obedience to the company. Though it is important, many Koreans will

most likely accept company promotion for years if it emboldens their security, especially within a top chaebol firm. Co-workers: As discussed previously, KCC demands a tight working relationship with all co-workers. Discord is not tolerated and usually ends in one employee leaving the company much sooner than he or she would prefer. Consequently, many workers compromise often in the name of the company and sacrifice personal opinion, individuality and face to maintain the culture. Pay: This component is extremely important on the individual level but as discussed, individuals have little place in KCC. As such, industry standards, which are quite uniform and of a limited range, are sufficient to attract nearly anyone who the company feels is qualified. Intense competition for positions thus creates low-paying, high demand and stressful careers. Supervision: Regarding this component, KCC suggests that employees need competent and willing supervisors and this relationship is of critical importance to one's career fulfilment. Full circle back to relationships, if a manager is seen as lacking in wisdom, the paternal system quickly breaks down and KCC suffers serious setbacks. However, Koreans have a specific term for ineptitude at the highest level.

Hours: As eluded to earlier, time is the greatest sacrifice employees make. Although current labour code limits the official work week to 44 hours, Koreans are known to be in the office much longer. As such, productivity is one of the lowest of the OECD (2013) and job morale remains low as witnessed through a consistent high suicide rate. The OECD also states that Koreans work the most of any rich country in the gambit. Benefits: Koreans still needs many labour standard upgrades but has also come a long way since democratization in the late 1980s. Pension plans, health/dental/eyecare plans and even a very minor allocation for unemployment benefits has entered the job market which has been formed through social programs and policy by a labour government from 20 years ago, ruling over 10 years and more recently moving to a conservative government which is less social program friendly. Career fulfilment however in this regard has general improved and remains a high priority for all levels of work. It is also to be noted that 'benefits' extends uniquely in Korea to personal affairs, be it through financial support when there is a death, new baby and weddings within each individual's life. Working Conditions: Of all elements of career fulfilment, this is the most difficult to balance for Korean workers. Employment is highly stressful as often workers strive to enter work before their superiors and leave after the superiors leave. These abnormally long stretches throughout the day are a cultural remnant which chides all workers but is an accepted reality with KCC. As such, many employees are overwhelmed but again, compromise their own personal feelings to try to maintain a positive demeanour on these demands (Froese, 2010).

Korean Corporate Culture and Influence of Confucianism:

Korea's unique corporate culture has been critical to its 'miraculous' economic success over the last three decades as it has yielded high growth rates (Trading Economics, 2016). Hence, understanding Korean corporate culture (KCC) allows one to understand why Korean expatriates suffer from different cultures as KCC is a rigorous, intense experience completely unique from of corporate cultures, even within Asia. Sadri and Lees(2001) suggest corporate culture consists of management thought, style, group consciousness and code of conduct formed over long-term operations. Confucianism has had a greater influence in South Korea than in any other nation (Yang, 2005).

According to Weaver (2014), there are 5 principle tenets to South Korean business success. They are: 'Injeong' - Humanity, 'Hyo' - Filial Piety, Collectivism, and 'Social Relations' and paternalism. Injeong is an extremely high moral standard of business ethics whereas Hyo fosters a very heavy top-down structure, featured in Confucianism. Men are more traditional business oriented over women for example while age, and hence maturity dictate sophistication and intelligence within the business framework. Collectivism is a result of the strong top-down management style which effectively coalesces the entire business structure into uniformity. Individual disagreements are rejected and seen as selfish whereas agreement with upper levels is the default. Social relations are forged by commonalities between all workers. Having a shared elementary school or military post brings major benefits to this structure. Finally, paternalism suggests that your guiding 'father' will always support you, even in times of mistake and learning. This is very evident in KCC and is literal in meaning. Part of the difficulty in implementing a corporate cultural system abroad and into a subsidiary is assuring that the people in the head company, native country fully approve of that corporate culture.

Family-Centred Business Model: Family is the basic unit of social life in Korea. Loyalty to family is associated with interest of the whole family, a kind of traditional familism developed through Confucianism. Enterprises form the core of modern industrial society; managers are "the central person" of the "family". Critically, employees appear to value the "family" at their company perhaps more than their financial compensation, formed from 3 principles. First, family structure and familial relationships influence achievement of a company's "family members". Second, ties of familism in enterprises decide economic relations. Third, the cultural tradition of a family institution directly affects individual economic behaviour and career choices (Johnson et al., 2011). Structure of Centralism: Power structures often only include one or two persons from top management positions and the board of directors. Though the board of directors and business managers undertake the protection of an enterprise's assets, inheritance belongs to seniors or immediate families. Power is not conferred to subordinates -

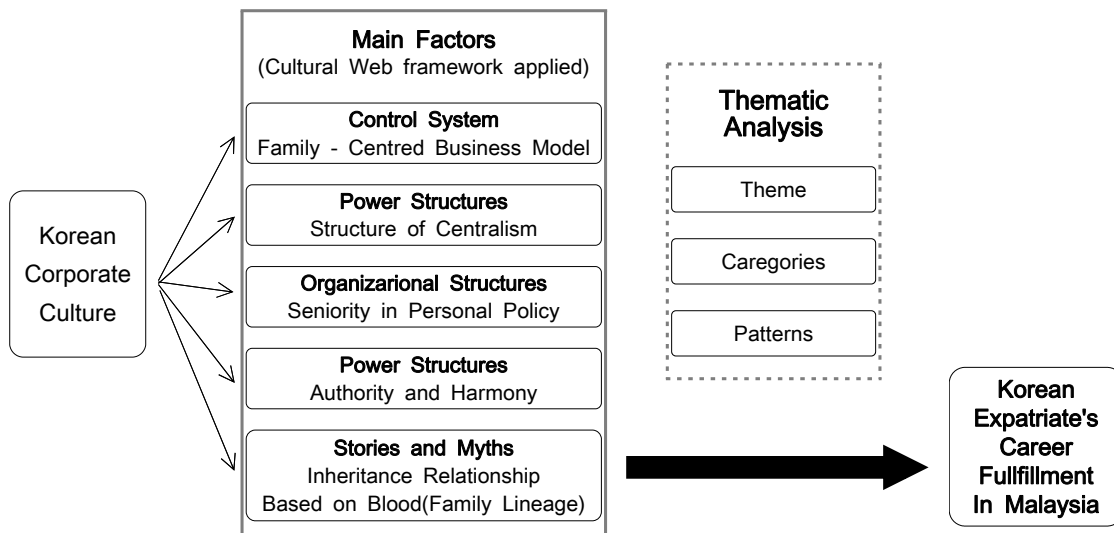
one of the principles of centralization. Centralization benefits South Korean enterprises even though it also costs them due to this unique culture and tradition (Johnson et al., 2011).

Seniority in Personnel Policy: Nonetheless, seniority still prevails (Lee, 2012) and remains unchallenged, for if a 'junior' asserts himself too far and out of cultural norms, this will be seen as an affront to the senior often with drastic reprimand. Society is based on age. Young employees who have better skills/knowledge thus suffer due to their age. This is an acknowledged weakness of KCC. This element is in great flux as now, aspects of an employee's position and achievements are considered leading perhaps to a more rational and balanced policy. **Authority and Harmony:** Employees of South Korean enterprises believe their company's leaders have absolute authority thus, top management in South Korean enterprises have the largest, almost dictatorial influence on decision making. However, companies also advocate harmony to emphasize unity. Harmony stabilizes an organization. A superior's leadership is based on morality and personality which in turn allows subordinates to always accept authority. **Inheritance Relationship Based on Blood(family lineage):** Companies are normally inherited by higher-level personnel but blood and family relations too help determine who will inherit a company. Samsung follows this kind of inheritance practice, like other major enterprises in South Korea. This is a sort of pseudo-royalty in Korean society and thus when KCC is implemented abroad in subsidiaries, there is a drastic lack of so-called 'blood' willing to continue subsidiaries when expatriates repatriate. Complicating this entire process is the thinking that companies must be retained in the control of the family.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework addresses the heart of Korean business practice – Confucianism. Consequently, evidence, anecdotes and the lessons offered from interviews and a literature review will develop Korea's competitive advantage with hopes of creating harmony on the world stage and allowing two diverse economies to meld and implement mutual advantage from each other. In this paper, a cultural web model will be applied to define the traits of Korean Corporate Culture. Then the paper will further try to explain what kinds of Culture shock, Cultural distance, Cross Cultural adjustment that had occurred during each participants' expatriation assignment.

Johnson and Scholes (1988) stated that one's corporate culture is composed of 6 major factors which are: control systems, organizational structures, power structures, symbols, rituals, and stories and Myths. **The Paradigm:** what the organization is about; what it does; its mission; its values. **Control Systems:** the processes in place to monitor what is going on. Role cultures would have vast rulebooks. A reliance on individualism in a power culture would increase. **Organizational Structures:** Reporting lines, hierarchies, and the way that work flows through the business. **Power Structures:** Who makes the decisions, how widely spread is that power, and what is it based on? **Symbols:** Organizational logos and designs are a part of it, but it also extends to symbols of power such as parking spaces and executive washrooms. **Rituals and Routines:** Management meetings, board reports and so on may become more habitual than necessary. **Stories and Myths:** build up about people and events, and convey a message about what is valued within the organization.



Source: Main Factors (Johnson et al., 2011), Thematic Analysis (Sayre, 2001), CulturalWeb(Johnson& Scholes, 1988)

<Figure 1> Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

Employing the interpretivist methodology, the researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended individual interviews amongst selected Korean expatriates at Korean firms currently operational in Malaysia. This qualitative approach employed the experiences of said nationals to be analysed according to the themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews and thus general deductions and inductions could be imposed and determined.

The target population is defined as: Korean expatriates currently employed for current operational Korean businesses located in Malaysia. All interviews were conducted in the Korean language as this is the first and most proficient language for all subjects. The sampling technique employed is a systematic random sampling. By employing verbatim discussions from all demographics, this selection of the population could reflect all levels of career satisfaction as a door to further research. Sampling was designed to select equal numbers of females and males, to select for an equal distribution over all ages (e.g., 20-29, 30-39,...) and to have educational backgrounds consistent with overseas expatriates in other countries. As S. Korea has a large number of university graduates at the bachelorette level, it was assumed (and verified) that many expats would hold this degree. Nonetheless, advanced degrees (Master's and Ph.Ds) were also targeted to try to fit a relative demographic consistent with Korean society.

First, research was done to determine potential Korean companies currently operational in Malaysia via the easiest way, the internet, through more traditional methods like the Chamber of Commerce. Next, the researcher went through exhaustive measures to contact the said expatriates and establish times to interview. Usually, interviews were held on company grounds but occasionally, as requested by some subjects, interviews were held away from the company in venues such as coffee shops. Interviews were a minimum of 25 minutes for a few subjects that were 'very busy' while one interview lasted 1 hour 40 minutes due to after work settings away from the office. In all, the researcher aimed for a 35-40 minute interview and the majority adhered to this time parameter thus allowing collection of data based on the questions outlined in the interview. Subjects were asked when the most convenient time was for an interview with most preferring after work hours (generally after 6:30pm) while some preferred on the weekend, away from the office, and thus allowed for a more relaxed atmosphere. However, it should be noted, some subjects insisted on interviews away from the locations of their work. Some insisted it would provide for a more relaxed, "honest" location in which details could be "divulged". The quality of the interviews is considered high as answers seemed genuine, at times quite passionate and mostly, in detail. Two

subject seemed reserved about their positions and in their answers but this could be attributed to a stressful work day, conditions and perhaps concerns about senior workers curiosity towards the subjects during their interview times (e.g., one senior colleague (intentionally?) interrupted one interview and the consequent demeanour of the subject noticeably changed after).

As all data were collected, information was compiled as per question into a master document. Answers were read and common variations were abstracted from the answers. Trends in attitudes (as gathered from recordings of the interviews), commonalities within answers were selected, generalisations primarily of the grievances were noted and key words, if any, were compiled to induce each particular interview question into a logical conclusion for each question and category. Materials were reviewed at least 3 times during the study and at different times for the researcher (for example one data set done in the morning, the same data set once in the afternoon (on a different day) and the same data set once later at night (during yet a different date). Data were analysed 3 fold to try to draw independent but consistent inferences from the data and it is thought that while inducing the information, the time of day may influence consistent readings. As trends started to materialise, these were compiled in a separate document in which the researcher constantly edited, adjusted and honed in order to reflect the general pattern of each question. Some questions were easy to abstract data. Thus, in the reflection within this study, the researcher noted the top 3 trends to such questions. Finally, it should be stated that in the longer-than-average interviews, there was significant curiosity regarding the scope of this paper (by the interviewees). Thus, after all questions were asked, the interviewees had additional time to inquire about the research. It was hoped that through this extra time, the curiosity would lead to additional insight into each character, case and position. Occasionally, subjects would digress and talk more about their job. In fact, many subjects did complain more about the difficulties they faced at their offices. Though this isn't the crux of the paper, it is mentioned here as this is a qualitative analysis with the intention of including as much palpable information as is possible.

The researcher read and re-read interview transcripts, and listened and re-listened to interviews while searching for similarities and differences in themes. Keywords were assigned to each question that was asked. Once keywords were detected, the researcher organized into categories of related attitudes, patterns, grievances, and ideas that emerged from interviewee's perspectives. First, Korean Corporate Culture (KCC) and its relationship to each factor with sample participants (surnames only cited) is introduced within the concepts and the participants who shared the valuable experiences to this research. Secondly, what will

follow is a section that presents data as analysed through applying a Thematic Analysis Methodology in regards to the framework introduced and its relation to KCC in reference to Malaysian implementation via Korean expatriates. Through this analysis, the researcher will offer anecdotes, quotes and other evidence to help explain the results. The final section will present the analysis of 'Patterns' which is a result of behaviour in reference to 'Categories'. Through this progress, it will be shown whether the given set of themes and the categorized behaviour results in positive patterns (resolution) or negative patterns (conflict). In all, in-depth interviews, document analysis, each individual's character and how each persona relates to the factors will be presented.

Thematic Analysis: In this process, data analysis began after the interview data was analysed from recordings to text. Data is reduced with re-listening and re-reading both the audio and transcribed data. Themes began to emerge with the initial listening and reading of each interview. Five themes were developed and are as follows: 1) Control System & Family – Centered Business of KCC (CFCB), 2) Power Structures & Structure of Centralism (PSSC), 3) Organizational Structures & Seniority in Personnel Policy (OSSP), 4) Power Structures & Authority and Harmony (PSAH), AND 5) Stories and Myths & Inheritance Relationship Based on Blood (SMIR). All interviewees seemed passionate about their careers and thus their short versus long term plans and goals at times seemed conflicted due to their Malaysian expatriate experience. Two distinct patterns emerged. 1) Resolution, therefore, gives job satisfaction in relation to corporate culture, 2) continued conflict, therefore, and gives job dissatisfaction in relation to corporate culture.

4. Results

Respondent description: The age of those in the group was from 25 years to 59 years. In all, 36 males and 10 females were interviewed for this study. All Korean expats used Korean as their first language and English (45) or Chinese (1) as their second language. All subjects had a minimum TOEIC score of 745 which ranged up to 975. The minimum time worked in Malaysia is 3 months for aged 25 to more than 10 years for a director, aged 46. Of the 46 total interviews, 20 were married, 2 were divorced and 24 were single. Of the 17 married subjects, 10 had their families stationed here in Malaysia with them while 7 had families back in Korea. The 2 divorced subjects were all male, while the majority of the 24 singles were male (16). Education background ranged from bachelorette degree holders (39 subjects), Master's degree holders (6), Ph.D. subjects (0) and interestingly, high school diploma (1). Incomes ranged from below MYR 10,000 (5), from MYR 10,000 to 13,000 (18), from MYR 13,000 to 16,000 (20), and above MYR 16,000 (3).

4.1. Korean Corporate Culture – Analysis of Major-factors

4.1.1. Control systems & family-centred business model

Interestingly, the control systems in place are different for KCC and MCC. KCC emphasises 'roles' and consequently it tries to adapt a 'role culture' whereas MCC focuses more on 'power' (especially to the individual) and thus 'power roles'. An example is cited in Kim 46: "Unbelievable what happened to us just last week but not the first time (it has happened several times before). We just had one local at an intermediate level submit resignation and the very next day he finished. One other time, we had 3 locals (juniors) in one week just say they're quitting. This is completely unheard of in our culture, isn't it?" Apparently this practice (sudden resignation by locals) seems common. At least 16 interviewees said they have witnessed such a move without notice or warning. Alarmingly, Korean expatriates employees suggested this placed heavier workloads on them when it wasn't necessary as Korean employers typically give at least 3 weeks' notice (and often longer!).

4.1.2. Power Structures & Structure of Centralism

In KCC, though with the emerging change of paradigm, structure is still very top-down heavy though the arrangement has been widened. MCC seems to be broader based with much more labour freedom.

Lee 25 asserts: "For Locals, not being punctual seems to carry no penalty unlike that for us. They are free to question upper management everything all the time. Expectations to co-work together are bit high when there are these differences?" This question is a very acute concern for many of the interviewees. Many have felt structures don't align and became very impassioned when discussing this concept. Here, the majority (~85%) again state that locals "take frequent break" and even "relax at their desks sometimes" and assert top-down functions don't work well with local workers. Senior managers reply that finding Korean expatriates to come on assignment in Malaysia is a significant challenge and they are "stuck" with locals much of the time. As such, centralism appears to be highly compromised for a business strategy amongst Korean expats in Malaysia.

4.1.3. Organisational Structures & Seniority in Personnel Policy

Organisationally, Korean expats in Malaysia apparently are in a plethora and variety of situations. Some companies with large amounts of local (and/or foreign) workers have a very complicated structure, as in the case of Shin 13: "With 70% Malaysians working here, I too am often confused what my company wants, what the locals are assigned and what specifically I need to do. There are days where I am very unproductive because they understand that I am to do the

work whereas I believe they are assigned the task. It's very frustrating." This suggests disharmony in the least and consequent chaos (as has been cited by several interviewees). Organisational structure has been compromised on several levels as is noted with. Lim 15: "I'm appalled at the conditions for both Koreans and locals alike as we seem to be always confused. Who does what?" It is common knowledge that a lack of organisation results in a lack of productivity

4.1.4. Power Structures & Authority and Harmony

In KCC, though with the emerging change of paradigm, structure is still very top-down heavy though the arrangement has been widened. MCC seems to be broader based with much more labour freedom.

4.1.5. Stories and Myths & Inheritance Relationship Based on Blood (Family Lineage)

What shape the paradigm of KCC are the stories and myths. As an example, KCC has a burden placed upon it directly because of Hallyu – the Korean social culture of dance and music and "K-pop" through hits like "Kangnam Style", and that somehow Korean KCC is just as fun and ambitious as its social counterpart. Korea is also known as an Asian Tiger – economically a miracle from the ravages of the Korean war to an impressive economy today. This is reflected in Lee 40: "My boss is always talking about Korea and the 'miracle on the Han (river). I find it embarrassing because the senior Malaysians just roll their eyes while junior locals seem to naively eat it up! One colleague is always saying 'Kangnam Style' when he approaches us!" These stories and myths, rather than bridging cultures, seem to divide them ironically as Korean expats hate the attention that follows. Several interviewees have said they are "tired of all the questions about social culture rather than business practices".

4.1.6. Symbols & Rituals

'Symbols' are hard to define within the paradigm but here cultural differences stressing differences in symbols between the sexes and a focus on religion is stressed. Accordingly, local women seem to be stronger, more independent and can take on other responsibilities not typically seen in Korea. Oh 16 states: "There are many female taxis and bus drivers here. In my company, local women seem to do many typical male role jobs. KCC still treat women equally but roles are more defined for the sexes" In regards to religion, KCC doesn't have any allocation for this whereas MCC demands and readily accepts it. This is an obvious source of disdain for Korean expats as Park 27 says:

"Why is it they can take many breaks and I have to continue to work hard? That's unfair." This obviously affects career satisfaction as Korean expats perceive so-called

'injustices' in these types of regards. In MCC, meetings are very, very common compared to KCC where they are not. Koreans typically want to be as 'efficient as possible' and face-to-face talk time is seen mostly as counter-productive unless it's necessary. This is evident with much 'desk-time' for Koreans versus face-to-face, the MCC way. This leads to chagrin as Ji 33 states: "If I could get supplies readily and not have to wait or always meet to discuss shipments, I would be much more efficient. Instead; I often have to chase down deliveries myself or even drive to the distributor. How can someone be successful like this?" Ji isn't the only one to suffer as many individuals (especially engineers) state that meetings are a waste of time. They would rather sleep because at least then they could be more alert.

4.2. Discussion of Themes: Patterns

Patterns of local employees at Korean firms in Malaysia result in feelings of both resolution (and hence acceptance) and conflict (and hence rejection) of Korean expatriates toward his or her expatriation assignment (Craig et al, 2000).

4.2.1. Control System & Family - Centered Business of KCC

(1) Resolution in the feedback to the model – this factor denotes the expat (expatriate) who has experienced strong integration in his/her time as an expat in Malaysia working for the Korean firm. For example, Song 12, has been in Malaysia for over 3 years and has adapted and is generally happy working in Malaysia. Song suggests that there is a 'family-like' feeling with his friends at work. This compliments his experience with KCC back in Korea. Likewise, Yoon 10, albeit in the honeymoon phase, feels very happy with the opportunity she has been given to work in Malaysia and fits in well "with my new family".

(2) Conflict towards the 'family-centred business model' - this result discusses the expats who have experienced negative "family" in his/her time as an expat in Malaysia working for the Korean firm. For example, Heo 08, has been in Malaysia for 1 year and is in the adaptation phase. She expresses criticism of both working in Malaysia and KCC. She suggests that she is not close to colleagues but longs for bonds she had with Koreans she met along the way in China and the Philippines. "It's just not the same here in Malaysia as I can't form 'sister-like' relationships, you know? Malaysians just 'do things differently'" she stresses. As well, Kim 18, in the adjustment phase, feels she has adapted well to the locals but the local trainees don't keep pace with KCC and are "cold" when the work day finishes, simply "going home and cutting off interaction on a personal level".

4.2.2. Power Structures & Structure of Centralism of KCC

(1) Resolution and feedback to the model. Centralism is critical to native Korean business practice. Some evidence of acceptance comes from Lim 15, in Malaysia for 6 months and is adjusting to the culture. He is mixed about working in Malaysia. He is an assistant manager with a large number of Malaysians he manages. He states, "they listen well although they don't always perform as I ask. This said, they understand I'm their boss and they report to me. I haven't had any problems with anyone". Also, Park 22, in the mastery phase, compared the locals to other Koreans he has worked with in the past. He states, "Malaysians inquire why we do things with such hierarchy. They are genuinely curious although sometimes confused. Once I was angry when they kept questioning my requests but they have adapted well to our ways.

(2) Conflict towards the structure of centralism – the expats here (many strongly) state there are several deficiencies with Malaysians understanding orders and protocol from the top in some way. For example, Kim 18 is very concerned about management in Malaysia. She stresses that "They question my ways so often it is very distressing. Worst of all, they don't do as I ask! It makes me crazy". Likewise, Son 34, who is weakened by hot weather and thus is concerned about his health seems to have a lot of stress on the job. He states, "I worked harder than any local at my level. They are picky about their food and they seldom follow company directions. I end up compensating for them. It's very unfair."

In all, a clear majority of about 78% of the interviewees cited a breakdown of the 'family-centred business model' which caused stress for their time in Malaysia. This extended to personal lives after professional time as many also cited being lonely and not being able to create friendships because the business culture was so 'selfish' – much like western business practices.

4.2.3. Organizational Structures & Seniority in Personnel Policy of KCC

(1) Resolution and feedback to the model – as age is a traditional Confucian concept, KCC promotes many based on their age. This is accepted in some cases. Oh 04, in Malaysia for 3 months is generally happy working in Malaysia and notes that local staffs like her are relatively young. Older managers are typical and she sees "no conflict" with seniority. Also, Yoon 26, in the mastery phase, feels satisfied with his career as a Tae Kwon Do (TKD) instructor and has been in Malaysia for 9 years. He asserts that "Malaysians know the structure. Your teacher is highest. Ranking in ensures there is great respect for higher belt levels. Even my Malaysian staff have started bowing to me (he laughs) – this is not common at all in Malaysia!"

(2) Conflict towards the structure of seniority. Expats here in their professional life in Malaysia cite frustration. Koreans in this category feel affronted when 'constantly questioned' by the young locals. It's highly insulting as in the example of Min 32, who despite working in Singapore, feels her work and effort in Malaysia is 'undervalued'. She "constantly explains herself to 'juniors'" and says they (the young local workers) "are rude to question my knowledge. I know more than them! They must listen but they don't". Also, Choi 36, suggests that work in Malaysia is "ok because of 'kind people' but at the same time punctuality is an offense to the company and to the bosses. Malaysians also go home on their own. We don't do that in Korea – we stay until our bosses go home."

The majority here favoured acceptance of seniority but thinly at ~52%. Apparently, Malaysians seem to want to learn as Koreans do in the corporate setting. However, there is an almost equal number that want to assert themselves and 'help' the company in their view despite their age. Senior managers especially take this as an insult because such behaviour in Korea is taboo.

4.2.4. Power Structures & Authority and Harmony of KCC

(1) Resolution and feedback to the model. As a critical metric for KCC success, authority and harmony complement Confucianism and imply top-down business practices. Some expatriates report this as 'accepted' within their KCC. For example, Heo 01, though going through the 'culture-shock' phase believes he doesn't really belong in Malaysia as he is 'overqualified' (interviewee stressed). However he also says that Malaysian workers seem to "question processes maybe because they just don't know". He says that harmony is 'different' but 'harmony nonetheless' because 'they try hard'. Jeon 06, in the mastery phase, also feels bored because his staff, says they seem to want to work together but "They just mostly do as they're told and go home."

(2) Conflict towards the structure of authority and harmony. These contrasts with the above in those workers in this category feel there is little harmony because there is "no respect" 'for the top. Kim 14 struggles in Malaysia and doesn't have enough senior employees to work with in order to feel competent at his position. Consequently, he gets "little cooperation from juniors" and "works in chaos". He suggests the company needs more senior staff because the disharmony at his level is making him consider quitting. In his words, "Malaysians just don't get it – we need harmony and need to follow 'army-like structure' to be successful – but this company is collapsing because they can't understand that".

Most authority and harmonious requirements are often neglected as ~78% of the interviewees believe Malaysians follow 'western practices' rather than the ways that Koreans want with KCC. This is evident in the very common report

of locals and other foreigners shockingly leaving before their boss (a taboo in KCC). Others report that Malaysians often joke in their circles about KCC as “their (the locals’) military service” perhaps mocking the experiences of Koreans who have served and follow KCC. Western standards, which Malaysians are accused of following more than Korean ways, are perceived as being inferior to KCC.

4.2.5. Stories and Myths & Inheritance Relationship Based on Blood (Family Lineage) of KCC

(1) Resolution and feedback to the model. Many Korean companies wish to pass on KCC and companies to direct family descendants with Samsung the most modern, common example. How does this fit in to KCC with Korean expatriates living in Malaysia? Lee 02, believes that though relationships are conservative in Malaysia, which this is a natural fit for KCC and Malaysians will accept this. He has a positive view and anticipates this as the case with his company. The weakness here is that Lee and his company haven’t actually experienced this process. As well, Choi09, works in Malaysia without a post-secondary education (the exception amongst all interviewees) and understands his company in Korea is going through the same transition. In Malaysia, he expects the company to send a son to oversee his rapidly growing company. In short, there seems little rejection of this amongst Malaysians as well as they report.

(2) Conflict towards the structure of family lineage. One company where Heo 08 works has been thrown into disarray because of, in her words, “family interference” which she cites as “extra confusing” for the locals. She suggests she is quite distressed because of changes to upper management before and during her time (from 2 years ago). She states that “hierarchy and family lineage, while it may work in Korea, fails miserably in Malaysia”. She too cites working in ‘chaotic conditions’ and is looking to find another job elsewhere, most likely abroad in a different country. She also states “both MCC and KCC don’t work in unison and she cannot find ‘harmony’ within her”. Park 28 speculates that family lineage is not a good idea. He cites too many cultural sensitivities and he says his “much less overtime” would certainly change if a family member took over business in Malaysia. Simply, “Malaysians don’t work like Koreans – a family boss most likely wouldn’t understand that”.

This idea of family lineage, though important to KCC is a difficult category to explore due to its rarity. The general consensus is that Korean expatriates don’t support this part of Confucianism and where it is being implemented, feelings are quite negative about it. For the little evidence found about actual experiences, it is negative and thus this aspect of Confucianism is particularly controversial. Due to little

actual ‘evidence’ qualitatively, it is hard to draw an inference regarding family lineage and its effect upon Korean expats.

4.3. Discussion

The expectations of KCC placed upon MCC are more of a detriment than a benefit, generally and across the board in regards to the 5 framework concepts outlined in this paper. Korean Corporate Culture in short appears to be a bit ‘dictatorial’ as against Malaysian Corporate Culture.

A ‘family’ suggests mutual respect for all family members but the deficiency lies within a mutual respect for all employees, local and expatriate, male and female, junior and senior for example. The deficiency lies herein when Confucianism itself is at odds with the KCC model imposed upon MCC. The concept of seniority for example is lost on locals when Malaysians are seen as ‘junior’ somehow than that for Korean expatriates. This deficiency is a palpable detriment to the KCC model and obvious harm is noted when ‘chaos’ is a prevalent trend within at least some firms. Power structures remain as struggles when KCC values ‘role models’ to fit in whereas MCC values ‘power roles’ with a focus upon the individual in the workplace. This detriment too is obvious when locals suddenly resign, a complete shock to Korean expats. Locals value their own personal family and religious freedom to practice within the workplace yet this is seen as overly self centered by Korean expats, which confers chagrin upon the expat – an obvious detriment in the workplace.

Seniority, while working well for Koreans in Korea, undermines the Malaysian subsidiary. Largely related to power structures, seniority is not recognised as a MCC norm. Adjustment by locals is apparently minimal leading in turn to a perception by expats of disrespect which in turn may create disharmony. Authority and harmony are undermined as MCC emphasises the individual and deterrence to personal rights. Locals see themselves as simply ‘wanting to learn’ and are ‘naturally curious’ and thus ask a lot of questions which in turn seems to be perceived as challenging to many of the expats interviewed within the study. Unless an expat is particularly accommodating to the locals and tries to understand this crucial difference, discord predominates – a major detriment causing many to leave relatively early in their tenure. Finally, family lineage and its implementation into MCC is an under-studied and difficult concept to ascertain. However, with the little evidence discovered through this study, it is largely rejected as the above corporate cultural differences are lost on lineage as a whole. It is guessed that blood lines in subsidiaries; at least as far as Malaysia is concerned will not be a beneficial part of the paradigm to Korean companies operating in Malaysia.

The hypothesis of a Korean expatriate’s career satisfaction being negatively influenced by working in Malaysia, whilst trying to implement KCC and meld with MCC seems to be proven through this paper. Several

expatriates cite large difficulties trying to implement the concepts of Confucian thought from the mother land and thus become disenchanted about their futures. Many expats end up quitting the company or requesting to be repatriated. As discussed in the paper, 'conflict' arises as a pattern rather than 'resolution' and the reasoning is straight forward that it is due to KCC largely being incompatible with local workers that seem not to want to adjust to KCC at Korean firms.

5. Conclusions

MCC seems somewhat resistant to change and KCC thus becomes a conflict to the expatriates themselves. A further challenge lies within the expat who is trained and conditioned to not question authority, as is imposed in a Confucian way of life. Consequently, senior staff may be unaware of the differences at lower levels between KCC and MCC, thus changes occur very slowly if at all they occur. This said, senior managers those are aware still experience high turnover rates from locals who appear to 'not care' about their job status and can submit resignation quickly – a complete shock to Korean expats at all levels. This may extend from religious differences as well which results in great discord between multiple cultures working under one roof. As eluded to above, differences in social customs create conflict for Korean expats as well. Prayer time, very common in Malaysian companies, is a hard implementation for Korean companies and the expatriates feel injustice when watching locals take 5 times a day break on 'company time'. Further, food and weather challenges cannot be ignored as these too seem to aggravate at least some of the expats thus negatively influencing career satisfaction.

In relating the above challenges studies within this paper, career satisfaction seems to take a beating (sometimes a severe beating) and many Korean expats while adjusting themselves more to MCC find themselves at odds and wanting to change course in their careers, either by leaving the country or by leaving the company and country and drastically affecting their career paths. In all, career paths for many of the expats interviewed didn't seem to be satisfactory and thus, while some expats have been here for years, the major trend is that Korean expats stay 2 years or less, often citing career dissatisfaction. Conflict was a common pattern for several Koreans and this pattern was generally common at all levels of career, from junior positions through senior positions, from younger workers to more matured workers, more pronounced with females but still prevalent amongst males, and at all levels of education. While the pattern is conflict, it should be pointed out that a minority of Korean expatriates did find satisfaction in their careers as many seemed to simply accept the shortcomings

of KCC and consequent replacement due to MCC compensating in the workplace. This minority of expats cited other compensatory mechanisms to help shape their careers, such as lower education costs for their children, lower food and medical costs and a consequent, overall better standard of living due to cheaper burdens like that of education. Still, expatriates in large reject the KCC system and its implementation in Malaysian based Korean firms. Many expats cite that upper management has to take MCC more in to consideration if they are going to succeed and develop further in this society.

In order for Korean companies to better adjust, adapt and grow within a Malaysian setting, the following recommendations are offered:

Implementation of training on MCC, for example, discuss: what its 'expectations'/norms' are. For example, at the time of hiring locals, a series of questions could be asked which may define their work place expectations and how those expectations would fit in with the Korean company and their own expectations of local workers. In addition, perhaps Korean language & cultural lessons could be offered for locals. In turn, when enough locals complete their questions on their expectations of Korean firms in Malaysia, this info could be discussed and taught with Korean nationals at head companies in Korea before being expatriated. The language could be reciprocal – Koreans could start to learn Malaysian while in Korea as well. Also, further inclusion of other expatriates can be considered in MCC group, for example, expatriates from countries other than Korea. This could be based on cultural themes such as religion etc. Furthermore, how to compensate for the norms discovered (e.g., break time, food differences, etc.) could be considered as well. In lieu of this, Korean companies should compensate in productivity for expatriates to avoid the frictions caused by issues such as break time. As mentioned in 'a', both MCC and KCC need to create understanding between and within them. Language exchanges would help with this bridging.

Another recommendation includes short duration training for adaptation of Malaysian life for expatriates while the expat is still in Korean society. These would include lessons on the history of Malaysia and the regular norms of social society. Country economy and its relations to the head company could be lessons within the training. Exchanges between Malaysian workers to Korea by introducing Malaysians to the Korean workplace for head companies in Korea i.e. programs for trials with expatriates. "Exchanges" in which locals from each culture move to the other country for 'experiences' at that colleague's job. The hopes would be to build bridges. Allowing for more locals to climb the corporate ladder and take more leadership roles at Malaysian subsidiaries. This may be a substantial compromise for KCC but a cost/benefits analysis should be carried out to see if it's worth the changes.

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