

# Adaptive Personality, Communication Competence and Psychological Health

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**Abstract:** Expatriate adjustment has gained wide attention because of its relevance to expatriates' successful performance. This study examined the adaptation experience of Korean expatriates in India. Y.Y. Kim's Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation offers a multidimensional system to explain the link between adaptive personality, communication and psychological health. Our analysis uses a self-reported questionnaire collected from 78 Korean expatriates. Results show positive correlation between theoretical constructs, suggesting expatriates' personality, ability to communicate and ability to participate in the host country's social processes facilitate successful cross-cultural adjustment overseas.

**Keywords:** adaptive personality, host communication competence, expatriates, expatriate adjustment.

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## 1. Introduction

The business environment is increasingly global. Because of the strategic importance of global markets and management of subsidiaries, many companies dispatch their employees across borders, and this trend will continue (Brookefield Global Relocation Services 2016).

Expatriate managers, as sojourners, leave their home country for a business purpose, with the intent of eventual return (Aycan & Kanungo 1997). While the benefits of a successful international assignment include organizational success and individual career progress (Dickmann & Doherty 2008), ineffective performance can be detrimental to multinational corporations' global business (Harvey & Moeller 2009). The inability to adjust to a foreign cultural environment, rather than lack of technical competence, has been noted as the predominant contributing factor to ineffective performance and premature return (Stroh, Black, Mendenhall & Gregersen 2005); according to that study, 20-40% of American expatriates return early, incurring costs to the company including reduced productivity, damaged relationships, and lost opportunities. Managers are also negatively affected with loss of self-esteem, self-confidence and reputation (Dowling, Festing & Engle 2013).

For this reason, expatriate adjustment has gained wide attention in recent decades. Numerous studies have identified factors that promote expatriate adjustment, including individual job, organizational, and situational issues (Malek, Budhwar & Reiche 2015; Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley 1999); personality traits (Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black & Ferzandi 2006); spousal or family adjustment (Palthe 2008; Trompetter, Bussin & Nienaber 2016); cultural novelty (Dunbar 1994; Jenkins & Mockaitis 2010); cultural intelligence (Guðmundsdóttir 2015); previous experience (Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun & Lepak 2005); and training (Moon, Choi & Jung 2012; Okpara 2016). The literature has identified models highlighting three distinct dimensions of adjustment: work adjustment, interaction adjustment and general life adjustment (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou 1991).

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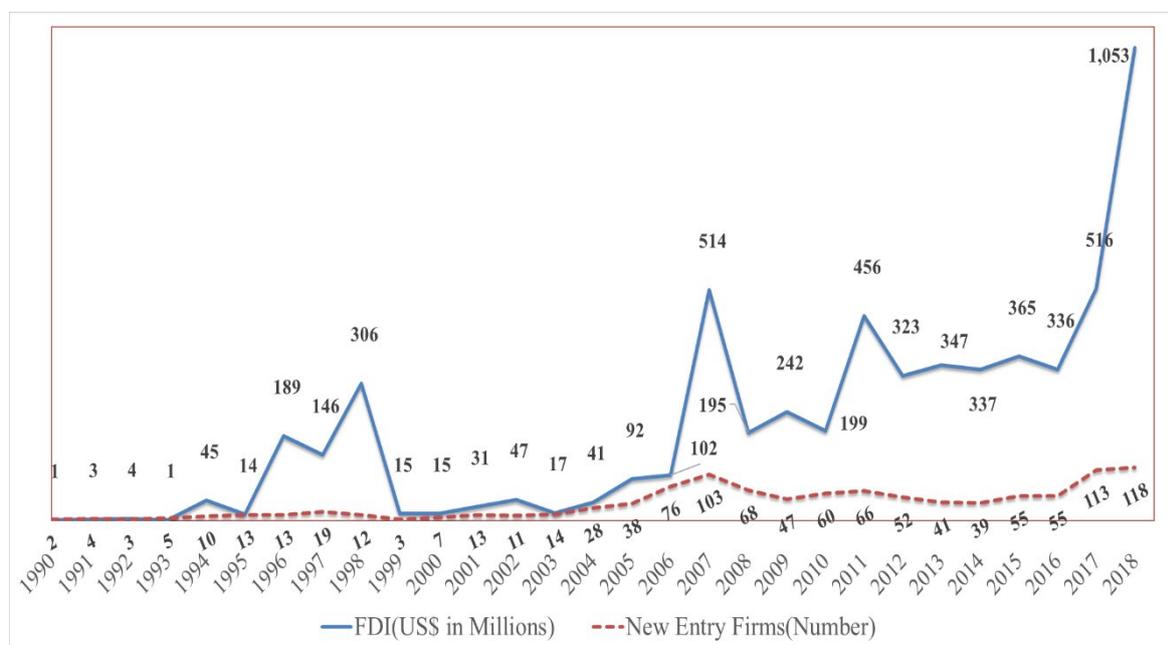
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The primary purpose of the present study is to build on these findings, to seek additional clarity and depth in the current understanding of the role of personality and communication in the adaptation process of Korean expatriates in India. Additionally, while there are many studies on North American and European expatriates in Asia, there are not many studies on Korean expatriates in India (Kim & Tung 2013). Thus, this study also seeks to fill this gap by investigating the cross-cultural adaptation of Korean expatriates in India. We employ Kim's (1988, 2001, 2005, 2012, 2015) Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation. Incorporating macro- and micro-level factors into a single, comprehensive communication framework, the theory offers a multidimensional account of the nature of the cross-cultural adaptation process.

### 1.1 Economic and cultural context in India

South Korea's foreign direct investment in India began in the 1990s when India opened its market to foreign investment, stimulated by its economic growth and the government's open-door policy (Figure 1). Major Korean companies -- Daewoo, Samsung, Hyundai Motors and LG Electronics -- entered the Indian market. Since 2003, the Indian economy has shown 7-8% average annual growth due to the influx of large amounts of capital resulting from the expansion of global liquidity (Cho & Choi 2013).



**Figure 1:** Korea's foreign direct investment in India; adapted from (Export-Import Bank of Korea, 2019).

In 2007, investment reached a peak of US \$514 million when 260 additional Korean firms invested in India, doubling the number of previous investments by Korean companies. While stagnating during the global recession, investment grew again because of the Korea-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership of 2010 (Lee et al. 2014). A total of 482 new Korean firms entered the Indian market 2008-2016, which led a total Korean investment in India of US \$4.4 billion. As of July 2016, the Korea Trade-investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) estimates the presence of 294 Korean firms in India employing 1,144 Korean expatriates (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Number of expatriates and local employees employed in Korean firms in India

Industry	Firms	Expatriates	Local employees
Mining and quarrying	1	6	-
Manufacturing	131	724	63,542
Electricity, gas, water supply and other utilities	1	3	2
Construction	27	156	2,574
Trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting	90	166	2,679
Financial, real estate and professional services	40	83	6,835
Public administration, defense and other services	4	6	36
Total	294	1,144	75,668

Adapted from (KOTRA 2016).

India consists of 29 states and seven special territories with languages and cultures. Each local government has its own labor regulations and corporate laws. Korean expatriates largely depend on their local employees to manage business because of a limited knowledge of local culture and government regulations (Seo & Kim 2014). Although Hinduism is the predominant religion contributing to core cultural values, there are hundreds of religions in India. Korean expatriates often have difficulty understanding the behavior of local employees based on differing cultural values and religious beliefs. Korean expatriates are often flustered when their local employees prioritize their family or religious events by taking days or even weeks off (Lee, Cheong, Choi & Oh 2006). While India and Korea are both identified as collectivist Asian societies, Indians are not so highly collectivist as some other cultures. Indian collectivism emphasizes loyalty to family, but Indians are individualistic in their pursuit of needs and interests (Bhatnagar & Tjosvold 2012). Korean business culture, strongly tied to Confucian values, tends to emphasize loyalty to the company, centralized authority, vertical hierarchies, clearly defined gender roles, seniority, position, harmony among employees, diligence and a strong commitment to education (Cho & Yoon 2001; Lee 1998; Morden & Bowles 1998). Cultural differences pose a challenge for Korean expatriates working in India.

## 1.2 Theoretical grounding

Guiding this investigation is Kim's (1988, 2001, 2005, 2012, 2015) Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation. Taking a system perspective, the theory strives to integrate previously separate and, indeed, divergent approaches into a comprehensive conceptual framework to explain cross-cultural adaptation.

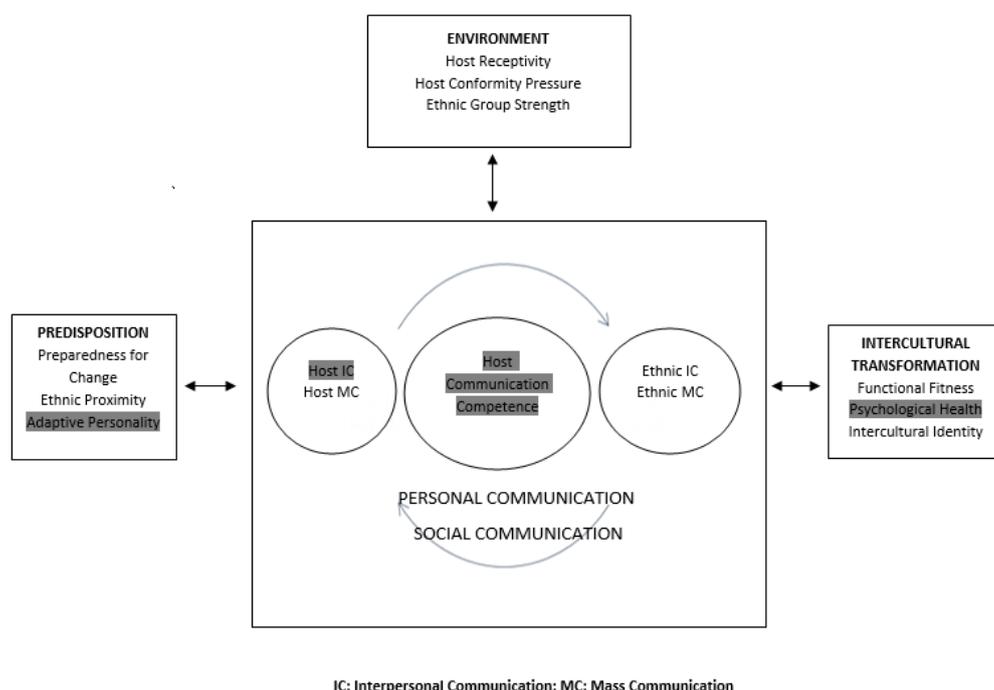
Using the term "strangers" to cover immigrants, refugees, and sojourners, Kim proposes that, in order to maintain equilibrium, strangers respond as "open systems" to drastic environmental challenges and psychological stress – better known as culture shock. Kim (2001: 90) notes that the term "adaptation" is used broadly to embrace more specific terms including "assimilation", "acculturation", "integration" and "adjustment".

Kim's theory addresses two basic questions. (1) What is the essential nature of the adaptation process that individual settlers undergo over time? (2) Why are some settlers more successful than others in attaining a level of fitness in the host environment? To address the first question using a process model, the theory explains cross-cultural adaptation as a long-term process of systematic change in the individual's psyche: a gradual psychic

transformation involving a “stress-adaptation-growth interplay” fostering increased chances of success in meeting the demands of the host environment.

### 1.3 Structural model

In addition to its process model, Kim’s theory offers a multidimensional structural model (Figure 2) to address the questions (1) *why do some settlers adapt faster than others?* and *given the same length of time, why do some settlers attain a higher level of adaptation?* The structural model identifies key factors that facilitate or impede adaptation to a culturally different environment. Emphasizing the centrality of communication to cross-cultural adaptation, the theory posits that an individual adapts to her host environment through communication activities ranging from intrapersonal to intrapersonal (social), identified as the dimensions of *host communication competence* (Dimension 1) and *host social communication* (Dimension 2).



**Figure 2:** Kim's (2001: 87) structural model: factors influencing cross-cultural adaptation.

Kim (2001) describes host communication competence as the overall capacity of a stranger to encode and decode information in accordance with the host communication systems. It consists of an individual's cognitive, affective, and operational/behavioral capabilities, deemed the engine that makes it possible for that individual to move forward along an adaptive path. Host communication competence is inseparably linked to host social communication (Dimension 2): the degree of one's engagement in the host social communication system through interpersonal, mass-communication activities in the host environment.

*Ethnic social communication* (Dimension 3) involves interpersonal / mass communication with co-ethnics in the host society. There are three key conditions to the *host environment* (Dimension 4): host receptivity, host conformity pressure, and ethnic group strength. The theory also recognizes an individual's *predispositions* (Dimension 5): internal conditions prior to resettlement in the host society, consisting of preparedness for the new environment, ethnic proximity or distance, and adaptive personality.

These five dimensions influence one another. Together, they facilitate or impede the overall process of *intercultural transformation* (Dimension 6), which has three aspects: increased functional fitness, psychological health and intercultural identity. The level of intercultural transformation, in turn, helps explain and predict the progress of all other dimensions.

#### 1.4 Research questions and central thesis

To examine the adaptation experience of Korean expatriates, we propose two broad research questions:

**RQ1:** How is personality likely to facilitate Korean expatriates' adaptation in India?

**RQ2:** Does communication serve as a central vehicle to facilitate Korean expatriates' adaptation in India?

The present study focuses on four of the theoretical constructs identified in Kim's structural model – (1) adaptive personality, (2) host communication competence, (3) host interpersonal communication, and (4) psychological health – comprising the primary variables for understanding the role of personality and communication in the process of adaptation. The interrelationships between and among these constructs are articulated in four theorems (Kim 2001: 91-92):

**Theorem 3:** The greater the host communication competence, the greater the intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).

**Theorem 5:** The greater the host interpersonal and mass communication, the greater the intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).

**Theorem 19:** The greater the adaptive personality, the greater the host communication competence.

**Theorem 20:** The greater the adaptive personality, the greater the host interpersonal and mass communication.

#### 1.5 Hypotheses

As we aim to investigate predicted relationships among the theorem constructs based on these four theorems, we propose the following four research hypotheses:

**H1:** The greater the adaptive personality of a Korean expatriate, the greater that person's host communication competence.

**H2:** The greater the adaptive personality of a Korean expatriate, the greater that person's host interpersonal communication.

**H3:** The greater the host communication competence of a Korean expatriate, the greater that person's psychological health.

**H4:** The greater a Korean expatriate's engagement in host interpersonal communication activities, the greater that person's psychological health.

## 2. Method

To test the hypotheses, a study was conducted during the first three months of 2017 among Korean expatriate workers in India. The study employed a standardized questionnaire consisting of background information (e.g., gender, age, length of stay, education, etc.) and scalar questions assessing the research variables, followed by open-ended questions about

experience dealing with Indian coworkers and business partners (e.g., differences and difficulties when communicating with Indians).

## 2.1 Participants

A combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. This was taken as the practical alternative to probability-based sampling, given the inaccessibility of and difficulties obtaining cooperation from eligible respondents in Korean firms in India. Information on Korean employees was obtained from the business directory of KOTRA (KOTRA 2016), which showed 294 Korean companies operating in India, employing approximately 1,144 Korean expatriates. Companies and employees were selected based on accessibility and availability. To expedite response from the intended respondents, we contacted managers of the companies with whom we had personal connections, asking for their cooperation with the study. Respondents were asked to name potential additional participants. Most respondents worked in metropolitan areas such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Gurgaon, Noida, Shahpur Jat and Bengaluru. In total, 78 expatriate managers representing 42 companies participated.

Ages ranged from 23 to 62 ( $M = 38.39$ ,  $SD = 10.44$ ), with 60 (76.9%) male and 18 (23.1%) female respondents, of whom 46 (59%) were married. Most had earned at least one college degree: 2 (2.5%) had high-school diplomas only, 63 (80.8%) had undergraduate degrees but not graduate degrees, and 13 (16.7%) had graduate degrees. Length of residence in India ranged from one month to twenty years, two months ( $M = 3.3$  years,  $SD = 3.35$ ). Regarding prior intercultural experience, 28 (35.9%) had lived in at least one foreign country. Eighteen (23.4%) received training prior to their international assignment; 59 (76.6%) had not. Training consisted of intercultural training (22.2% of respondents), language training (11.1%), both language and intercultural training (50%), or other forms of training (16.7%).

## 2.2 Data collection

An original version of the questionnaire was pilot-tested between September and November 2016. The wording was refined based on comments and suggestions from pilot-study participants. The questionnaire was first written in English then translated into Korean by a Korean-American interpreter. Following Brislin's (1980) method, the Korean questionnaire was then back-translated by the interpreter. Both English and Korean versions were given to participants, who were asked to choose one version. All participants chose the Korean version. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed via the Web or administered in person by Korean-company managers who had personal connections with the authors. Of the questionnaires distributed, 88 (58.7%) were returned. Ten were excluded due to the number of unanswered questions, leaving 78.

## 2.3 Measurement

The four theoretical constructs (adaptive personality, host communication competence, host/ethnic interpersonal communication, and psychological health) were operationalized mostly into Likert scales. The reliability of each scale was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Items in a scale that lowered its reliability were dropped from the scale to enhance reliability.

Adaptive personality was measured in terms of two attributes: positivity and openness. Positivity refers to "affirmative and optimistic mental outlook" (Kim 2001: 177). A new general self-efficacy scale consisting of eight items was used to assess participants' self-evaluation of effectiveness: achieving goals, accomplishing difficult tasks, obtaining outcomes, succeeding at most endeavors, overcoming challenges, performing different tasks, outperforming others, and performing well in a tough situation. Scale items were adapted from Chen, Gully and Eden (2001). Answers used a five-point Likert scale with 1 = totally

disagree and 5 = totally agree. The reliability of this scale was found to be satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of .87.

An open-mindedness scale consisting of eight items assessed participants' self-evaluation of flexibility and openness: maintaining one's own opinion, no point listening to other people, rejecting different opinions, trying new ways, doing things in conventional ways, listening to others' views with an open mind, being willing to read or listen to opposing views, believing there are two sides to every question. Scale items were mostly adapted from Tammam (1993). Answers used a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 = never true and 5 = always true. To improve reliability, the first and fifth items were deleted. The resulting six-item scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .81.

Host communication competence was measured in three areas: cognitive, affective, and operational. On the cognitive dimension, respondents were asked to assess their English-language ability and knowledge of Indian (Hindu) culture. English was used for host-language competence because English is the working language for foreign expatriates conducting business in India. Host-language ability was measured with seven items assessing participants' self-evaluation of adequacy speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English to carry out specific communication activities: taking care of simple everyday needs, conversing with friends over the phone, asking questions and solving problems at work, understanding the news on American radio or TV, reading/comprehending English-language newspapers, and writing business or personal letters. Answers used a five-point Likert scale with 1 = very inadequate and 5 = very adequate. Scale items were mostly adapted from Maruyama (1998). The reliability of this scale was found to be satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of .92.

Knowledge of host culture was measured as knowledge of Indian (Hindu) cultural norms and communication rules. The five scale items adapted from Gudykunst (1991) included understanding Indian cultural norms and values, how Indians communicate nonverbally, how Indians express themselves verbally, and how Indians think. Answers used a five-point Likert scale with 1 = not at all and 5 = very much. The reliability of the scale was found to be satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of .88.

For host communication competence, an adaptation motivation scale assessed participants' motivation to adapt to Indian society and culture. A five-point Likert scale was used from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much. Of the five items constituting this scale, three were drawn from Kim's (1976) measure of acculturation motivation: making friends with Indians; understanding the ways Indian people behave and think; and learning about current political, economic, and social situations and issues in India. The remaining two items were adapted from Maruyama's (1998) research: learning the Hindi language, interacting with Indian people, and adapting to Indian culture/society. The combined five-item scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .89.

The operational dimension was assessed by a behavioral competence scale, comprising eight five-point Likert-scale items measuring how effectively participants could communicate with and relate to Indians. The first four items were adapted from Tammam (1993). The remaining items were adapted from Maruyama (1998): (1) avoiding misunderstandings with Indians, (2) achieving what one hopes to achieve in one's interactions with Indians, (3) communication flowing smoothly when interacting with Indians, (4) getting one's point across easily, (5) being flexible enough to handle unexpected situations, (6) having difficulty establishing personal relationships with Indians, (7) feeling awkward and unnatural when communicating with Indians, and (8) finding interacting with Indians challenging. The answers used a five-point Likert scale from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree. Cronbach's reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .89.

Host and ethnic interpersonal communication was measured by participants' interpersonal ties according to group categories and intimacy levels. Adapted from the

measure of interpersonal communication in a study of interethnic communication (Kim, Kim, Duty & Yoshitake 2002), participants were asked to indicate the percentage of people with whom they had relationships in each group: Indians, co-ethnics (e.g., Koreans), and others; and the corresponding levels of closeness: casual acquaintances, casual friends, or close friends. Host interpersonal communication was measured in terms of three levels of relationship with Indians, while ethnic interpersonal communication in terms of three levels of relationships with co-ethnics. The reliability test yielded an alpha coefficient of .76 for host interpersonal communication and .78 for ethnic interpersonal communication.

Psychological health -- the subjective sense of well-being while living in India -- was assessed by two indicators: satisfaction and alienation. Satisfaction was measured by seven items, consisting of four items adapted from Gao and Gudykunst (1990) and three additional items adapted from Maruyama (1998). A five-point Likert scale was used (1=not at all; 5=very much) measuring participants' sense of life in India as satisfactory, comfortable, rewarding, or stressful, as well as participants' acceptance of Indian people's attitudes, satisfaction in their relationships with Indians and satisfaction in their experiences of Indian culture. The combined seven-item scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .88. Alienation was measured by a five-point Likert scale (1= totally disagree; 5=totally agree) comprising seven items adapted from the ten-item measure of Kim's (1980) Indochinese refugee study. The seven items assessed participants' feelings of awkwardness and frustration, difficulty understanding the Indian way of life, feelings of loneliness and being disliked by Indians, as well as overall levels of frustration and disappointment in life in India and desire to return to the home country. The combined seven-item scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .88. As multiple indicators, both satisfaction and alienation scales make the measurement more reliable for assessing psychological health.

### 3. Results

Table 2 presents descriptive analysis to examine distribution of data on the key research variables, based on means and standard deviations. Descriptive analysis according to principal demographic factors is described in tables 2.1 (gender), 2.2 (age) and 2.3 (length of stay).

**Table 2:** Descriptive analysis on key research variables ( $n = 78$ ).

Variables	Mean	SD
<b>Adaptive personality</b>		
- Self-efficacy	3.91	0.54
- Open-mindedness	3.97	0.56
<b>Host communication competence</b>		
- Host language competence (English)	3.52	0.61
- Host culture	3.15	0.71
- Adaptive motivation	3.46	0.85
- Behavioral competence	3.57	0.64
<b>Host interpersonal communication</b>	37.74	22.86
- Casual Indian acquaintances	58.21	28.15
- Casual Indian friends	34.73	28.39
- Close Indian friends	20.27	26.67
<b>Ethnic interpersonal communication</b>	54.54	25.10
- Casual Korean acquaintances	34.69	25.47

- Casual Korean friends	57.59	30.80
- Close Korean friends	71.33	33.10
<b>Psychological health</b>		
- Satisfaction	2.98	0.68
- Alienation	2.46	0.75

**Table 2.1:** Descriptive analysis on key research variables according to gender ( $n=78$ ).

Variables	Gender			
	Male ( $n = 60$ )		Female ( $n = 18$ )	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Adaptive personality</b>				
- Self-efficacy	3.96	0.53	3.74	0.55
- Open-mindedness	3.98	0.56	3.92	0.56
<b>Host communication competence</b>				
- Host language competence (English)	3.48	0.64	3.67	0.49
- Host culture	3.16	0.74	3.13	0.57
- Adaptive motivation	3.36	0.91	3.79	0.50
- Behavioral competence	3.61	0.61	3.44	0.74
<b>Host interpersonal communication</b>	36.02	21.66	43.44	26.37
- Casual Indian acquaintances	57.25	28.10	61.39	28.89
- Casual Indian friends	32.83	27.32	41.06	31.73
- Close Indian friends	17.98	23.60	27.89	34.77
<b>Ethnic interpersonal communication</b>	54.26	24.86	55.48	26.59
- Casual Korean acquaintances	33.78	24.61	37.72	28.71
- Casual Korean friends	57.53	30.75	57.78	31.86
- Close Korean friends	71.45	32.71	70.94	35.16
<b>Psychological health</b>				
- Satisfaction	2.95	0.72	3.10	0.55
- Alienation	2.47	0.74	2.44	0.79

**Table 2.2:** Descriptive analysis on key research variables according to age ( $n = 78$ )

Variables	Age in years							
	20-29 ( $n = 21$ )		30-39 ( $n = 21$ )		40-49 ( $n = 21$ )		50+ ( $n = 14$ )	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Adaptive personality</b>								
- Self-efficacy	3.76	0.54	3.92	0.31	3.96	0.61	3.96	0.67
- Open-mindedness	3.92	0.56	3.98	0.51	3.90	0.59	4.08	0.60
<b>Host communication competence</b>								
- Host language competence (English)	3.56	0.52	3.60	0.58	3.42	0.68	3.42	0.64
- Host culture	3.14	0.65	3.22	0.66	3.05	0.81	3.19	0.71
- Adaptive motivation	3.67	0.83	3.72	0.67	3.08	0.97	3.30	0.77
- Behavioral competence	3.50	0.73	3.69	0.45	3.43	0.65	3.63	0.66
<b>Host interpersonal communication</b>	40.41	24.76	35.56	22.60	37.13	21.48	40.60	22.79

- Casual Indian acquaintances	63.57	28.81	53.57	27.26	59.67	24.00	59.07	32.24
- Casual Indian friends	35.90	28.11	31.24	26.68	35.62	30.76	39.36	29.50
- Close Indian friends	21.76	32.96	21.86	26.44	16.10	23.12	23.36	23.76
<b>Ethnic interpersonal communication</b>	59.14	24.80	53.90	26.7	57.67	23.11	47.79	23.20
- Casual Korean acquaintances	36.14	28.66	38.57	24.89	34.38	22.61	29.64	26.28
- Casual Korean friends	63.57	28.29	57.52	31.11	60.71	31.36	48.14	30.98
- Close Korean friends	77.71	33.32	65.62	33.62	77.90	30.34	65.57	31.51
<b>Psychological health</b>								
- Satisfaction	3.11	0.66	2.98	0.61	2.83	0.72	2.97	0.81
- Alienation	2.31	0.79	2.59	0.72	2.62	0.78	2.30	0.68

**Table 2.3:** Descriptive analysis on key research variables according to length of stay ( $n = 78$ ).

Variables	Length of Stay									
	*1		**2		***3		****4		*****5	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Adaptive personality</b>										
- Self-efficacy	4.00	0.34	3.80	0.55	3.96	0.64	4.03	0.47	3.44	0.88
- Open-mindedness	3.95	0.59	3.91	0.57	4.1	0.54	3.87	0.53	3.67	0.47
<b>Host communication competence</b>										
- Host language competence (English)	3.49	0.64	3.40	0.59	3.63	0.54	3.65	0.68	3.14	0.20
- Host culture	2.95	0.47	3.10	0.71	3.09	0.54	3.49	0.99	3.20	0.57
- Adaptive motivation	3.89	0.58	3.37	0.90	3.21	0.86	3.66	0.86	3.30	0.14
- Behavioral competence	3.42	0.42	3.43	0.72	3.67	0.51	3.83	0.63	3.63	0.53
<b>Host interpersonal communication</b>	40.76	25.18	35.51	23.78	37.44	24.00	42.38	17.70	49.17	5.89
- Casual Indian acquaintances	59.09	25.87	58.18	29.71	57.11	29.91	62.08	22.49	67.50	31.82
- Casual Indian friends	40.91	30.40	30.91	28.41	34.33	29.50	40.46	27.90	47.50	3.54
- Close Indian friends	22.27	32.51	17.42	25.53	20.89	29.53	24.62	24.02	32.50	17.68
<b>Ethnic interpersonal communication</b>	58.94	25.10	58.10	26.89	52.52	25.20	50.10	18.70	45.83	1.18
- Casual Korean acquaintances	40.45	26.12	36.73	27.19	33.56	26.83	30.00	19.38	27.50	24.75
- Casual Korean friends	58.64	30.17	62.10	32.15	54.94	31.59	54.92	28.08	47.50	3.54
- Close Korean friends	77.73	32.51	75.49	33.11	69.06	33.99	65.38	30.85	62.50	24.75
<b>Psychological health</b>										
- Satisfaction	3.18	0.45	2.92	0.72	2.66	0.74	3.32	0.58	3.21	0.10
- Alienation	2.14	0.79	2.61	0.72	2.75	0.77	2.00	0.51	2.43	0.61

\* 1: less than a year, \*\* 2: one year and a month to three years, \*\*\* 3: three years and a month to five years, \*\*\*\* 4: four years and a month to ten years, \*\*\*\*\* 5: More than ten years.

A bivariate correlation analysis was employed to test the hypothesized theoretical relationships between and among the research variables.

The first hypothesis, positing a positive association between adaptive personality and host communication competence, is partially supported. As shown in Table 3, correlation analysis clearly indicates that two indicators of adaptive personality, self-efficacy and open-mindedness, are significantly positively related to some assessed dimensions of host communication competence. Self-efficacy is significantly positively related to host language (English) ability ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), knowledge of host culture ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ) and behavioral competence ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), but not significantly related to adaptation motivation ( $r = .17, p > .05$ ). Open-mindedness is significantly positively related to host language (English) ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ) and behavioral competence ( $r = .46, p < .01$ ) but not significantly related to knowledge of host culture ( $r = .19, p > .05$ ) or adaptation motivation ( $r = .17, p > .05$ ).

The second hypothesis positing a positive association between adaptive personality and host interpersonal communication is fully supported. Correlational analysis indicates that two personality traits – self-efficacy ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ) and open-mindedness ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ) – are significantly positively related to host interpersonal communication.

The third hypothesis, predicting a positive theoretical relationship between host communication competence and psychological health, is measured by two indicators: satisfaction and alienation. As shown in Table 3, correlation analysis clearly supports this hypothesis. All assessed dimensions of communication competence are significantly positively related to satisfaction: host language (English) competence ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ), knowledge of host culture ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ), adaptation motivation ( $r = .67, p < .01$ ) and behavioral competence ( $r = .46, p < .01$ ). The same dimensions are significantly negatively related to alienation: host language (English) competence ( $r = -.26, p < .05$ ), knowledge of host culture ( $r = -.40, p < .01$ ), adaptation motivation ( $r = -.57, p < .01$ ) and behavioral competence ( $r = -.48, p < .01$ ).

**Table 3:** Simple correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) between research variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Adaptive personality</b>										
- Self-efficacy	1									
- Open-mindedness	.47**	1								
<b>Host communication competence</b>										
- English	.33**	.44**	1							
- Cultural knowledge	.25*	.19	.39**	1						
- Adaptive motivation	.17	.17	.41**	.53**	1					
- Behavioral competence	.31**	.46**	.60**	.59**	.50**	1				
<b>Host interpersonal communication</b>	.29**	.25*	.14	.07	.20*	.23*	1			
<b>Ethnic interpersonal communication</b>	-.50**	-.36**	-.30**	-.26*	-.25*	-.46**	-.64**	1		
<b>Psychological health</b>										
- Satisfaction	.13	-.01	.28**	.48**	.67**	.46**	.27**	.23**	1	
- Alienation	-.35**	-.15	-.26*	.40**	.57**	.48**	.35**	.29**	.74**	1

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

#### 4. Discussion

Employing Kim's (1988, 2001, 2005, 2012, 2015) Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation, the primary goal of this study was to add clarity and depth to insights generated from previous studies by exploring the cross-cultural adaptation experience of 78 Korean expatriate managers in India. The four research hypotheses positing predictive relationships among adaptive personality, host communication competence, host interpersonal communication and psychological health were tested using numeric data collected through a self-reported survey questionnaire. The findings reveal significant relationships, suggesting that expatriate workers' adaptive personality and communication competence were associated with their psychological health.

Results for the first hypothesis indicate that Korean expatriate workers who have a higher level of self-assurance in their capabilities to achieve a level of performance ("self-efficacy") tend to have better English ability, knowledge of the host culture and behavioral competence. Korean expatriates who are more open-minded ("open-mindedness") are likelier to show better English ability and behavioral competence, which refers to communication and relationship skills. Relatedly, results for the second hypothesis suggest that these personality traits tend to promote more active engagement with host nationals.

These findings offer clear explanation of how personality factors play out in facilitating expatriate adaptation, as posed in the first research question. Adaptive personality tends to positively influence host communication competence and host interpersonal communication, with these two factors facilitating psychological health in the process of adjustment, as confirmed by testing hypotheses Three and Four.

These findings are consistent with those from previous expatriate studies reporting positive associations between open-mindedness and adjustment (Albrechet et al. 2014, Kim et al. 2014, Peltokorpi & Froese 2012) and between self-efficacy and adjustment (Bahtti, Kaur & Battout 2013; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl 2009).

Results for the third hypothesis indicate that all indicators of host communication competence (i.e., host language/knowledge of host culture, adaptation motivation, and behavioral competence) help to facilitate psychological health in expatriate workers. The findings suggest that Korean expatriates are more likely to be satisfied in their life overseas when they have higher levels of host-language (English) competence, better knowledge of host culture, higher adaptation motivation and competent behavioral skills. Korean expatriates who are equipped with all dimensions of host communication competence are less likely to have a feeling of alienation in their lives overseas.

Consistent with the theoretical relationship predicted in Hypothesis Four, three levels of host interpersonal relationship have been found to be important factors in facilitating the psychological health of expatriate workers. Korean expatriates who actively engage in personal relationships with host nationals (Indians) tend to have more satisfaction and feel less alienated in their lives overseas. Obviously, interpersonal networks with host nationals play an important role in facilitating the adaptation of expatriate workers, as posed in the second research question.

These findings are consistent with findings from previous studies, of Korean expatriates (Kim & Kim 2007) and Bosnian Refugees in the U.S. (Cheah, Karamelic-Muratovic, Matsuo & Pojarevic 2011), that host communication competence and host interpersonal communication contribute to expatriates' and refugees' adaptation. Other studies (e.g., Kim & Slocum 2008, Zhang & Peltokorpi 2016) specifically reported host language proficiency as positively related to expatriates' adjustment.

Overall, the study suggests that, as predicted by Kim's theory, one's ability to communicate and participate in host social processes is essential to successful adaptation. The more expatriate workers have host-language competence and know about a host country's

cultural norms and systems and the more they are engaged in interpersonal relationships with host nationals, the better their psychological health is likely to be. Conversely, also as predicted by the theory, this study has demonstrated the reciprocal influence between lack of knowledge, motivation, operational skills, interpersonal contact and interaction at all levels of relationships on the one hand, and higher levels of stress and dissatisfaction in the host environment on the other. Expatriate workers' adaptive personality traits have a strong influence on their host-communication competence and their ability to maintain meaningful relationships with host nationals, facilitating psychological health and successful adjustment overseas.

#### **4.1 Practical considerations**

The findings of the present study have important practical implications for the management of expatriate workers in multinational corporations. When recruiting expatriate managers, human-resource management personnel should consider personality as part of their selection criteria, given the importance of an adaptive personality for successful adjustment. Motivation also needs to be considered. Taking these factors into account would help companies identify which individuals have the greatest potential for international assignments, as well as those most likely to be at risk.

Enhancement of host-language competence, knowledge of host culture, adaptation motivation and operational competence should be considered among the primary objectives of any intercultural training program. Frequent interaction with host nationals is important to emphasize. Together, these factors comprise the general capacities needed for successful adjustment. Their significance is illustrated in responses to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

Some participants commented that unclear instructions due to language issues might cause misunderstandings that are not easy to resolve. Many participants indicated culture differences in terms of local employees' lack of punctuality or lack of motivation to overcome unfavorable business circumstances.

One participant reported that the information he had received about India was not accurate. He stressed that India is a country of many regions with different dialects and cultures. It would be beneficial for expatriates, he thought, if more specific information was made available about the culture(s) in the region to which one is being assigned. This suggests that HR personnel need to create more customized training programs.

One participant shared his experience regarding interpersonal networking with host nationals:

According to Koreans in India, it is very difficult for them to enter Indian society; however, it depends upon how actively you try to interact and communicate with them. As for me, I eagerly said hello to people that I encountered in the morning work-out every day. After two years, the relationship has been developed beyond casual acquaintances at the park for morning exercise. Now I have been enjoying socializing activities with them, drinking at a membership club on weekends.

By offering carefully designed training programs, multinational firms might help their employees acquire all dimensions of host-communication competence – knowledge of the host language and culture, adaptation motivation, and operational skills – thereby promoting participation in host interpersonal communication (Kim 2003).

#### 4.2 Limitations and future research

The findings from the present study leave room for improvement. As an exploratory study, the study had a sample size of 78 Korean expatriate managers, who were selected using a convenience sampling method combined with snowball sampling. To make these findings generalizable, a more comprehensive survey is needed based on a sample that is larger and more representative of expatriate managers in India. Future studies can benefit from incorporating an additional theoretical variable: host environment. By adding macro-level environmental factors – host receptivity, host conformity pressure and ethnic group strength – these studies could offer a more comprehensive theoretical account of the adaptation process for expatriate workers.

Future studies could incorporate in-depth personal interviews to obtain participants' own voices on their adaptation experiences, offering valuable additional insights to reinforce the statistical findings. The present study explored expatriate adjustment in a non-Western cultural context: namely, India. Future studies will be more fruitful if they examine expatriate managers' adaptation experience in other Asian countries: e.g., Vietnam, Thailand, or Indonesia.

#### 5. Conclusions

Most previous studies of expatriates have been conducted from an American or otherwise Western perspective. The present study offers insights about the adaptation experience of Korean expatriates in a non-Western cultural context. This study links communication variables (host communication competence and host/ethnic interpersonal communication) to expatriates' psychological health as well as making the association between adaptive personality and these communication competences. It demonstrates why expatriate managers need to think consciously about how their communication activity plays a crucial role in facilitating their successful adaptation overseas.

For multinational organizations and human-resource personnel, the present findings offer practical insights into how they can help expatriate workers facilitate their successful adaptation overseas. Special training programs could be offered, focusing on improving language competence, familiarizing oneself with host cultural norms and practices, and fostering meaningful social interactions with host nationals. Human-resource personnel need to take personality factors into account when recruiting employees for international assignments.

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