

**JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EXPATRIATES, REPATRIATES AND  
DOMESTIC EMPLOYEES.**

**The perceived impact of international assignments on work-related variables .**

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**Abstract.**

The present study is an empirical evaluation of job satisfaction among expatriates, repatriates, and domestic employees with no international experience. The study was conducted on a large sample of employees from a Spanish multinational construction company. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the Scheffe test were employed to analyse the data. After controlling for hierarchical status, the results indicated that, among these three groups of employees, there are some significant differences in the satisfaction ratings on job characteristics, career prospects, and internal communication. We did not, however, find differences in the mean satisfaction rating on general job satisfaction. Findings are discussed, as are limitations and suggestions for future research.

Key words: Expatriates, Repatriates, job satisfaction, international assignments.

## **Introduction**

With the increasing globalization of business and economic activities, international job mobility is becoming a more common experience for a growing number of employees. An international assignment is no longer confined to a core cadre of global managers who move among the different units and then up into the central corporate hierarchy, but a real possibility for a much larger group of employees such as business establishers, customer project employees, R&D project personnel; etc (Tahvanainen, 2000).

From the individuals' point of view, an international business experience may have a number of positive outcomes, including skill acquisition, personal development, and long-term career advancement (Black et al., 1992). However, such an experience is not without difficulties. On the contrary, many expatriation problems have been reported. In addition to the often cited family and social tensions associated with expatriate assignments (Black et al., 1992; Shaffer et al., 1999), it is well documented that the career implications of international assignments are often frustrating. A lack of respect for acquired skills, loss of status, and reverse culture shock upon return are recurring problems in many companies (Daily et al., 2000; Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2001; Stahl, Miller and Tung, 2002). In the light of these positive and negative aspects associated with international relocations, individuals must confront a high degree of uncertainty when they are offered a foreign assignment. They may ask themselves a number of questions,

including 1.- How satisfying will the experience be?; 2.- How will I feel upon return?; 3.- Will I be more or less satisfied than my colleagues who stayed home?; 4.- Is it worth accepting the offer?.

This study provides some empirical evidence to help answering these questions. Focusing on purely work-related aspects, the study first offers a series of hypotheses on job satisfaction among three groups of employees: expatriates, repatriates and nationals with no international experience. We then test these hypotheses on a sample of employees from a Spanish multinational construction Company (“Dragados y Construcciones, S.A.”). This empirical analysis consists of asking the same job-related questions both to expatriates, repatriates and domestic employees, and then to compare the extent to which their satisfaction levels differ. To the knowledge of the author, this procedure has not yet been applied by the literature on expatriation. In this sense, the paper casts some additional light on a increasingly relevant type of experience for a growing number of employees.

### **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

In a review on recent developments in international management in the 20 top management journals from 1996 to 2000, Werner (2002) has shown that literature on expatriation has focused on a wide number of issues, including assignment acceptance (Aryee et al., 1996), concerns and expectations of dual career expatriates (Harvey, 1997), adjustment (Caligiuri et al., 1998; Shaffer et al., 1999), psychological withdrawal

(Shaffer and Harrison, 1998), pre-departure thoughts (Garonzik et al., 2000), and commitment (Gregersen and Black, 1996). Job satisfaction -the main object of this paper- is a significant construct for all of these issues. However, studies focusing on expatriates' satisfaction as such remain a relative rarity (see Guzzo et al., 1994, for an exception).

Job satisfaction is usually defined as an affective or emotional response toward one's job (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1992). From an economic perspective, job satisfaction is a unitary concept which tends to be explained in purely monetary terms (Lazear, 2000). It is assumed that individuals like rewards but dislike effort. As a result, a better salary, for an identical level of effort, will determine the decision to quit and a higher level of satisfaction. From the lens provided by psychology and sociology, however, the employment relationship is about much more than the exchange of labor services for a pay-check. It is an economic relation in part, but it is a potent social and psychological one as well (Baron and Kreps, 1999). Thus, a person can be relatively satisfied with the absolute monetary rewards he or she receives and dissatisfied with how they fare relative to others (Festinger, 1954; Adams, 1965), or with other aspects of his or her job, either because they do not allow to fulfill his or her needs (Salansik and Pfeffer, 1977) and values (Locke, 1976) or because they do not met his or her expectations (Rice et al., 1989).

This psycho-sociological perspective will be the one adopted here. This means job satisfaction will not be understood as a unitary concept, but as an affective or emotional response toward various facets of one's job, and in which processes of social comparison

take place. The facets or aspects we will consider will be the job characteristics, career prospects, salary, coworkers, and internal communication.

### *Job characteristics*

Probably the most important element of an individual's satisfaction with his/her job is related to the characteristics of the position he/she occupies. Almost everyone agrees with the notion that an interesting and rewarding job will greatly contribute to increasing satisfaction within a given work environment. Researchers have repeatedly shown that these job/task characteristics strongly influence worker's attitudes, including satisfaction and commitment (Miller & Monge, 1986; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986).

Considering the importance of job characteristics in determining workers' satisfaction, it is surprising that the literature on expatriate assignments has paid so little attention to them, focusing instead on those aspects of international positions that are unique to expatriates' experiences (usually non-work variables). Some authors, however, have dealt with this issue and found results consistent with domestic research, in the sense that sets of variables considered to be antecedents of job satisfaction in domestic situations seem to be also strongly related to satisfaction in overseas assignments (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998).

Given that our objective is to assess the differences in satisfaction among expatriates, repatriates and domestic employees, we will focus on those aspects of expatriates' jobs that might be generating differential levels of satisfaction. In general,

employees on international assignments will be subject to a higher level of stress than that of domestic employees. They usually need to travel frequently and sometimes their work overload is considerably high (Black, 1988). Along these same lines, McCauley et al (1994) found that expatriates, as compared with domestic employees, experienced greater job overload, greater external pressure, and greater pressure from the visibility of their jobs. Moreover, their functions are not always completely specified; so, they may experience a higher degree of uncertainty and role ambiguity (Osland, 2000). All these circumstances have been proved to affect satisfaction negatively (Naumann, 1992; Bedeian & Amenakis, 1981; Lyons, 1971).

On the other hand, a series of exploratory studies have shown that usually expatriates' jobs have a greater task variety (Czinkota, Rivoli & Ronkainen, 1989; Edstrom & Galbraith, 1977) and provide a more challenging position. Along these lines, Guzzo, Noonan & Elron, (1993) used a sample of 148 expatriate managers to whom they asked questions about their job experience. Their findings showed that the majority of things expatriates indicated were the best part of their assignment were related to their work. For example, they generally reported greater autonomy, variety and responsibility.

In the light of the overall positive characteristics of expatriation jobs, it is reasonable to expect expatriates to be in general more satisfied with their positions than domestic employees and reentry positions to be perceived as less challenging and satisfying (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2001; Hammer et al., 1998; Stahl et al., 2002). From these considerations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Compared to both repatriates and domestic employees, expatriates will report a significant higher level of satisfaction with their jobs.

### *Career prospects*

The career can be defined as the sequence of work-related experiences and attitudes that the individual has over the span of his or her work life (Hall and Associates, 1986). The international management literature has often discussed the implications of international positions on employees' careers (Scullion, 1992; Feldman and Thomas, 1992; Daily et al, 2000; Yan et al., 2002). The basic problem faced by expatriates in this area is commonly summarized in the cliché "out-of-sight, out-of mind". When someone has to leave his/her country and begin to work in a new environment, many of the professional contacts that he/she had at home disappear. This may harm their career prospects. As the sociological literature has profusely shown (Burt, 1992; Podolny & Baron, 1997), social networks have positive effects on career outcomes and, specifically, on upward mobility. If this is so, one could think that expatriates will feel more pessimistic with their career prospects as they perceive that the distance from headquarters puts them at an informational and networking disadvantage (Daily et al., 2000).

Yet, a recent survey of a large population of German expatriates (Stahl et al., 2002), showed that the majority of expatriates view their international assignment as an opportunity for personal and professional development and career advancement, despite

perceived deficits in corporate career management systems and a widespread skepticism that the assignment will help advance within their companies. These findings support the emerging notion of "boundaryless careers" (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), which are managed more by the person than by the organization and is characterized by more inter-organizational mobility than the traditional career (Yan et al., 2002). Compared to purely national assignments, international relocations may have more positive effects on boundaryless careers, as they allow for the acquisition of international experience, an asset increasingly valued within corporate environments. In fact, recent empirical research has shown that, in the external selection of CEOs, organizations increasingly consider international experience of fundamental importance (Daily et al., 2000).

In addition, research has also shown that, for repatriates who stay in the same organization, international assignments not always have a positive impact, as many repatriation problems often arise (Black et al., 1992; Black & Gregersen, 1999). Lack of respect for acquired skills, loss of status, and reverse culture shock are reported to be recurring problems upon repatriation. The gap between an expatriate's expectation and reality upon return may negatively affect his or her level of satisfaction (Guzzo et al., 1994; Strohl et al., 1998). On the basis of this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Compared to both repatriates and domestic employees, expatriates will report a significant higher level of satisfaction with their career prospects.

## *Salary*

Research on expatriates' attitudes has uncovered low levels of salary satisfaction among these workers. For example, Black et al. (1992) asserts that 77 percent of expatriate employees are highly unsatisfied with their compensation systems. Similarly, Hamill (1989) suggests that these low levels of pay satisfaction might explain the high rates of expatriate failure that have been widely documented by the International Management literature.

These low levels of salary satisfaction among expatriates can be explained in terms of the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Adams, 1965). In this model, satisfaction is a function of how "fairly" an individual is treated at work. Satisfaction results from one's perception that work outcomes, relative to inputs, compares favourably with a significant other's outcomes/inputs. Dissimilar ratios lead to perceptions of inequity. This proposition implies that the same organizational circumstance may be perceived as fair or unfair depending on which individual or group of individuals the worker chooses to compare himself to. Accordingly, a main concern when analyzing people's satisfaction with their salary is identifying the referent used in the individual's comparisons (Chen et al., 2002).

In a workplace context, an employee will compare himself to other employees within the same organization (assessment of internal equity), to people occupying similar jobs in other companies (assessment of external equity), and to employees performing

similar jobs within the same company (assessment of relative equity). The problem faced by expatriate workers is that there are multiple referents available to them when working abroad (Bonache et al., 2001). Not only they can compare themselves to other expatriates within the same company and host country, but also with expatriates within the same company and other host countries, expatriates from other companies within their host country, local employees, etc. This fact has led some authors to assert that, for a majority of these workers, lack of equity with respect to other expatriates is a very significant issue (Harvey, 1993).

Yet, a low level of salary satisfaction is a very common problem among all types of employees (Gomez-Mejia et al., 1995). This means that, even though expatriates might not feel satisfied with their pay, they might be relatively more satisfied than other groups of employees. In fact, researchers have found that that satisfaction tends to be greater among individuals with higher socioeconomic status and income (Shaffer, 1987). In this respect, it is well known that employees on international assignments are particularly costly for most organizations. According to a report elaborated in 1996 by the Management Europe Center, the cost of an expatriate is about three times that of a domestic employee.

Most multinational companies use the so-called *balance-sheet* approach in order to determine how much an expatriate should be paid (Organization Resources Counselors, 1998; Schell & Solomon, 1997). The objective of this approach is to maintain the employee's purchasing power in different locations, as well as making international assignments appealing. To this end, the firm calculates how various

categories of expenditures are affected by an overseas assignment, and provides differentials when needed. Moreover, some incentives or allowances - bonuses, currency insurance, etc. - are offered in order to encourage acceptance of an overseas assignment. Most companies also provide benefits such as domestic staff, childcare, health insurance, etc., which are not normally available for domestic employees (Guzzo et al., 1993; Chen et al., 2002). These incentives and allowances fail to be provided when the expatriate return home, leading to a substantial loss of income (Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1987). In fact, such a loss of income is mentioned as one of the difficulties upon return (Harvey, 1989). In sum, we could expect that, in principle, expatriates will be more satisfied with their salaries than both repatriates and domestic employees, as a result of their higher salaries and benefits,. Thus, the following hypothesis results:

H3: Compared to both repatriates and domestic employees, expatriates will report a significant higher level of satisfaction with their salaries.

#### *Co-Workers*

Social support can be defined in terms of the sources and quality of helping relationships (Ganster, Fisilier and Mayes, 1986). The literature on expatriation has often argued that the spouse and the family are the most important sources of social support for expatriates (Black et al., 1991). However, given that this study focuses on work-related variables, we choose to analyze another source of social support: an individual's co-workers.

Research on social networks has shown that social support from co-worker networks serve as a resource that affects job satisfaction (Hulbert, 1991; Hodson, 1997; Ducharme & Martin, 2000). Yet, it has also shown that social ties are less likely to develop between people who do not shared a common background (Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989). Thus, there is evidence that interactions with local peers are so scarce that expatriates miss an opportunity to learn about the host country culture (Adler, 1997). Manev and Stevenson (2001) explain these scarce interactions on the basis of their status differences. Three factors make that the status distinction between expatriates and local peers become a barrier for close ties among them. First, local employees see the culture of the home country as less accessible and may rarely initiate contact with expatriates. Second, in order to exploit their relative national advantages, MNC frequently conduct activities in less developed countries (Dunning, 1988). The cultures of countries of less national wealth are often characterized by higher power distance, which discourages local staff in those countries from interacting with expatriates. Third, communication is affected by the language abilities of both expatriates and local staff. For all these reasons, we can expect that expatriates will be less satisfied with co-workers than their national counterparts.

As for repatriates, they usually experience difficulties in the process of adjusting to working with colleagues from their own culture (Martin, 1984; Hammer et al., 1998). Gómez-Mejía et al. (1995) illustrate such difficulties with the example of an American expatriate who had worked in Spain, and who noted that:

"I began to take for granted the intense camaraderie at work and after hours among male friends. Upon returning to the US, I realized for the first time in my life how American males are expected to maintain a high psychological distance from each other, and their extremely competitive nature in a work environment. My friendly overtures were often misconceived as underhanded maneuvers for personal gain".

The conflict between the repatriate and his/her national counterparts is not only due to the psychological changes he/she has undergone living and working in another culture, but also to different host/ home perceptions: host nationals understand that expatriates may not behave the way native members of the culture do while members for the repatriate home culture do not expect the expatriate to act differently (Martin, 1984; Hammer et al., 1998).

In light of the above considerations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Compared to both expatriates and repatriates, domestic employees will report a significant higher level of satisfaction with coworkers.

### *Internal Communication*

Being distant from headquarters for extended periods involves a risk and may lead to a feeling of isolation. As Daily et al. (2000:520) put it, "one could imagine a series of executive-level changes in personnel, practices, and responsibility about which the expatriate may not be well informed, due simply to the distance from headquarters". Feelings of isolation lead to high perceptions of stress when the worker finds herself in a

relatively new and unknown business environment, experiences difficulties of cross-cultural adjustment and does not get enough information from corporate headquarters. Under such conditions, the perceived stress will probably be higher than that of both repatriates and domestic employees. Given that lack of support and perceived stress lead to job-related strains such as dissatisfaction and turnover (Katz and Kahn, 1978), we propose the following hypothesis:

H6: Compared to expatriates, both domestic employees and repatriates will report a significant higher level of satisfaction with the company's internal communication.

### **Data, Methodology and Results**

The data for this study were taken from an organizational climate survey in Dragados y Construcciones, S.A., a leading Spanish construction company. The company's international activities are located mostly in Latin America and, to a lesser extent, in Europe. At the time of the study, it employed 3,450 workers in Spain and had 138 Spanish expatriates working abroad. The company regularly collects the opinion of these employees on different aspects of the company's management practices and policies. Local employees hired by overseas branches are not included in these surveys. Therefore, the population of the study are the company's Spanish employees, either working in Spain or abroad.

Data on employees' attitudes were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire, which was distributed on November 2001. Respondents were ensured that individual responses were anonymous. A pre-test was run on one of the small units in the company (twenty two employees). This initiative allowed us to improve some of the questions and arrive at the final version of the questionnaire. The company coordinated the distribution and collection of the surveys with their internal mail services and forwarded them to the researchers from Universidad Carlos III of Madrid, who designed the questionnaire and conducted the statistical analyses of results.

Employees were asked to provide *demographic information* as part of the self-report questionnaire. Information regarding *age* (in fifteen year-increments), *hierarchical level* (upper level managers, middle level managers, lower level managers, clerical staff, and blue-collar workers), *functional position* (line or staff), and *international experience in the last 2 years* (yes or not) was required from all employees. Gender was not requested to assure confidentiality, as there were only a few women at line positions. Those respondents with international experience were further required to indicate whether or not were they currently working abroad (yes= expatriates; no=repatriates). If they were expatriates, they were further required to provide information on previous international experience, length of time abroad, and area of assignment. If they were repatriates, they had to indicate the number of previous assignments, and the number of years abroad.

The global response rate was 64,78 percent. In the case of domestic employees, 1616 valid questionnaires were received. In the case of expatriates, our sample was of 101 individuals. For repatriates, 117 valid questionnaires were received from employees who have been back in Spain during the last two years. Characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

**[Insert Table 1 about here]**

In addition to the demographic data, the questionnaire included 41 questions. They were clasified into several sections which were concerned with different aspects of the company (the job, communitation, career prospects, salaries, safe conditions, quality management initiatives, etc....). In this paper, we will only refer to those questiones relevant for our research. Hence, we have considered the following variables:

- a. Job characteristics:** Job characteristics satisfaction was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ( $\alpha=0,76$ ) that asked employees to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with six statements about satisfaction with task clarity (t-clarity), task variety (t-variety), role discretion (autonomy), opportunities for learning (O-learning), possibility to apply one's own knowledge (K-Applicability), and responsibility. For example, the statement for role clarity is: "I know exactly what is expected of me in my job". This statement was taken from Shaffer et al. (1999).

- b. **Pay satisfaction:** A three-item scale ( $\alpha = 0,68$ ) was used to measure salary satisfaction. Each item referred to one of the three main components of an employee's compensation (base pay, variable pay, and benefits). Responses were made on a 5-point scale (1= highly dissatisfied to 5 = highly satisfied).
- c. **Career prospects.** Using a five-point Likert scale, we asked respondents a single statement regarding the extent to which there were good promotion opportunities (promotion) within the company. The statement was taken from Truss et al., (1997).
- d. **Coworkers:** Using a five-point scale, the respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with one statement regarding the level of support from co-workers (Co-workers). The statement was: "How much have you been able to rely on your co-workers when things get tough". This statement was taken from Shaffer et al (1999).
- e. **Internal Communication:** Using a five-point Likert scale, we asked respondents a single statement regarding the extent to which there were satisfied with the quality of information they received from the company regarding the firm's policies, practices and strategies. The statement was taken from Trust et al., (1997).
- f. **General job satisfaction.** Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with four items, which were taken from Leung et al. (1996). These four items were: "I am satisfied with my job", "I would take the same job again", "I would recommend this job to a friend", and "This job measures up to my expectations". Responses were made on a 5-point scale (1=

strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The reliability of the scale proved acceptable ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ).

### *Method and Results*

The data were analysed in two phases. In *Phase 1*, since the three groups had a different profile in terms of hierarchical status (see Table 1), we selected three homogeneous samples with respect to this demographic variable. Thus, for each group, we had 45 per cent upper level managers, 18 per cent middle level managers, 12 per cent lower level managers, 7 per cent clerical staff, and 16 per cent blue collar workers. The selected sample is presented in Table 2

**[Insert Table 2 about here]**

*Phase two* of our empirical study consisted of determining whether differences existed between the mean responses of each sample group on each the work dimensions analyzed. To this end, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Where differences did exist, Scheffe (1959) post-hoc tests were used to determine statistically significant differences between individual pairs or clusters of groups. Tables 3 and 4 show the results of these analyses.

**[Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here]**

Hypothesis 1 of this study states that (1) job satisfaction differences would exist

between expatriates and the other two group of employees; and (2) expatriates would report a significant higher level of satisfaction with their overall job characteristics. The results of the one-way analysis of variance test indicate that all means, with the exception of task clarity, were statistically different from each other. Scheffe test results also generally support Hypothesis 1. Although some groups were misclassified in some of the job characteristics (task variety and opportunities for learning), expatriates form a group whose job satisfaction mean is different from and higher than that of the other two groups.

ANOVA results indicate that statistically significant differences exist among the groups in the mean satisfaction ratings on career prospects. Scheffe test results fully support Hypothesis 2 of this study. Essentially, this hypothesis state that (1) differences exist between expatriates and the other two groups on career prospects; and (2) expatriates tend to be more satisfied with their career prospects.

The results of the one-way analysis of variance test for an overall difference between expatriates, repatriates and domestic employees on the mean ratings of salary satisfaction was not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Also in contrast to Hypothesis 4, the results of analysis indicate that the three groups did not differ in the mean satisfaction rating on co-workers.

Hypothesis 5 received partial support. The results of the analysis of variance test indicate that, indeed, statistically significant differences exist among the three groups on

the mean satisfaction ratings of internal communication. However, the three groups were misclassified in the Scheffe test results. Contrary to expected, the group of repatriates did not form a cluster with that of domestic employees. It is worth noting that the low means in the satisfaction ratings of internal communication on each of the three groups are consistent with the results obtained by Truss et al. (1997), from which the statement of satisfaction with internal communication was taken.

Although no formal hypothesis was developed, we exploratory investigated whether there were significant differences in General Job Satisfaction among the three groups. The result of the one way analysis of variance test for employees type on general job satisfaction mean was not significant. Although expatriates tend to be more satisfied with a number of the work-aspects analysed (i.e. the job, promotion), their level of general job satisfaction is not significantly different from that of the other two groups.

### ***Conclusion and discussion***

The present study aimed to provide an empirical evaluation of job satisfaction among expatriates, repatriates, and domestic employees. The empirical analysis consisted on asking the same job-related questions to these three groups, and after controlling for hierarchical status, comparing the extent to which their satisfaction levels differ. Some interesting results have been found. First, compared to both domestic employees and repatriates, expatriates are in general more satisfied with a number of job characteristics. Specifically, they value more positively the extent to which their jobs have task variety

and autonomy, provide opportunities for learning, allow them to apply their knowledge and give them enough responsibility. These findings lend support to authors such as Guzzo et al. (1993) and Suutari (2003) who claim that the best part of international assignments is related to the new work experiences and learning they offer. Second, the expatriates' satisfaction with career prospects is different from and higher than that of the other two groups. Consistent with other studies (Stahl et al., 2002), this finding suggests that the gap between high expectations and reality upon return negatively affect the level of satisfaction. Finally, we have found that expatriates tend to be less satisfied with the company's internal communication, a finding fully consistent with the extant literature on the feelings of isolation experienced by expatriates while working abroad.

On the other hand, the study failed to find differences among the three groups in other work-related variables. Thus, contrary to expected, we did not find significant differences with respect to pay satisfaction. We expected that the high salaries and benefits enjoyed by expatriates would positively affect their satisfaction and put them in a more positive cluster with respect to both repatriates and domestic employees. To account for this result, we could draw on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Adams, 1965) and argue that 1) people care not so much about their absolute pay but they do care about being treated fairly, and that 2) the problem faced by expatriates in this area is that they usually compare themselves to multiple referent groups when assessing the fairness of their salaries (i.e. expatriates within the same company and host country; expatriates within the same company and other host countries; expatriates from other companies within their host country; local employees). In such a case, it might well be

that high absolute pay levels are not very satisfying when perceived equity is low. Unfortunately, the lacking of questions regarding equity in salary levels among employees prevent us from supporting or rejecting this argument. Future research should explore this issue.

Also contrary to our expectations (Hypothesis 4), we did not find significant differences among expatriates, repatriates and domestic employees in the mean satisfaction rating on co-workers. The way that satisfaction with co-workers was measured might explain these results. The respondents had to indicate the extent to which they had been able to rely on co-workers when things got tough. Hypothesis 4 assumed that, 1) co-workers will be employees from the same culture; and 2) the status distinction between employees from a different culture becomes a barrier for social ties. However, in answering the questionnaire, expatriates, for example, might well have assumed other expatriates to be their co-workers. This is a relevant element, because it is well documented that sharing a status group (expatriate vs. local) provides common experience and points of view and therefore result in stronger social ties (Manev and Stevenson, 2001). To fully test the hypothesis, respondents should have been asked to indicate the national origin of co-workers. Clearly more research is needed on this issue.

While the results of this study provide insight into the perceived impact of international assignments on some highly relevant work related elements, they do not allow accurate conclusions to be drawn regarding the extent to which expatriates are more or less satisfied when compared to their national counterparts (repatriates and

domestic employees). We exploratory investigated whether there were significant differences in general job satisfaction among the three groups, but we failed to find such differences. Although expatriates tend to be more satisfied with a number of the work-aspects analysed, their level of general job satisfaction was not significantly different from that of the other two groups. This result might be explained by the lack of inclusion of non-work variables in the study. In fact, in the case of expatriates, non-work factors seem to provide a key role in explaining their satisfaction with international assignments. For example, in a study by Arthur and Bennett (1995), family situation was rated by expatriates as the most important contributor to expatriates' satisfaction with international assignments. These non-work factors, such as spouse adaptation, integration within the local community, and logistics support, are complex issues and might have deteriorated the overall job satisfaction of expatriates from this sample. Future research on this topic should attempt to get more fine-grained data on non-work variables in these three groups and integrate them in the variables we have considered in this study. Our study is, then, a first step in this direction.

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**TABLE 1**  
**Numbers and Percentage of Usable Responses from Domestic, Expatriates, and Repatriates for the Demographic Variables**

	DOMESTIC N= 1616		EXPATRIATES N= 101		REPATRIATES N= 117	
<b>Demographic Variables</b>	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Age</i>						
35 or less than 35 years old	365	23,1	23	22,8	30	25,6
36 thorough 50 years old	601	38,0	37	36,6	39	33,3
51 or more years old	617	39,0	41	49,6	48	41,0
<i>Hierarchical level</i>						
Upper level managers	329	20,4	46	45,5	55	47,0%
Middle level managers	379	23,5	19	18,8	21	17,9%
Lower level managers	381	23,6	13	12,9	10	8,5%
Clerical staff	296	18,3	7	6,9	10	8,5%
Blue-collar workers	231	14,3	16	15,8	21	17,9%
<i>Functional Position</i>						
Line	1136	70,8%	79	78,2%	91	77,8%
Staff	468	29,2%	22	21,8%	26	22,2%
<b>Information Specific For Employees with International Experience</b>						
<b>VARIABLES FOR EXPATRIATES</b>						
<i>Previous international experience</i>						
Yes			43	43		
No			57	57		
<i>Length of Time Abroad</i>						
Less than 1 year			34	33,7		
More than one year			67	66,3		
<i>Area of Assignment</i>						
Asia			1	1		
Africa			35	34,7		
Europe			29	28,7		
LatinAmerica			34	33,7		
NorthAmerica			2	2,0		
<b>VARIABLES FOR REPATRIATES</b>						
<i>Number of previous assignments</i>						
1 Assignment					54	46,6
More than 1 assignment					62	53,4
<i>Number of Years Abroad</i>						
Less than 3 years					79	67,5
More than three years					38	32,5

Note: The sum of certain woes differs due to the fact that some employees failed to provide specific demographic data.

TABLE 2: SELECTED SAMPLE

Hierarchical Level	Domestic (n= 723)		Expatriates (n=101)		Repatriates (n = 81)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Upper level managers	329	45,5	46	45,5	37	45,7
Middle level managers	136	18,8	19	18,8	15	18,5
Lower-level managers	93	12,9	13	12,9	10	12,4
Clerical Staff	50	6,9	7	6,9	6	7,4
Blue collar workers	115	15,9	16	15,9	13	16,0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 3:  
Satisfaction means, standard deviations, and ANOVA results for the three groups

	<u>Expatriates</u> n=101		<u>Domestic</u> n= 723		<u>Repatriates</u> N= 81		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
<u>Job characteristics</u>								
Task clarity	3,88	1	3,68	0,96	3,64	1,03	2,06	0,1276
Task variety	3,89	0,93	3,56	0,92	3,61	0,97	5,51	0,0042**
Autonomy	3,69	1,09	3,43	1	3,27	1,15	4,14	0,0162*
O- learning	3,44	1,16	3,07	1,13	3,22	1,12	4,81	0,0084**
K-applicability	3,66	1,03	3,32	1,11	3,21	1,14	6,17	0,0023**
Responsability	3,77	0,97	3,49	1	3,33	1,05	4,58	0,0105*
Pay satisfaction	1,79	0,78	1,67	0,89	1,63	0,92	1,16	0,3147
Promotion	2,84	1,03	2,42	1,09	2,27	1,09	17,81	0,0004**
Coworkers	2,86	1	2,80	0,92	2,9	0,95	0,57	0,5654
I-Communication	1,67	0,9	2	1,06	1,8	1,09	5,01	0,0069**
General J-Satisfaction	3,58	0,98	3,44	1	3,32	1,04	1,48	0,2273

- Means are responses to the 5-point Likert scale survey.
- \*p < .01; \*\* p<.001.

TABLE 4: Scheffe results for the significant differences

	Cluster 1	Overall mean	Cluster group		Cluster 3	Overall Mean
			Cluster 2	Overall mean		
Task variety	Expatriates	3,89	Domestic	3,56	Repatriates*	3,61
Autonomy	Expatriates	3,69	Domestic Repatriates	3,41		
O-learning	Expatriates	3,44	Domestic	3,07	Repatriates*	3,22
K-applicability	Expatriates	3,66	Domestic Repatriates	3,24		
Responsibility	Expatriates	3,77	Domestic Repatriates	3,48		
Promotion	Expatriates	2,84	Domestic Repatriates	2,41		
Internal Communication	Expatriates	1,67	Domestic	2	Repatriates*	1,8

- Critical F-value = 2,42; rejection level = 0.1
- Groups within each cluster do not differ in their satisfaction levels; significant satisfaction levels exist between clusters.
- \* Hypothesized that this group would be in the same cluster as domestic employees.